

Gear

STOMPBOX FEVER



McCon-O-Wah Wah

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDA

MICHAEL McCONACHIE—THE BRAINS

behind McCon-O-Wah pickups, pots, and, yes, wah pedals—built his own gear while in the Marines for ten years, and never stopped his quest for awesome, vintage-kissed tone. Which makes his company a bit unique, because, while he offers “off-the-rack” products for sale, he also likes involving the customer in the design process. That’s crazy! It’s also *brilliant* if you dig gear with some exclusivity, as well as a personal touch. Here’s how it worked for me with the McCon-O-Wah [\$389-\$489 direct] McConachie sent to *Guitar Player*...

When he called the *GP* offices, McConachie said something like, “Listen, I know from reading the magazine that you’re a Mick Ronson freak, so why don’t I craft a wah for you that offers that searing Ronson midrange, but that also has a wider frequency range in the lows and low mids so that you can really do some vocal-like stuff.” And that’s what I got. *Precisely*.

Although McConachie’s pedals are expensive, his design goal is to offer serious wah disciples a path to vintage tones without having to resort to multi-Franklin bidding for original ’60s and ’70s wahs on eBay. I’ve never spent more than \$120 for a wah to date, but I’d send off more than three times that for this one. What has happened to me?

**SO WHAT DO YOU GET?**

All McCon-O-Wahs are handwired point-to-point, true bypass, and assembled with hand-selected transistors (for “maximum chewiness”). McConachie uses wax-sealed, hand-stamped, and personally hand-wound 500mH Halo inductors—which are extremely close to what you find in original 1967 Clyde McCoy wahs, and he makes his own circuit boards to ensure they stand up to rough play. Each pedal also comes in a heavy-duty aluminum casing and has an adjustable-tension foot treadle. The innards are neatly wired, signed by McConachie—who also bakes each wah for four hours after assembly—and definitely give you that, “Oh, this was hand-made for me” feeling of glee.

HOW TOUGH IS IT?

This pup is *heavy*. I’m thinking it could withstand a direct hit from a bazooka, but I didn’t have the weaponry to confirm this. I did toss it rudely into my car trunk, kick it off a four-foot-high stage onto a linoleum floor, and crash into it with a careening road case. While the McCon-O-Wah did get scuffed up a tad, the pedal’s tone and treadle operation never wavered from its “right out of the box” condition of newness. Maybe I *do* need to find a bazooka to wreak havoc on this thing.

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?

Tested with my favorite 1976 Les Paul Standard, a Collings 290, and a Fender Stratocaster—all plugged into a Marshall JCM900 and then a Vox AC30—the McCon-O-Wah always produced an edgy, soaring midrange that absolutely brought me into Ronson territory. I cocked the wah in various positions—as Ronno was known to do—and got very close to the sounds of David Bowie’s *The Man Who Sold the World*, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars*, and *Aladdin Sane*, as well as his own solo album, *Play Don’t Worry*. True to McConachie’s word, I could also deploy the wide frequency range to produce burps, bleeps, vocoder-esque gurgles, and old-fashioned disco-funk stutters. The McCon-O-Wah also tracks performance gestures and pick attack exquisitely—meaning I could produce many different wah tones by simply caressing or pummeling my strings.

I couldn’t find anything *not* to love about this pedal that seemed to be custom made just for me. Well, McConachie’s gold sticker did fall off the front panel. But I consider that a benefit, because it keeps other guitarists in the dark about how I get these epic wah sounds.

KUDOS Awesome sting. Expanded bandwidth. Feral.

CONCERNS Pricey.

CONTACT mcccon-o-wah.com