

**Detailed Review of the  
Celestial Effects  
Aquarius Fuzz Pedal**

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Fuzz pedals have been part of the vocabulary in the vernacular of guitar players for a few decades now. Several variations of the fuzz box, ranging from the classic sounds of Hendrix, to the tone shaping good rocking of Reverend Willy G, to the noise workouts of J. Mascis and Nels Cline, germanium and silicon transistors have tickled the creative fancies of guitar players across the globe. With the recent boom of boutique pedal builders, searching to recreate the classic and expand the vocabulary of tone, very few examples stand out from the vast amount of background noise (pun intended). The Aquarius Fuzz (AF) from Celestial Effects is such a standout box.

Let us begin with first impressions. The pedal comes neatly packed and with some “case candy”, which includes a couple of stickers for your guitar case decorating efforts, a guitar pick, and four rubber feet not attached to the pedal. Maybe this is nitpicking but I absolutely HATE having to remove rubber feet from pedals so that I can place them on my pedal board, so having those pesky rubber feet come separate already put me in good spirits. As much as we would like to deny, guitar players are into fashion and looks, and personally if a pedal looks like it was pieced together in a plain case and it does not excite my visual senses, well, I am likely not going to use it that much; fickle perhaps, but I am done lying to myself. The AF comes with cool, zodiac-inspired graphics, built like a tank (check out the parts used on [celestialeffects.com](http://celestialeffects.com)), it is true bypass, and a LED that is bright but not blinding, and taking a peak inside reveals some of the neatest soldering I have seen in ages.

For the sonic assessment of the pedal, I plugged a parts-caster Tele with DiMarzio Chopper T on the bridge and a vintage Seymour Duncan 59 on the neck, and a 1976 Gibson LP Custom, into a 1984 JCM800 2204 50 Watt, out to a 2x12 semi open back cab with Hellatone 60 speakers. I did click some delay and wah pedals just to see how they behaved with the AF, and all I have to say is that there are no worries as far as stacking the AF with other pedals. The AF sounded great no matter what was stacked with it. It is also VERY quiet for a fuzz pedal. Not sure how that was done, but I don't care either! Now, the AF has 4 knobs, namely VOLUME, FUZZ, FAT, and IMP. The knobs are 100% interactive and though if you just started with all knobs at noon, you already get useful sounds, the reward in tweaking each knob and learning how the interplay of each control affects the tone will reward the professional musician who needs a tone palette, or for the bedroom musician who just likes to tinker. The VOLUME and FUZZ controls are self-explanatory. One thing to note, is that although it is a fuzz pedal, it never gets super hairy and ultra compressed like fuzz faces can be, and it never gets shrill and piercing like tonebenders of the world can be. What the AF manages to do is to bring an excellent

element of the hair of fuzz pedals, with the note clarity and dynamic response of an excellent overdrive.

Complex chords? Not a problem, each note rings out beautifully with a certain bloom, characteristic of a tube rectified vintage amp. The touch sensitivity of the AF, and its response to the volume knob on the guitar is purely stunning. Even pricey overdrives out in the market don't come close to the AF. Lightly strum chords, or lightly pick single notes and the AF puts a nice boost into your base tone, dig into the guitar and the pedal responds. Actually to my ears, the AF sounds like a great design combination of an overdrive and fuzz, though I am not certain that was an original design concept. Whatever it is, it works for me! The same happens with the volume knob on the guitar, back off slightly for a cleaner sound with less fuzz, and bring it up to 10 to hear the full potential of the settings. The pedal has plenty of output and can be very loud especially with all knobs dimed. But I have a feeling most players will not set the AF in that manner, which brings me to the FAT and IMP knobs. The FAT knob controls some lower frequencies, and to my ears also low mids.

As I mentioned, tweaking this knob will affect not just the base sound, but adjustments may have to be made to the volume and fuzz knobs as well to find the correct balance of tones. This is just great because this is how tube amps work (or good ones should anyhow), and how great pedals should work. The IMP knob reveals something very interesting tone results. It is an adjustment to the input impedance of the pedal and it really plays nicely with the FUZZ knob. Fully dimed, the IMP knob adds all kinds of sweet fuzzy edge to the overall sound, without being harsh. In the fully off position, the tone becomes very smooth, and for lack of better adjective, "Gilmourish". I have a feeling that most players will adjust the IMP somewhere in between to find "sweet spots". I actually found this very useful when switching from single coil to humbuckers, favoring higher settings for LP type guitars and lower IMP settings on single coils. In that sense the FAT control is also part of the tone shaping and it allows players who come from the "Steve Morse School of Frantic Pickup Switching and Knob Doodling" to explore tones. I particularly enjoyed using the neck pick up, boosting the FAT knob for lead tones, then using the bridge pickup on the Tele, backing off the volume slightly and just not being able to stop smiling from the sheer dynamic control.

I have owned and played several fuzz pedals. Some were incredibly good, others total waste of money, but no matter what they were one tricky ponies, and if you just looked at them the wrong way, the tone would go into squealing-useless noise, or changing pickups or volume and tone settings on the guitar, rendered pure mud or ear piercing unpleasantness. Calling the AF a "fuzz" pedal is a bit of an understatement of its capabilities. Sure you can get into some psychedelic electric church music, or Texas-approved dirty boogie, but the AF is more like a great pre-amp reminiscent of the tube-driven control boards of days gone by, being able to coax all kinds of sonic goodness, from lean to mean. It is playful, full of tones, full of rewards for the discerning ear, and for the starving musician, also priced very nicely for such a gorgeous masterpiece of sound and stunning looks. The AF is the first fuzz pedal that has earned its spot on my pedal board and it will not leave.