

# EARTHQUAKER DEVICES

## ERUPTER

REVIEW BY **JAMIE WOLFERT**

STREET PRICE **\$145.00**



Simplicity and perfection often go hand-in-hand. When one thinks about the very few things in this world that have attained a state of true perfection, things like Telecasters, Funhouse-era Stooges, and pizza, for example, those things often have an elegant simplicity to them that is part and parcel of their rarefied natures. This kind of natural simplicity can be deceiving, appearing easy and obvious to the uninformed outside observer, when in fact it was arrived at only through careful planning and years of trial and error. Such is the case with the

newest fuzz pedal from Akron, Ohio's EarthQuaker Devices, the aptly named Erupter.

The Erupter began several years ago as EQD head honcho Jamie Stillman's personal quest for the ultimate classic fuzz tone. The catch was that this ultimate fuzz tone had to be accessible via a stripped down, no-nonsense interface, and it had to work anywhere in the signal chain without complaint. It had to be both fat on the bottom and clear and cutting on the top, without getting flabby or harsh. This would

seem to be a tall order, but after a couple of years of swapping components and experimenting with various topologies, the magic formula revealed itself.

At its core, the Erupter is based on a silicon Fuzz Face circuit, but it is like no Fuzz Face you have seen or heard. For one, EarthQuaker outfitted it with just a single control: one big knob for setting the bias. Volume and gain have been permanently fixed at maximum, a choice which some might question, but which makes perfect sense if you've ever played through a

vintage Fuzz Face. Classic Faces sound like they're supposed to only with both controls cranked anyway, so why not just ditch them both and have a Bias knob for dialing in the perfect feel and response? It's a genius maneuver, in my estimation, and sets the Erupter far apart from the pack.

The EarthQuaker Erupter is designed to sound consistently ballsy anywhere in the signal chain, and with any guitar and pickup combo. As such, I took it for a test drive with a variety of guitars and pickup types, as well as several different amps, both tube and solid-state, and a handful of complementary pedals. I also tried it with bass, just to see what kind of rumble of which it was capable.

Upon plugging in, I was immediately struck by the Erupter's gargantuan bottom end. It is seriously bold, even with vintage-output single-coils. The low frequencies are so hefty I initially thought the circuit

must have some Muff in its deep DNA. A little more investigation and single-note noodling revealed a syrupy, violin-like Fuzz Face character, though, albeit one with considerably more guts and brawn than I am accustomed to. With all of this weight in the bottom end, my assumption was that the Erupter would be far too dark with humbuckers. I am pleased to say that this assumption was unfounded, however. It actually sounded consistently fat, yet biting, with everything I put into it, from hums and singles to P-90s.

So how about that Bias knob? As expected, the Erupter doesn't vary much in gain or perceived output when it is turned, but the feel and tone changes dramatically, from a gently starved, gated rip in the counter-clockwise direction, to a tight, modern roar as the knob travels clockwise. There's a detent right in the middle, indicating what will likely represent an ideal blend of these qualities for most

players. As with any great classic fuzz, it also has a symbiotic relationship with the guitar's volume knob that results in a whole universe of tonal variations. Complex chords that tend to get lost when at full roar pop right out when you roll the volume back.

The Erupter has plenty of gain and output for any purpose, easily pushing every amp I tried it with firmly into face-melting territory. This being the case, it's probably a little over-the-top for most gain stacking experiments. I experimented anyway though, and found it to be a richly cacophonous experience that yielded many more musical possibilities than expected. And of course I paired it with a wah, both before and after. I was pleased that it worked well in either spot, but my preference was for the more pronounced guttural sound of Erupter before wah.

As previously mentioned, I also hit the Erupter with my thudstaff, an '80s

Ibanez PJ model with low output passive pickups. The beastly low frequencies it summons all but required a run-through with the four-string, and once plugged in, my suspicions were confirmed. The Erupter is one mean son-of-a-bass-fuzz, with plenty of rumble, mucho sustain, and more rip and gnarl than you can shake a leftover pork steak at. Bassists looking for something different in the fuzz realm are going to dig it.

## WHAT WE LIKE

The Erupter is the most unique, imaginatively designed take on a vintage-style fuzz that I have encountered in a minute. Eliminating the superfluous gain and output knobs was a stroke of genius, and the Bias control combined with the guitar's volume knob is a recipe for a colorful array of tones that range from raw and sputtery, to tight and crushing. It has the potential to sound great in any rig, and it even rules on bass.

## CONCERNS

Some players will likely find the burly low frequency content and fixed maximum gain and output of the Erupter to be somewhat overbearing. Its minimalist control set is sure to invite the typical "one-trick pony" criticisms, but only from those that don't take the time to learn all its tricks.

