

EARTHQUAKER DEVICES DUNES

REVIEW BY **IAN GARRETT**

STREET PRICE **\$185.00**



You know the old adage—sometimes less is more, and it is true again with the Dunes overdrive from EarthQuaker Devices. Based on the bigger and more complex Palisades overdrive that had more features than a Mercedes S-Class, the Dunes takes the key ingredients from that pedal, and scales them down to what matters most to guitarists—great tone and simplicity. Plus, without the additional footswitches and knobs, and the input and outputs on top of the pedal, the Dunes is very pedalboard friendly.

The Dunes, like the Palisades, is a Tube Screamer variant. Yet it goes a step further from the original, adding a few extra features that go a long way to matching your guitar and pickups, to your amp. The knobs are familiar—Tone, Gain and Volume. In addition, there are three toggle switches that really make things interesting. Let's dig deeper.

VOICE: Gives you three tonal differences; MOSFET, Silicon and Normal. These options give you different levels of compression when adding gain, and really

change the overall character a lot. The Normal setting has little to no compression if that is desired.

NORMAL/BRIGHT: Works great when using either darker humbuckers—switch to Bright, or if using single coils, keep it normal. Using the master tone control in conjunction with this switch gives you a lot of useful variation.

BANDWIDTH: What a traditional Tube Screamer lacks—here, the Dunes gives you the option of adding a lot of deep low end—great for single coils, or switch

it back to the more traditional screamer mode, accentuating the midrange, with less emphasis on the bottom end.

I found I could quickly change settings for either a Stratocaster or a Les Paul with just a few adjustments. Doing so enabled a perfect fit with my amp. With a Strat, I kept the tone toggle on normal so it wouldn't get too bright, and set the bandwidth for lower-end presence. Although surprisingly, because I do like a lot of low end in my tone especially with single coils, I often found I would go back to more of a midrange bump, with less bass. It's nice to have the option though!

With a Les Paul or humbucker-equipped guitar I found what I liked best was a bit less gain overall, the bandwidth almost always set for more midrange instead of a bass boost, and the tone toggle set on Bright, but with the Tone knob

dialed back a bit. My favorite voicing position was MOSFET, with Silicon a close second; I like some added compression with my gain. With my amp turned up past breakup but not too over the top, the Dunes just took it to a whole other level. Heavy hitting, yet notes still had good definition—my tone really came alive with rich harmonics flying off the fretboard—the very definition of rock 'n' roll.

WHAT WE LIKE

The Tube Screamer overdrive has been a classic ever since it came out decades ago, and for good reason. With the right amp in the right situation, it just works. But for some users, there have been limitations in how it can be used. Not anymore. The Dunes takes the Screamer platform, and gives just enough flexibility without being overly complex, allowing players to tailor it to their amps and guitars. It's simple to use like the original, yet flexible enough to be extremely

useful, the Dunes is sure to make almost every finicky overdrive owner happy.

CONCERNS

None. While I thought it worked great for home and live settings, it really does shine best when you can turn up your amp loudly, and then hit it again with the Dunes. With a clean amp the gain structure was still really good—but it just begs to be matched up with an overdriven amp.