

DAREDEVIL PEDALS FEARLESS DISTORTION

REVIEW BY **ERIC TISCHLER**
STREET PRICE **\$159.00**



I'd never heard of Daredevil Pedals until I was asked to review The Fearless overdrive. Now that I've played, I'll be keeping an ear out for more from these builders. The Fearless is a simple overdrive, and Daredevil is kind of vague in its description, but the pedal's sound is rich with detail.

The Fearless has three controls: knobs to control the amount of Volume and Distortion, and a two-way toggle between high ("Hi") and low ("Lo") gain. Pretty simple, right? I checked Daredevil's online demo for The Fearless, and as soon as Johnny Daredevil

mentioned "op-amp distortion" I thought "Ooh! DOD 250 variant!" I mean, the 250 is a two-knob op-amp-based distortion pedal, so it seemed to add up.

Because I love the 250, the wait for the pedal felt long, and when The Fearless arrived, I set it to Hi, put Volume and Distortion at 2 o'clock (my favorite 250 setting) and let it rip. There it was: the amp like compression that fattens the low end, the articulate midrange, the present-but-not-shrill top end. Awesome. As I let power chord after power chord rip and then ring, I decided I should A-B

The Fearless with my 250. Imagine my surprise when I realized they're voiced very differently.

Like the 250, the heart of The Fearless's midrange is pretty flat, but as you crank Distortion, the low mids come up, so the effect is somewhat like the 250's, but the way in which it manifests is different. The 250's compression brings up low end, but the circuit itself is actually cutting low end, keeping the pedal response fairly neutral. The Fearless keeps pushing, and while the 250 adds treble, I was surprised to find The Fearless is comparatively darker, because the treble

feels focused and present. Interestingly, like the 250, The Fearless seems to be cutting some lows, but the fundamentals are so strong, and the low mids so muscular, it feels bottom heavy, but in a very reassuring way—I loved it.

On their site, Daredevil talks about The Fearless being Marshall-y, and I can see their point: the voicing isn't brashly mid-forward in the way Marshalls are, but the crunch of a JCM 800 and thump of a closed-back 4x12 are invoked as The Fearless's massive amounts of gain are uncorked. There is a LOT of gain, enough for two Pete Townshends. And The Fearless's dynamics are impressive, with the pedal able to pull back to a whisper at most gain settings if your right hand can manage it.

The increasingly present low-mids meant The Fearless could be touchy with humbuckers and P-90s at high gain; there was some serious Leslie West action going on, and that could be great for a three-piece

or a nightmare for a busier band. With the toggle set to Lo, however, the midrange content was more manageable (think some of Ronnie Wood's more laid back performances with The Faces). The bass cut felt more pronounced, and the top end was darker still. To me, it sounded like a grungier Klon, with that ballooning midrange and attenuated top and bottom, all with a touch of grit at any setting. I found the Lo setting to be less flattering with single coils, but given the way they were singing in the high gain setting, I don't think it matters.

Given the name, I wonder if The Fearless is meant to be Daredevil's flagship pedal. It should be, and it's aptly named because, with a pedal this good, the player who wants to rock (particularly with single coils) has nothing to fear.

WHAT WE LIKE

Rich, articulate and responsive amp-like distortion at a very reasonable price.

CONCERNS

Not a goldarn one.