



*By Ken Volpe - Guitar Jam Daily*

For nearly three decades the Ibanez Tube Screamer has been a staple for many player's guitar rigs. Famous users include Stevie Ray Vaughan, Trey Anastasio, and so on...

The Tube Screamer sound is a sustaining, smooth overdrive that is best suited for Blues and Blues-Rock. Certain amplifiers tend to like being interfaced with a Tube Screamer. The most notable Tube Screamer friendly amp is the black-faced era Fender. The original TS-808 pedal is very rare and highly sought after. Various replicas made by Ibanez and other companies have come out since then. Most players agree that they don't have the sound and the mojo of the original. That's where Mr. Keeley comes in.

Roughly ten years ago, Robert Keeley had the knowledge and the willingness to start designing and tweaking guitar pedals. Fast forward to 2008, the result is a well-respected and successful pedal company. Robert knows how to design and tweak a pedal to give it that extra ten percent of magic.

I personally have a lot of experience with Tube Screamers and I'd have to say that Mr. Keeley nailed it on this one. In side-by-side comparisons of an original TS808, I found nothing to complain about. I actually prefer the Keeley version. For starters, Keeley uses the highest quality components. There are metal film resistors in the circuit to improve the signal to noise ratio. Film capacitors are utilized to provide the ultimate frequency response in this pedal. The main foot switch is heavy duty, which was a complaint on the original. The controls are smoother and more gradual, making it easier to dial in your tone.

But as we all know, the thing that really matters is the sound. I was able to dial in the exact same silky, liquid lead tone as I was with the original. Many of the other replica versions seem to be lacking in the tone department. The highs were a little too "spikey" and the lows seemed a little unfocused. That is not the case with the Keeley. My test rig was a Baker Robben Ford model and a Tony Bruno CT35 1 x 12 combo. With this set-up and the pedal I was able to achieve a host of great sounds. With my neck pick-up split, SRV tones were a breeze. Setting the Keeley overdrive control to max in conjunction with my bridge pick-up yielded a searing yet refined lead sound. I also found by dialing back my guitar volume I was able to achieve a slew of medium crunch tones. I also utilized the Keeley 808 in line with one of my distortion pedals for some amazing results. An over-the-top high gain tone that would rival any cranked modded Plexi.

In conclusion, I would say that the Keeley Overdrive Pro is the answer to any gear freak that has searched for an original 808. As I alluded to earlier, the build quality makes this more reliable than the original. Unlike the original, the Overdrive Pro has true by-pass circuitry. In other words, when the pedal is not engaged it has zero effect on your sound; a must for modern pedal boards. It's noteworthy to add that the Overdrive Pro is also more versatile than the original. At a street price of roughly half of what the original costs, it's a no-brainer. Hats off to Mr. Keeley for another successful pedal in his growing line.