

Gore

GUITAR PEDALS

About [Joe Gore](#):

I'm all over the frickin' map.

I'm San Francisco-based guitarist, music journalist, composer, and audio tech guy. I've recored with Tom Waits, PJ Harvey, Tracy Chapman, the Eels, Courtney Love, DJ Shadow, Flea, Les Claypool, John Cale, and many other artists. I've written several thousand published articles about music and musicians and am the former Senior Editor of *Guitar Player* magazine. I've also worked as a consultant for numerous audio companies, including Avid, Yamaha, Native Instruments, FXpansion, and most recently, Apple, where I am a major independent developer for the Logic and GarageBand platforms.

About my pedals:

- 100% designed, assembled, tuned, and decorated by me at my filthy workbench. (Expect “cosmetic variation” and greasy fingerprints.)
- Strictly point-to-point wiring.
- True-bypass switching
- 9-volt operation via battery or standard adapter.
- Top-shelf parts, unless the low-shelf parts sound cooler.
- They are not clones of old pedals. I only sell designs that have evolved far enough from their ancestors to offer unique tones and features. Love 'em or hate 'em, my stompboxes don't sound quite like anything else out there.
- I have some ~~erackpot~~ unorthodox ideas about stompbox design. You may want to [read about 'em](#) before forking over your hard-earned cabbage.

Availability:

- I build to order. Right now the wait time is days, not weeks, though that may change depending on demand and my other commitments. I fill orders first come, first served, and don't require a deposit. When your pedal's ready, I'll email you and request payment via PayPal. To place an order, just [email me](#)!



Cult

GERMANIUM DRIVE

Overview: My take on 1960s treble boosters—criminally underused effects despite their crucial role in British rock. (If you're not familiar with the wickedest overdrive ever, read [this tribute](#).)

What's unique: The voicing. It's a nifty balance between smooth, harmonically rich germanium drive and snotty, resonant mids. Compared to an original or a clone, the Cult just seems to "gush" a bit more. Yet it's not over-compressed—

your notes crack like knuckles. You know those overdrives that sound pleasant when you playing solo, but vanish when in a band? The Cult isn't one of them. The dynamic response is amazing—you won't believe the way it cleans up when you back off your guitar's volume.

Also worth noting: The big-knob is a filter/tone control. At one extreme, you get a bright, stabbing British blues. At the other, the corpulent crunch that defined early metal. Everything in between sounds great too.

General ass-covering: Germanium is noisy—you may hear slight hiss when you're not playing. Unlike "Screamer"-type overdrives, which deliver their signature sounds even at low volume. here you have to whack your amp hard for the best effect. Most treble boosters include volume and/or gain controls, but I just left that crap off. You really have to play this thing wide-open to get the most out of it.

Price: \$250 (plus shipping)

Cult Commentary:

“I don’t think I could describe the Cult pedal in one word (other than, you know, *bitchin*), but if I had two words, I’d pick ‘huge’ and ‘musical.’ Supposedly, it’s a treble booster. Okay, if you say so. To my ear, it’s much more interesting. To borrow a word from *The Simpsons*, the Cult embiggens my guitar’s sound. Plugged into a great amp (in my case a first-edition ElectroPlex Rocket 35 modified to run at 22W), it gives me what I want in a so-called distortion device, without the drawbacks. It doesn’t alter the sonic personalities of my guitars. My Strat still sounds like a Strat. My PRS still sounds like God. With the right pot for your guitar’s volume control, the Cult provides what so many of us are looking for—the ability to go from full-toned clean sounds to harmonically rich distortion with a simple nudge of the guitar’s volume knob. My first reaction—why would you turn it off?”

—Tom Wheeler, former Editor-In-Chief of [Guitar Player](#) magazine and author of [The Soul of Tone: Celebrating 60 Years of Fender Amps](#) and [American Guitars: An Illustrated History](#)

“The Cult pedal is an incredible addition to my tonal arsenal. I have a vintage Ampeg Jet... this pedal turned my rig into a screamer... and allowed everything in between. It also has a great tonal roll-off that changes character in a very musical way. Level boost and tone madness. Love it!”

