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Ernie Ball Wah Wah review

Based in San Luis Obispo in central California, the Ernie Ball company (now run by Ernie's son Sterling) has long been synonymous with great guitar strings, having been the first company to offer custom gauged strings for electric guitar players back 'in the day'. They have long had a full catalogue of products besides the neon packaged Slinkys though. Their Musicman brand guitars and basses have always been fantastic, and in addition to assorted bits and bobs, their volume pedals have always a popular choice of the professional musician.

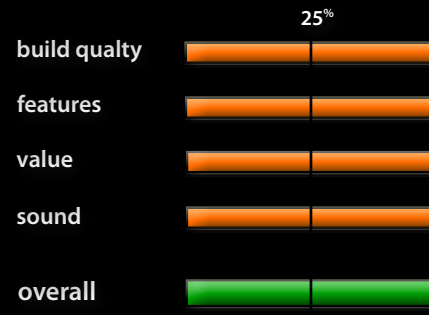
Using much the same design, Ernie Ball have recently launched a wah pedal. Almost identical to its chrome coloured volume swelling brother, the Ernie Ball Wah is manufactured from an aluminium alloy casting which they claim is "indestructible" and I have to say that it's easy to believe them. It has almost exactly the same footprint and weight as the ubiquitous Jim Dunlop Crybaby Wah, but seems sturdier somehow; probably due to the larger footplate

coated in a grippy (technical term..) material that feels somewhere between sandpaper and felt roofing.

It sports all of the features that you'd expect to find on a wah; input, output, true bypass, recessed 9V battery compartment (thankfully no going back to the days of having to unscrew the feet on your wah to change your battery) and a connection for a 9V DC supply (as traditional, not included). One handy addition to the norm is a bright green LED on either side of the chassis to let you know when it's on. Simple but clever and effective.

Obviously the unit is activated by pushing the footplate all the way forward until the switch clicks (unlike the Morley Bad Horsie and Power Wahs which engage as soon as you move the pedal - this seems like a good idea until you realise that you can't use the wah as a filter by leaving it in one position a la Satriani). Although the Ernie Ball has the same kind of switch as the

Jim Dunlop it feels much more responsive, largely due to the fact that the footplate on the Ernie Ball Wah is only 5mm thick so you can really feel it when it engages. Also the Ernie Ball Wah moves the potentiometer



by attaching a length of very strong cable, wound several times around the potentiometer shaft to a spring, whereas the Jim Dunlop uses a plastic connection which can break.... I remember visiting the Ernie Ball factory a few years ago and seeing rows of little old ladies carefully winding this

twine onto the volume pedals, although judging by the "Made in Malaysia" sticker on the bottom of this unit they must out-sourced their little old ladies over there.....

My only complaint about the construction is that there is a large open cavity inside the pedal underneath the footplate which means that quite a lot of lager would go in there if someone spilt a pint on it.... not that musicians spill drinks on their equipment.

First thing you realise upon plugging the unit in is that the jack and power connections are on the far edge of the unit, maximising available space on your pedalboard. Again, simple but effective...

The pedal sounds fantastic on both clean and dirty settings, the Ernie Ball seems to have more mid range to it than it's competitors and the action of the footplate is much smoother and more comfortable; sounds good on everything from clean

wakka-wakka to full metal lead mayhem. And because it seems to have a wider midrange band and responsive action you can use it as a filter for lots of different frequencies easily.

VERDICT

In conclusion, the Ernie Ball Wah is a great pedal which offers a few intelligent improvements over the stalwarts of the genre; it is sturdily constructed, sounds and feels great and is certainly built to last, although it is a little pricier than its rivals..... but anyone want to buy a second hand Crybaby?

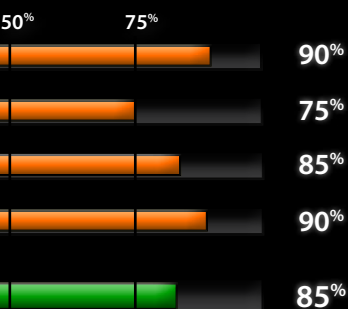
SIMON WESTAWAY
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FEATURES

Voltage:
9vDC - battery and mains

Manufactured:
Malaysia

Weight:
1400g





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FRANK RILEY  WAH

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