

# KEELEY ELECTRONICS ROTTEN APPLE

REVIEW BY **NICK RAMBO**  
STREET PRICE **\$149.00**



Billy Corgan—he of Smashing Pumpkins fame—relied on a fairly simple formula to achieve his unmistakably signature sound: Fender Strat, Marshall JCM800 and an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff Pi.

But not just any Big Muff Pi.

Corgan's go-to was an op-amp version of the storied fuzz circuit that was made in the late '70s. You know—the one with a slightly flatter midrange, a little less gain and a bit less bottom end than other versions of the Big Muff. Essentially, the one best applied in situations

where crushing, wall-of-sound distortion tones are needed—like the ones found on the most seminal of '90s-era Smashing Pumpkins albums.

And while someone will say that what is lost can never be saved, I'm here to tell you that the Pumpkins sound lives on and that it's pent up within the confines of the Rotten Apple fuzz, brought to you by the letter "F" and the team at Robert Keeley Electronics.

## CHERUB ROCK

I dare you to plug in the Rotten Apple and not immediately dive into

the Smashing Pumpkins catalog. For me, "Bullet With Butterfly Wings" just happened. It involuntarily flew across my fretboard before I realized what was happening. Reason being: the Rotten Apple has that sound in spades.

But there's more than that, too. After further investigation, I was delighted to find that the Rotten Apple has a surprising amount of versatility and is, in many ways, good for quite a bit more than just the Pumpkins sound.

Foremost is the three-way tone switch that works in conjunction with the

powerful sweep of the Rotten Apple's dedicated Tone knob. On the left side of the switch, you'll get a classically scooped Muff tone that carves out the midrange and makes the low end hit even harder. Yes, you'll have to crank up your amp for best results in a band mix, but hey—sometimes more volume is a good thing.

In the middle, you'll find a full frequency range approach that ups the midrange content and pulls the sound more forward in the mix with more perceived volume. And on the right you'll find my favorite setting, a flat response that gives you a nicely balanced EQ profile that's perfect for riffage of any kind.

Another high note on this pedal is the expansive gain range.

With the knob marked Buzz cranked clockwise, you'll get a thoroughly saturated and singing fuzz tone with a boatload of sustain, but roll that

back some and you'll get a very pleasant lower gain grind that's remarkably touch sensitive for a Muff-inspired pedal. Not only does it react to changes in your picking dynamics, but it also cleans up nicely with your guitar's volume knob throughout most of the gain range—a real feat for a fuzz with this kind of heritage.

All in all, the Rotten Apple would be great for someone looking to nail that classic Smashing Pumpkins tone—it was tested using an Eric Clapton Strat with Lace Sensor pickups after all—but rest assured that it's good for much more than just that.

## WHAT WE LIKE

This ain't yer daddy's Big Muff—and that's good thing. Whether you're someone who's looking for a new Muff flavor or just want to get out of your comfort zone, the Rotten Apple is a great fuzz with more versatility than many of the standard off-the-

shelf options you'll find out there.

## CONCERNS

It's obviously not the territory this pedal was intended to foray into, but there are moments when you expect the Rotten Apple to start choking off a bit—and it doesn't. Gated fuzz is one of my foremost guilty pleasures and it would've been great to hear this go there.