—[Dave LeBolt](#), composer, session musician (David Bowie, Billy Joel, Foreigner, Julian Lennon), and former general manager of Avid/Digidesign

“This pedal has changed my life and given me a whole new tone that I have been looking for. I can get a nice fat tone with plenty of bite and no mud. I can’t even think of plugging in my guitar without the Cult pedal.”

— Greg Ingraham, once and future [Avengers](#) guitars and punk-rock god (Joe’s description, not Greg’s. He’s way too modest to talk like that.)

“Joe Gore has made a pedal that is exactly like he is; unassuming, self-effacing, and quietly virtuosic. You plug this thing in and the qualities you look for in a stomp box—quality and uniqueness of tone, responsiveness to your own playing, robustness of build—are immediately felt. There is nuance to its breadth of tone, and you will be seduced. Now when is he making more?”

— [Tony Berg](#), producer and session guitarist (Peter Gabriel, Aimee Mann, Michael Penn, X, Squeeze, P.I.L., Wendy & Lisa, Lisa Loeb, Cracker, Weezer)

Trilobite

FOSSIL FUZZ

“Delivers a wider range of tones than its two knobs would suggest. Tonally balanced and touch-sensitive, it tracks guitar volume changes well, yielding everything from corpulent, sustaining leads to gritty clean rhythm textures and alluring ring modulation tonalities. Whether you’re an old-school rocker or fuzz frontiersman, you’ll appreciate what this pedal can do.



—Art Thompson, [Guitar Player](#) magazine editor and author of [Stompbox!](#)

Overview: A tribute to the “Brand X” fuzz pedals of the late ’60s—Fuzzrites, Orpheums, Companions, Bosstones, and their ilk. The Trilobite oozes the same snotty, garage-punk attitude, minus the low-end loss and pesky, bee-in-a-bottle highs.

What’s unique: Unlike most ancient fuzz pedals, the Trilobite is extremely sensitive to playing dynamics, and you can get many tonal shadings by adjusting your guitar’s volume control. It also has a great-sounding tone control, with usable colors throughout its range.

Worth noting: While the Trilobite excels at hard, edgy fuzz, it can also deliver warm, fat legato tones, especially when you dial back the highs. But even at modest settings, you wouldn’t call the Trilobite “smooth-sounding.” If you crave compressed, “Screamer”-style distortion, you’ll *hate* this damn thing.

Price: \$225 (plus shipping) **COMING SOON!**



Duh

REMEDIAL FUZZ

“Amazing sustain and sweetly aggro tones.”

—Mike Molenda,
[Guitar Player](#) magazine

Overview: An aggressive one-knob fuzz. It doesn't merely bludgeon your amp with gain, but adds a distinctive, harmonically rich character. There's high-end sizzle and low-end mass, but both are carefully sculpted—think “fat but fit.” Unlike most ultra-high-gain fuzzes, it boasts great dynamic sensitivity, cleaning up nicely as you back off your guitar's volume knob. Result: far more colors than you'd expect from a one-knob box.

What's unique: Exceptional dynamic sensitivity for a full-bore fuzz. Beautifully balanced tone with a unique harmonic signature. Won't disappear in a mix or live band setting like many fuzzes.

What it's good for: Sustain-rich single-note lines and solos. Chunky chords, including relatively complex voicings that would dissolve into mush with most fuzz pedals.

What it's not so good for: While the Duh is more dynamically sensitive than most aggressive fuzzes, it's never completely clean. It doesn't sound particularly “vintage” (like the [Trilobite](#) does), nor is it a modern-metal “stack in a box” pedal.



COMING SOON!

Filth

**PSYCHO-FUZZ
MADE EASY**

“Just enough sonic weirdness to turn people’s heads. Bravo!”

—Mike Molenda,
[Guitar Player](#) magazine

Overview: An absurdly versatile fuzz pedal despite its simple layout. Adept at both classic tones and tweaky-freaky new sounds. The “X” and “Y” knobs are highly interactive, revealing endless facets of filth. Tight or loose, stable or sputtering, whippet-thin or morbidly obese—it’s in there.

