

DOD

GONKULATOR RING MOD

REVIEW BY **FLETCHER STEWART**

STREET PRICE **\$149.95**



RETRO FUTURE SHOCK BOX

There perhaps isn't a more unpopular guitar effect out there than the widely feared and often misunderstood ring modulator. Most traditional guitarists plug in, hear something akin to an intergalactic root canal and immediately chalk the ring mod up to "unusable." What impatient tone purists are missing out on are the millions of little universes that exist within the realm of the ring modulation. Rusty-throated and ruffled robo-talk can add menace and intrigue to any track. This is perhaps what the ring

mod is known for, but with careful fine-tuning; one can achieve characterful glitch harmony, octave clanging and even tremolo with some tweaking.

Back in the '90s, DOD created a sleeper classic by pumping a hot load of meaty dirt from the Grunge pedal circuit in parallel with a ring mod. This anti-social two-headed monster was dubbed the Gonkulator and reared its head in at least three slightly different enclosures. DOD, making a recent comeback, was savvy enough to reissue the now collectable Gonkulator in a classier,

sturdier enclosure that harkens back to their DOD's '70s roots. Thankfully, the silly pre-pubescent control names and weak plastic switching tabs are done and the carrier frequency can be tuned right on the handsome face of the unit. This is how a proper reissue is done—all the original quirks combined with all the modern perks. This pedal is rebooted and ready for sonic destruction.

THE CLANG'S THE THANG

What really sets the Gonkulator apart from the pack is the ability to

dial in any combination of distortion and ring modulation. Remember that timeless solo from Black Sabbath's "Paranoid?" The left channel is pure dissonance with scruffy tangled wire textures tumbling and clanging into the ear membranes, while the right channel is just pure fuzzy lead tone. This can be reproduced in mono brilliantly with the Gonkulator, simulating that stimulating sinewy ball of capillaries and cables. Being all analog, the seemingly inorganic abrasions of the ring mod section pepper the meat of the fuzz like a dusting of nanobots marinating and enhancing natural flesh. This can add a bitter yet intriguing taste to even the most bland riff or solo.

The Gain control can go from subtle overdrive, to full-on Melvins-style lurching churl. Dialing in the Ring on cleaner settings makes the dissonant bell-like harmony more apparent and the Freq control can be tuned to certain keys and octaves.

Turning the Ring up past noon turns the guitar into an atonal trashcan drum machine. This tone is similar to that legendary freq-out solo in Devo's "Satisfaction." One could simulate Gary Numan's "Cars" synth tone with something like this. My favorite setting is a healthy dose of everything and the Freq around ten o'clock. This is killer for some D-standard destruction with a perforation of industrial edge. The setting is great for an unyielding disassembly line of riff repetition. Double stop bends pull off the fleshy tone epidermis, revealing a mess of wiry atonal harmonics like a malfunctioning cyborg trying to shed its organic outer layer. This thing rips. I can't wait to feed it to my Malekko Assmaster.

WHAT WE LIKE

DOD has done us all a solid by resurrecting a quirky classic and improving it with added tweakability, retro-futuristic visual appeal and the classic enclosure we all know and love. This will give boutique noisemakers a run for their money—DOD has really been upping the ante lately.

CONCERNS

I want a stereo Gonkulator that sends the ring mod to one side and the distortion to the other, with an expression pedal input for the frequency control.

