



## **Crucible Fuzz Owner's Manual**

The idea of writing an owner's manual for such a simple pedal might seem kind of odd at first. Input, Output, Fuzz, Volume (which are clearly marked on the case), and a footswitch to take it in and out of the signal path.

This document is actually more of an application guide that I've come up with after many hours of using the Crucible Fuzz as well as observing other musicians using it, playing through a variety of tube and solid state amplifiers.

### **basic controls**

The Fuzz knob controls how distorted the signal is and the Volume knob controls how loud the signal is with the effect engaged. Not very complicated. There is a slight interaction between the controls, so experiment with both to get the sound you want. I usually start with them at maximum, then back off as necessary.

### **power**

As with most battery-powered stompbox-type effects, the Crucible Fuzz powers up when you insert a plug into the input jack. For this reason, when you're not using it, pull the plug out of the input jack to extend battery life.

The Crucible Fuzz is designed to sound at its best with a reasonably fresh 9V alkaline battery. Current draw is low enough that such batteries should last for months. If you notice your tone suffering, check the battery. As the Crucible Fuzz is a descendant of the Fuzz Face, it will sound different at lower voltages, and even, some say, with different types of batteries. If this sort of thing intrigues you, try carbon 9V's or half-dead batteries and see if you like the tone. Let me know what you come up with. Me, I like how it sounds at full throttle. But I am like that.

For a high-gain fuzz like this, I do not care for the power supplied by 9V wall warts. For this reason, the Crucible Fuzz does not come with an external power jack installed. If you are a pedalboard user who *must* power everything with a mains adapter, you may power it using a 9V battery clip from your 9V supply. A 9V jack may be special-ordered or retrofitted by request. If you use either of these options, be sure to supply it with well-filtered juice.

### **signal going in**

The Crucible Fuzz was designed using traditional passive pickups, both humbucking and single coil. It sounds good being slammed with a high output humbucker and it sounds good being tickled by a thin Tele bridge single coil.

It also sounds good with a solid state preamp in front of it, and has been tested with several types. As far as active pickups go, we do not specifically test it with them, but it should work fine. It doesn't depend on input impedance loading to even out the sound. So feel free to try sticking other effects in front of it. If the effects have built-in buffers, you may notice some brightening of the tone. This means you will be heard better over the cymbals.

It responds to the level of signal feeding it, so you may try rolling back your instrument's or preamp's volume knob to get different tones. If suddenly it sounds different with the same rig, check to make sure you haven't changed the levels of the signal feeding it.

## **signal going out**

The Crucible Fuzz has been tested driving both tube and solid state input configurations. It sounds great with both. However, it is sensitive (as are most electric instruments) to the type of input it sees and will sound different plugged into different types of inputs. With tube amps, the design of input stages has not varied much in 50 years. Therefore, if you are using different tube amps, there will be less need to make any adjustments between them when using the Crucible Fuzz. With solid state amps, as well as feeding most effects and mixing boards, there is a much wider variety of circuit designs.

So if you are used to playing through your own amp and you switch to a different amp, if both amps are tube, you'll see little variation. If either of the amps is solid state, you may need to spend some time making adjustments before you get your tone. I have found especially that solid state amps with separate preamp gain controls are trickier. If you're having problems with too much gain, feedback, whatever, see if the solid state amp has a lower-gain input (sometimes the lower of two input jacks on the front panel) and try that.

I mention this for the benefit of gigging musicians who may be using different amps at the gig or rehearsal hall. As an experienced musician myself, my advice is that if you're playing with a different amp, expect to have to adjust your signal processors. This goes for all signal processors, not just the Crucible Fuzz. I've learned through bitter experience that just because I sounded great in the rehearsal studio through my Champ doesn't mean that I'll sound the same through the JC-120 at the gig.

## **technique**

If you're an experienced fuzzster, go plug the thing in and wail. If you're new to the world of high-gain distortion, I have some words of advice.

If you have learned to play guitar with a cleaner sound, with an acoustic guitar or clean electric, you'll probably need to adjust your chording technique to sound good with a lot of distortion. With the knobs dimed, you may wish to avoid open chords (unless you try it and like it). With a fuzz, you get a very full sound with as few as 2 or 3 note chords. Try major barre shapes with only the lowest root, fifth, and octave. Be sure to mute unplayed strings. Playing choppy parts with palm muting sounds good. Clean guitars sound great with lots of notes ringing, but a fuzz generates so many overtones and harmonics by itself that extra notes are not necessary, and can even muddy things up. Of course, you may want to muddy things up. If so, do not let me inhibit you. And be sure to send an MP3.

As far as leads go, the Crucible Fuzz works wonders with pick harmonics, slide, and finger vibrato. One of the reasons I developed it was that I was tired of single notes fizzling out as they faded. The Crucible stays right with you until the note ends. Mmm-mm good.

When first using your Crucible Fuzz, you may tend to set the Volume control so that the unaffected and affected sounds are of the same volume. This sounds good at home when you are playing by yourself. However, when playing with a full band, it usually sounds best to make the fuzzed tone louder than the clean tone. If you have songs where you switch the effect in and out, a la Pixies, Nirvana, Weezer, Blur's "Song 2," you'll probably want to emphasize the fuzzed tone with a volume boost. If you only switch it on for solos, I *know* you'll want to make those louder!

## **conclusion**

Thanks for using the Crucible Fuzz. I hope you love it as much as I do. If you do like it, drop me a line. I'd especially like to know if you've used it on a recording. If you make MP3's, send me links to them.

Cheers,  
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