What’s unique: With most “freak fuzzes,” you have to spend time fishing for usable sounds. But the Filth’s precise tuning and minimal controls make it easy to get to the good stuff.

What it’s good for: Crafting unconventional fuzz colors. It excels as a studio pedal, especially for overdubs—it’s easy to dial in just the right character to suit the track. It’s also great for differentiating guitar tones in a multi-guitar band.

What it’s not so good for: Luaus, hotel lounge gigs, open-mic blues jams.

COMING SOON!



Ocho

OCTA-FUZZ

Overview: A ferocious octave-up fuzz.

What's unique: Most octave fuzzes restrict you to using the neck pickup and the middle range of the guitar, but the Ocho provides strong, consistent octaves throughout the guitar's range using any pickup combination. And while most octave fuzzes have either no octave-off option, or a loose, messy-sounding one, the Ocho does great conventional fuzz.

What it's good for: Bold, blazing octave solos that will cut through a band, a mix, or reinforced concrete.

What it's not so good for: Unlike most of my pedals, the Ocho doesn't clean up much when you play quieter—it's always going full-bore because anything less yields weak octave sounds. There's no gain control because, like Sea Monkeys, "clean" octave effects are inevitably a traumatic disappointment.

BTW: Just to be clear, this is not a digitally-generated octave effect like, say, a DigiTech Whammy Pedal, but a high-gain fuzz with a prominent octave overtone. While it's easier to generate a consistent octave sound with the Ocho than with other octave fuzzes, you'll probably need to monitor your playing technique for best results, and anything more than single notes quickly devolves into toxic ring-modulated sludge. Not that there's anything wrong with a liberal application of toxic ring-modulated sludge now and then . . .

COMING SOON!

Boring

BOOST & BUFF

Overview: Just as a boring person can make everyone else in the room seem more interesting, the Boring pedal makes everything else in your signal chain a little more exciting. The boost adds a touch of treble sheen and a bit of low-mid cut—precisely the adjustments sound engineers typically make when mixing electric guitars. There’s enough clean gain to clobber your amp into distortion, or you can just leave the boost set low and savor improved presence and frequency response.



The benefits of buffering have been the subject of mind-numbing debate since the Pleistocene—just Google [“buffer vs. true bypass”](#)—but in most cases, a buffer adds clarity and impact, especially with multiple pedals and/or vintage-style pickups.

What’s unique: There are few commercially available buffer pedals, and none with an integrated booster.

What it’s good for: Place at the beginning of your signal chain to optimize your signal and overdrive downstream pedals. Or put at the end to nix pedalboard signal loss and to provide the option of a “turn it up to eleven” boost. Or both.

What it’s not so good for: Buffers can add unwanted highs to some fuzz pedals.

“I JUST LEAVE OFF ALL THE CRAP” JOE GORE ON STOMPBOX DESIGN

I've conducted literally thousands of musician interviews. Time to suck it up and suffer through one of those pretentious Joe Gore interview myself.

Joe: *Why, why, why would you want to sell stompboxes? Aren't there already enough clowns in the circus?*

Joe: Tell me about it! And believe me, I'm *far* from the most talented clown. I have no engineering background whatsoever, and my craft skills haven't evolved much since I got a C- in middle school wood shop. I started building pedals while doing digital modeling work for Apple and other companies, figuring that a few builds would help me better understand how they worked. But I got hooked and spent countless hours toiling at my workbench, usually while listening to audiobooks of long 19th-century novels. (If it weren't for pedal building, I'd never have “read” *Anna Karenina* or *Vanity Fair*.) I started with kits, then clones, and then began dicking around with the circuits. When the smoke had cleared and the smoke alarm had been reset, I had a few designs that I considered unique and cool enough to sell.

Joe: *Hey, you're not talking to some chump from [The Gear Page](#)! I know perfectly well that 95% percent of boutique pedals are clones. Fess up!*

Joe: You're right. I haven't invented any new ways of generating distortion. Any overdrive pedal with a single transistor will probably echo the Rangemaster, LPB-1, or Electra Distortion. A pedal with two transistors will owe a debt to a Fuzz Face, and so on. So yeah, by that reckoning, my pedals aren't terribly original.

