

dark, or the distortion too edgy, grainy and gritty. The way the controls are designed may not allow enough flexibility in managing volume, gain, or EQ. Some pedals are an all-or-nothing affair, while others are designed to ramp up slowly, with a wider yet more gradual range of distortion intensity. Most of us can't use a pedal that causes the volume of our rig to jump by 50% even when the volume setting is minimal, but some do. What good is that? A lengthy preamble to the main attraction, yes, but you aren't here for a vanilla gusher, and neither are we. We'd prefer you get what you want the first time, or pass altogether.



According to Mike Piera (Analogman), the Astro Tone Fuzz was inspired by the original of the same name built by Astro Amps in New York circa 1966, later built for Sam Ash and marketed as the Sam Ash Fuzz Boxx. Piera built a prototype that was in all respects a faithful recreation of an original he owned, but he didn't like the sound. Modifications to the circuit were made that produced fuller low end, and Piera found

several hundred original Astro Tone Fairchild transistors with 1966 date codes that he is using in the pedals built today. He added: *"Many people have problems using a Fuzz Face type pedal like our Sunface live with a band. I had the same problem, which is one reason we are making the Astro Tone; it's something I need to get the sounds I want. I play Fender amps with a Les Paul, which is not too favorable to fuzz face pedals, but this pedal works great with that setup. The sound is not as compressed as a fuzzface, not SUPER thick and saturated – something between a fuzz and distortion, but closer to a fuzz."*

Here's the deal... The Astro Tone does indeed bridge the intensity of a fuzz with the less compressed dynamic feel of a distortion effect, which is to say that the fidelity and dynamic feel of our '66 Deluxe were not overwhelmed or obscured by hard clipping. Nor does the Astro Tone wrench volume up to a point that when the pedal sounds good your amp is too loud for the mix. We achieved unity gain with the volume on the pedal set at roughly 11 o'clock, and it comes up very gradually as you continue to turn the knob. The tone is fatter with the volume set higher and the intensity set below 12 o'clock. Lower volume levels and higher intensity settings create more sustain with slightly less low end, but you can also manage EQ with the tone control. The Astro Tone produces smooth, musical, natural-sounding distortion, and the intensity of distortion and breakup can also be



managed by pick attack, or with the volume pot on your guitar. Imagine that. At moderate burn settings we found that a light pick attack produced a cleaner, jangly tone

with subtle breakup perfect for driving rhythms. Very cool. While the Astro Tone is more fuzz than boost, it is versatile enough to double as a not-too-gonzo boost device if you have the patience and the ear for thoughtful experimentation. The controls allow quite a lot of variation in the mix of volume and intensity, and depending on the output of the pickups in your guitar, you can mine varying levels of sustain through a 20 watt amp set clean on '4' like our Deluxe, and the affected sound remains lush, rich and penetrating. Plug into a bigger amp at higher volume levels like our Germino 55LV or '66 Pro Reverb and the hugeness of your tone may well raise Felix Papallardi from the dead, still shouting, "It's A, D, F#m, you fat fuck!" True bypass, super-low power consumption, negative ground to play well with others on yer pedalboard and ultra compact, we luv the Astro Tone. Highly recommended. When you hear one of these, it's easy to hear the difference. **TQ**

[www.analogman.com](http://www.analogman.com)

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