

KEELEY ELECTRONICS

1962

REVIEW BY **PHILLIP DODGE**

STREET PRICE **\$179.00**



I don't know what's in the water out in Edmond, Oklahoma, but I want some of it—whatever it is. Robert Keeley Electronics has gone from a stable of a few tried and true effects to a veritable smorgasbord over the last year or so. It seems like every time one turns around, Robert and his crew have a new and awesome tone toy for our collective pleasure. The most recent one to take a ride on the pedalboard is the 1962 British Overdrive.

Some folks call them emulators, some call them foundations, and others call them amps in boxes. No matter the nomenclature,

there's something magical about little metal boxes with some knobs in a switch conjuring the sounds of a big tube amp. In the case of the Keeley 1962, our favorite effects tinkerer from Oklahoma has taken the sound of the Marshall Blues Breaker, added his own special magic, and brought it to us in pedal form.

STACKING THE STACKS

If you've been down the rabbit hole that we call overdrive pedals, the idea of stacking will not be new to you. Stacking means running one overdrive pedal into another to build

a thicker, richer, more harmonically complex tone. The Keeley 1962 tackles this concept in a single pedal by using JFET transistors to recreate the Marshall Blues Breaker circuit and sandwich it between two halves of a Keeley Katana.

Clearly, this isn't something you could do with a real amp and a Katana. Sure, you could hit the front end with a Katana or other boost. But you could never run the amp into a pedal. Strictly speaking, you could. But it would end with a blown transformer and god knows what other damage. Thanks to the 1962, you'll never have to try.

KISS: KEEP IT SIMPLE STUPID

The 1962 keeps things nice and simple. Keeley could have loaded it with multiple gain stage and tone shaping tools, but thankfully, he didn't. Instead, we get a straightforward feature set of Gain, Tone, and Level. I was worried at first that the lack of a control for low-end would make it tough to pair the 1962 with multiple guitars and amps. Would it have too much low end and sound boomy with humbuckers and a small amp? Would it lack low end and sound anemic when paired with single coils? Nope. The 1962 is voiced like a great single-tone-knob amp. Every type of guitar you plug into it sounds like itself, and the 1962 reacts beautifully to the controls on the guitar. To really make this point, I paired it with the single P-90 Reverend Sensei Jr. One may think a pedal with only a single tone knob and a single pickup guitar would give only a few tonal options. They'd be wrong. Every adjustment of the volume, tone, and

bass contour control on the Sensei Jr. is translated perfectly by the 1962. I'm not saying I want to play a whole gig with this combo, but I could do it.

BRING THE NOISE (THE GOOD KIND)

The 1962 is perfectly capable of low- to mid-gain overdrive tones, the tones you'd expect from a Blues Breaker. But it's just as happy to kick out higher gain tones. And it loves being boosted by other pedals.

On its own, it's great for tones from the '60s. Goosed by another pedal, it breathes fire—think late-'70s classic rock through the '80s on the Sunset Strip. With my PRS S2 Mira, I was able to dial in some great late-period Zep tones. As luck would have it, I was reviewing the Keeley Caverns delay/reverb and the Way Huge Blue Hippo MKII chorus while I had the 1962. This trifecta was perfect for pulling off some early EVH tones. I even busted out my sad attempt at playing "Eruption." The

playing was far from good, but the tone was nothing short of perfect.

WHAT WE LIKE

Big amp tones in a small package. An open voice that allows the character of your guitar(s) to shine through. Plays well with others.

CONCERNS

None.