Joe: *So answer my first question already!*

Joe: Jeez! I don't remember you being such a dick when you interviewed Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Joe: *He wasn't trying to sell me anything.*

Joe: [*Sighs.*] Okay, it's like this: Because I have a lot of experience designing and fine-tuning guitar sounds, and no electrical engineering chops whatsoever, there's only one way I *can* create circuits: I start with an extant circuit, and then I fuck with it.

Joe: *Can you dial down the language a bit?*

Joe: [*Rolls eyes.*] And then I *mess* with it. I swap out components, nudge values up and down, pop in parts of other circuits, or just yank stuff out. So yes, my Cult pedal is a Rangemaster variant. The Trilobite wouldn't exist without the silicon-transistor fuzzes of the '60s, especially the Fuzzrite. The Duh and Filth pedals are also two-transistor fuzzes, so they owe something to the Fuzz Face, but they don't sound like it. The Ocho octave fuzz borrows tricks from the Ampeg Scrambler and Armstrong Green Ringer, but you'd have to be deaf to mistake it for either one. So yeah, my "engineering" isn't imaginative in the slightest. But for better or worse, my obsessive tweaking eventually generated unique-sounding pedals. [*Mops brow.*] Are we almost done?

Joe: *I'm surprised they have so few knobs.*

Joe: Me too! At first I'd assumed I'd make pedals with a zillion knobs. But I soon realized that sometimes adding knobs is the easy way out, especially if you just replace every resistor in a circuit with a pot. Meanwhile, the pedals that have lived on my pedalboard year after year tend to be really minimal, like the Klon Centaur and the Z. Vex Super Hard On. They commit to a particular point of view. Same with classic audio gear, like LA-2A compressors. Guitars, too—instruments with a strong point of view, like Telecasters and Les Pauls, always inspire me more than ones that try to be chameleons.

Also, minimal circuits just sound better. That sounds like a cliché, like "the best pleasures in life are simple." But I mean it quite literally. In most cases, the less crap you put between your guitar and your amp, the better your tone. So I just leave out all the crap.

Joe: *Like what?*

Joe: Conventional tone controls, for a start. A lot of fuzzes, for example, generate a cool distortion sound, decapitate it with a passive tone control, then boost it again to make up for the loss. That's why, to my ear, primitive distortion pedals without tone stacks, like Rangemasters, Fuzz Faces, and early Tone Benders, sound so much more bitchin' than later "refinements." Also, most conventional tone controls only sound cool through a fraction of their range. You'll almost always get better results if you ditch the tone stage and make adjustments at the amp, the guitar, or the fingers.

Joe: *So you basically make one-sound boxes?*

Joe: Nope. I *do* use tone controls of a sort, though they're usually input filters, or biasing tricks that make the distortion sound thicker or thinner. More important, I make everything as dynamically responsive as possible, even the high-gain fuzzes.

You can get an enormous range of tones by adjusting your volume controls or playing technique. To my ear, most distortion effects have way too much gain, resulting in over-compressed sounds. If you've ever played a pedal that sounded massive in your bedroom, but seemed to vanish onstage with bass and drums, you know what I'm talking about. My pedals maintain strong note definition and don't smooth over your dynamics.

Joe: *Some players like pedals that smooth out their dynamics.*

Joe: That's cool. But they probably won't like my pedals.

Joe: *How come you're only making distortion pedals?*

Joe: *[Laughs.]* You mean, aside from the fact that they're easier to build than choruses and delays? Because guitar distortion is the one of the few areas where digital still lags behind analog. The best digital delays and reverbs sound as good or better than anything analog, with less cost, more convenience, and greater customizability. I'm perfectly happy generating any ambient or modulation effect with digital tools. But great transistor fuzzes still move more me than their digital approximations.

Joe: *Is that a joke? Everyone knows analog is always better.*

Joe: It is not!

Joe. *It is so!*

Joe: Is not!

Joe: *Is so!*

Joe: Is not!

Joe: *Is so!*

Joe: Is not!

Joe: *Is so!*

Joe: Is not!

Joe: *Is so!*

Joe: Is not!

Joe: *Is so!*