

Io Thick Air

The Thick Air pedal consists of two simple Jfet transistor pre-amplifiers using limited supply/NOS components, each with individual gain control and a foot-switch for each. Either pre-amp can be used individually, or in combination.

Stage One – on the left (designated by the ridiculously obscure 'o' above the left LED) straight forward single transistor preamp with gain control

Stage Two – on the right (also designated by an equally obscure 'oo' above the right LED ;o) same basic pre-amp as Stage One, but with additional filtering as the Gain is adjusted, and the Air switch which is essentially a subtle 'bright' switch.

When both Stages are on, Stage One is the initial stage, feeding into Stage Two. When both stages are engaged, the gain is substantially higher than either one individually.

Use:

It's best if you try to put all your preconceived/habitual guitar volume and tone settings aside and imagine this being the first time you tried it. Your guitar's volume and tone controls will behave differently using the Thick Air pedal.

Here is a simple template for initial introduction/experimentation: (I do this as a check on every pedal before it goes out the door) You should spend at least an hour or two with just your guitar, the pedal and your amp, to start to get familiar with how the TA interacts with your setup. Note: The numbers used to indicate settings on the dial, will change a bit depending on what gain levels are used in the specific pedal... experimentation is the key.

Using only your guitar, the Thick Air pedal, and your amp/reverb: Set your amp volume so that it's comfortable with the pedal off, and the guitar volume about 7. Set your guitar tone in the middle somewhere. Play a bit and adjust tone and what not so that it's sounding good with just the guitar. And now leave the tone controls completely alone for the rest of the this bit.

Have both stages of the pedal at 0, or 7:00, with the Air switch to the right, 'More' position (it only effects the signal from the second stage). Turn on the First Stage 'o' with the footswitch. It will probably only bump the volume a tiny bit, but you should hear a difference in the tone immediately. Start playing around different registers on the guitar, different pup settings etc, as you occasionally bump the gain on the first stage small amounts. The gain adjustments are a reverse log taper, so the first half of the dial doesn't add much gain, but this first half of the dial alters the feel and tone in many different ways (individually, but more so when both stages are engaged at the same time).

Now start changing the gain in 30 minute bits, ie 7:00 to 7:30; so turn it up to 7:30, you will notice that it doesn't get much louder, but it's making noticeable tonal/response

changes. Keep doing that, check out how different settings sound in different registers, different picking styles, etc...

When you get to 12:00 noon on the dial, it will start to be more gain responsive, and from about 1:00 or 2:00 depending on your touch, it starts to leave the Jerry zone, and enter the blues/rock zone. (Just a note: as you get into the higher settings, lighten your picking touch, and you will be in a place where picking/attack/style/intensity controls the amount of breakup you achieve, from clean to dirty) Anyway, go all the way up to 5:00, while steadily decreasing your guitar volume to compensate.

Turn that first stage off and repeat the same thing with the second stage. You'll notice that the tone/character of the second stage is different than the first.

After going all the way to 5:00, put both stages back to 8:00, and turn both on. Now just try going in approximately 1 hour changes. Stage 1 at 9:00, stage 2 at 8:00; switch to S1 @ 9:00, S2 @ 10:00, then S1 @ 10:00, S2 @ 9:00 and so on, back and forth in different ratios....To the end of both dials.

At this point you'll know there is a lot of new territory to explore tonally. Once you start altering your guitar's tone, you'll note that you've got a whole new area to check out. The Thick Air pedal is very interactive. It responds well to different pick attacks, fingering, and loves fretting hand/fingering that is active, using vibrato, bends, nudges... try setting both gains around noon, both on, hit a 12th fret g, holding it steady... it decays like a regular note... now hit the note, and bend it very slightly, you'll hear it start to grow, and as you mess with it, you can get the note to bloom, just by goosing it with your fretting finger.

It is necessary to use a high quality, switching type, 9 volt power supply with the Thick Air pedal (the type most quality suppliers currently use.)

Using sub-standard power supplies will result in a lot of noise, squealing, and the pedal may not work at all.

Care:

Light soap and water, no abrasives.

The Thick Air pedal is finished with Nitro-Cellulose lacquer, and comes a couple of coats of automotive quality Carnuba wax on it; and if you want to spruce it up, any good Carnuba wax will be great.

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