

review...

Flying Dragon Overdrive

TQR advisory board member and Radiators' guitarist Dave Malone has always done a great job of keeping us abreast of cool new tools, and after nearly 30 years on the road with the Radiators, he's still freakin' on gear. Here's what he had to say about the Flying Dragon... "Have you ever been in the middle of a solo and wished that you just had "more" of what you were already hearing? The Flying Dragon is more of exactly what you're sending the amp, and it also works great with every other pedal I use and all my amps."

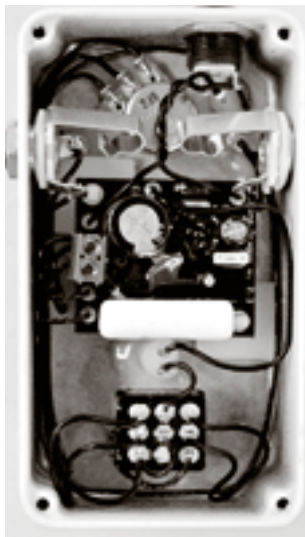
We contacted Steve Miller, founder of Lizard Leg Effects in Slidell, Louisiana, and arranged for a Flying Dragon to be sent for review. We also asked him to share his perspective on building effects in what has become a very crowded market, and his response was surprising...

TQR: *What sets the Flying Dragon apart from other overdrive pedals?*



That's a tough one... I could go on and on about the types of components I use, the simplicity of the design, etc., but I

think the way the Dragon sounds is more a result of going into the project with my eyes and ears totally fresh. I play for personal enjoyment at home and as such, I have never owned or even heard how other boost pedals sound – I had no pre-conceived notions of what it "should" sound like. In essence, what I tried to accomplish was boosting all frequencies equally, while keeping the circuit as simple as possible. Why pick one frequency range to boost when, at least to my mind, to do so is contrary to what we all are trying to achieve? Boosting a particular frequency range while leaving the harmonics associated with those notes unchanged didn't make sense to me. The other half of the design was simplicity itself. Why spend thousands of dollars on your ultimate guitar, with the ultimate pickups, running into that mint vintage amp – only to have the raw essence of your tone (the signal from your pickups) being sucked out by one more set of tone controls and dozens of additional electrical



components? I felt that the fewer components I used that affected the raw signal, the better. In other words, *your* sound – just more of it. We just tried the Dragon with an electric cello as well as a Roland RD-600 electric piano the other night, and it worked flawlessly on both. I also found out from one of my customers that he uses it on his mandolin, and some time in the next week or so we are going to hook one up to a clavinet.

And finally, there is no way I could have ever done this without the support and help of my wife, Brandi. She has stood beside me every step of the way and is now doing all of the graphics for the pedals. None of this would be possible without her help.

www.lizardlegeffects.com 225-938-2521

Review

Well, gang, we're not sure how much of a flowery, adjective-laden description the Flying Dragon requires... Just fire up any of your favorite guitar and amp rigs, step on the Dragon, and true to Dave Malone's words, you get more of the same unaffected signal boosted across the entire frequency range with no faux distortion, low end loss, treble roll-off or mid boost. As Steve Miller claims (and it's true), "*Your sound... just more.*" How much more depends on how far you twist the single volume knob.



Many boost and overdrive pedals can do a lot more than merely "boosting" your signal... The vintage B.K. Butler Real Tube Overdrive (TubeWorks) is more of a turbo-charged afterburner device, while various renditions of the Ibanez TubeScreamer reveal a pronounced midrange bump in its trademark "scream." Another favorite of ours is the Landgraaf Dynamic Overdrive – a not-so-subtle

tool that can deliver Hendrix tones at your feet from much

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less than a Marshall stack. You already know about our admiration for the Klon, and the Hoochie Mama, too. The Flying Dragon simply pumps up your natural tone from subtle to intense levels while remaining clean, tonally accurate and completely void of noise, dissonant artifacts, or any tendency to create havoc with other pedals. The Dragon operates on a 9V power supply with reverse polarity protection and true bypass, hand built and wired using Vishay/Sprague Orange Drop filtering caps, Vishay/Dale metal film resistors and Switchcraft jacks. In addition to the Flying Dragon, Steve Miller also builds the Whiptail overdrive for acoustic/electric guitar, and the Blue Tail overdrive for bass. We love the Dragon for its luscious, true sound, compact size and hand-crafted assembly with a very personal touch from the great state of Louisiana. *Laissez les bons temps rouler... To*

review...

POWER TOOLS



If you use a pedal board, you need pedal power. We've been using the Visual Sound 1 SPOT for years, and as much as we still see

“brick” power supplies taking up valuable space on many pedal board rigs on stage, we have often wondered why anyone would choose to spend nearly five times the cost of a 1 SPOT Combo Pack (\$34.95 for a 1700 mA Power Adapter, eight Multi-Plug Cables, two Battery Clip Converters, two 3.5mm (1/8") converters and an L6 Converter for Line 6 modeling pedals) versus a bulky brick power supply. Our experience with the 1 Spot has been flawless, so we asked Visual Sound founder Bob Weil to explain how the 1 SPOT works while de-mystifying the voodoo of pedal power...

TQR: Your motivation for developing the 1 SPOT seems obvious, but describe the challenges you experienced with its development. The concept almost seems too simple...

Although the 1 SPOT looks like an ordinary cell phone charger on the outside, it's quite different on the inside. The biggest challenge in developing it was getting an inherently noisy switching power supply to work noiselessly with audio

equipment. I've spoken with executives at some of the large wireless microphone companies over the years and they actually thought it couldn't be done until they saw the 1 SPOT. Getting the output noise and ripple to an absolute minimum requires a lot of tweaking to the power supply circuit. It involves utilizing the right switching frequency, doing the board layout just right, and specifying the right components. I can't get into more detail than that, but it took a lot of time working alongside some very talented switching power supply engineers to get it right.

TQR: As a point of clarification, can you describe how the 1 SPOT works in terms that guitarists can appreciate? You might also take this opportunity to educate any skeptics on how the 1 SPOT delivers power just as efficiently and dependably as a more expensive power supply.

There is a lot of confusion about power supplies among musicians. Much of this comes from manufacturers writing in their instruction manuals, “Do not use any other power supply other than the one we make, or your gear may blow up and we won't cover it under warranty...” They also often write specifications that show the current draw of the device as what is shown on the rating label of their adapter. For example, an adapter might have a maximum current rating of 200mA. That means the adapter can only handle up to 200mA of electric current being pulled out of it by a device like an effects pedal. So manufacturer X (who makes an adapter rated at 200mA), puts on their effects pedal “Use only 9VDC 200mA adapter or 9V battery.” The effects pedal might only use 10mA, but by putting the 200mA thing on the pedal and by using the warning in the manual, the musician thinks they can only use the adapter made by manufacturer X, even though that's really not true.



One specific example of this that we get questions about all the time is regarding the Line 6 DL4 and their other large modeling pedals. Next to the power jack on the back of those pedals, it shows “9VAC 1200mA” which is, coincidentally, the rating of the adapter they make for those pedals; the one originally made for the POD. Oddly enough, the DL4 (and others in that series), also run off batteries. For those who know that batteries only put out DC voltage, it raises the question, “Why do I need an adapter that puts out 9V AC when the pedal obvious-

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