

## Electro-Harmonix East River Drive Review

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As any casual *Premier Guitar* reader could probably tell you, the Tube Screamer-style stompbox market is crowded and competitive. Within that heavily populated pedalsphere, there's no shortage of expensive "ultimate" and "super-refined" TS pedals. But it's been a while since we saw an affordable TS-style that surprised us like Electro-Harmonix's East River Drive.

Released as part of a recent EHX overdrive barrage that includes the Klon-inspired Soul Food and Brit-flavored Glove, the East River Drive is a TS-808-inspired OD with a 4558 chip at the heart of the circuit, just like the original 808 and most first-generation TS-9s. It delivers just about everything you want from a good, solid TS-style pedal with a very authentic voice. And it does so at a price that'll tempt you to leave the music store with a spare.

### Lean and Green

The East River Drive is built into EHX's compact Nano-sized enclosure, and like all its Nano-sized cousins, it's a canvas for Electro-Harmonix's arresting enclosure graphics and a study in design economy. A busy but tidy, integrated circuit sits snugly inside with the JRC4558 situated at the center, and the pedal has a sturdy, road-ready feel.

While I didn't have a vintage TS-808 for comparison, I did A/B the EHX against a very early TS-9 from the first year of manufacture, and the similarities are striking. In general, the vintage TS-9 has more

dimensionality and excites more of a given guitar's tone spectrum. But that only underscores that the East River Drive sounds more like a vintage TS-808 *should* sound—smoother in the low and low-mid spectrum and a little more organically integrated with the tone of your amp. There are a few gaps and thin areas in the East River Drive's tone range that make the pedal sound a bit boxy for ringing chords and arpeggios, a setting in which some other vintage TS pedals lend a cool, airy presence.

So many folks gripe about the midrange boost you get from a TS-style circuit. You can almost forget that midrange in an overdrive can be a *good* thing, depending on the song, band, and arrangement. The East River Drive, with its slightly mellower midrange, reminds you how useful a little midrange can be, especially with a neck pickup in the mix.

While the midrange bump from the East River Drive is mellower than what you'd hear from a TS-9 (and more authentically vintage 808-like), high-gain settings demand that you mind the tone control. High tone settings can excessively color chord harmonics in the upper mids (especially with single-coils), creating a dry, scratchy texture. Set the tone too low, and the chords get thin and muddy. But with the gain wide-open and the tone between noon and two, classic rock chords sound perfectly rowdy and full of harmonic juice. If you're using the East River Drive primarily for leads, you can add more highs to the mix. Even aggressive tone control settings give lead lines the cool blistering quality of a revved-up (if somewhat compressed) Marshall plexi, especially with humbuckers.

If you use the East River Drive primarily for biting lead tones, you can still generate smooth and crunchy chord sounds. The pedal is very responsive to your guitar's volume control, and you can contour the harsh edges of chords with a little real-time attenuation from your pinky and the volume knob. Using your guitar volume is also the key to getting the East River Drive to behave more like a clean boost. Even with the gain all the way off, there's discernable dirtiness, but a touch of attenuation scrubs the output clean without sacrificing too much body or presence.

### The Verdict

At the price of a really nice pizza date, the East River Drive is a steal. Depending on your tastes, the compressed and slightly-smoother-than-TS-9 midrange bump may be a virtue. But if you've even ever just *wondered* how a TS-style pedal might fit into your rig, this is a chance to get a pretty nice one for next to nothing.

## Ratings

### Pros:

Authentic TS-style tones. Responsive to guitar volume adjustments. Super cheap.

### Cons:

Some high-mid tones can sound scratchy in chord-heavy settings.

### Tones:



### Playability/Ease of Use:



### Build/Design:



### Value:

