



## USER'S GUIDE

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Dirty Little Secret MkII! If you're reading this, you obviously wanna bring the rawk! We're here to help you on your quest!

The Dirty Little Secret MkII (DLS MkII) was designed to be the secret weapon in your tone arsenal. Want to get cranked amp tones at bedroom rocker levels? Playing gigs but have to use whatever amp is provided as the backline? Like your clean amp sound but don't care for its overdrive channel? Enter the Dirty Little Secret!

The DLS MkII is an overdrive pedal designed to bring you the sound and response of a '70s-era Marshall amplifier. It, like other pedals in our "amp drive" range of pedals, is designed to be a "foundation" overdrive pedal - it is your "always on" pedal that forms the core of your guitar sound which you can enhance and embellish by adding boosters, fuzzes, filters, and other overdrives in front of it - just like you would in front of a real amp.

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## QUICK START GUIDE

Plug it in, turn the knobs till it sounds killer, and rock out! That might be all you need to know, but let's go ahead and check it out a bit further....

First, set your amp to a clean setting that sounds good. If you're playing into a Fender style amp, try setting the Vol somewhere between 2-4, Treble - 6, Bass - 3, and Middle (if you have it) to 6.

Now plug your guitar straight into the DLS MkII and then into your amp. Start off by setting the Presence and Fullness knobs to their minimum setting (full CCW). Go ahead and crank the Pre-Amp control to full and the Master control around noon or so. Play some licks and riffs and you'll hear a great full-bodied midrange sound. Now add a bit of Presence as needed and use the Fullness control to bring up the "cab thump" frequencies. Now try turning the volume knob on your guitar down - with medium to low output pickups, you'll be able to get perfectly clean sparkly tones even with the DLS MkII's Pre-Amp control cranked! You can leave it on all night and get cleans by turning your guitar down, and get really sustainy, overdriven sounds by hitting the DLS MkII with your favorite fuzz, booster, or overdrive (such as a tube screamer type pedal).

## CONTROLS

**MASTER** This controls the output volume level. Normally you would set this to just above unity volume for best results (unity volume is when the pedal is about the same volume on as it is off). With the pedal running at 9 volts, unity is usually around 1-2 o'clock. At 18 volts, around 11-12 o'clock.

**PRE-AMP** This is your gain control. Turn it up for more overdrive, down for less. It incorporates a brightness preserving circuit that retains clarity as you turn the gain down. You'll find that you'll need less on the Presence control when the Pre-Amp control is set lower.

**PRESENCE** This controls the high treble frequencies. It has been carefully voiced to give you useful tones from minimum all the way to maximum, unlike some other pedals where the tone controls only have a narrow sweet spot. The best way to utilize this control is to start at minimum and then turn it up until you get the amount of presence you need to cut through the band.

**FULLNESS** This controls the low, "cab thump" frequencies. You can really hear it's effect when doing palm-muted chunky chords. Just like the Presence control, start with this control at minimum and then bring it up until you get the desired amount of thump or fullness for your rig and playing style.

The controls ARE interactive so definitely spend time getting to know them! For example, with the Pre-Amp set high, you'll find you need less Fullness and maybe more Presence. With a low setting on the Pre-Amp knob, you might want to turn the Presence down and the Fullness up (this holds true for real tube amps too!). Adjust the Master control for the desired output level after you've dialed in the other controls.



## STACKING WITH OTHER PEDALS

The Dirty Little Secret MkII was specifically designed to combine well with other pedals. This section gives you ideas on how to incorporate it into your rig.

Think of the DLS MkII as your virtual pre-amp. And let's think of your actual guitar amp as your "power amp". With that in mind, what types of pedals do most guitarists normally plug into the front of their amp? "All Pedals!" is the quick answer. But some types of pedals might work better in the effects loop of the amp or even fed from the amp mic. So, pedals that you would normally plug in front of an amp, you'd plug in front of the DLS MkII. Pedals that you might prefer to run in the "effects loop" would go between the DLS MkII and your amp. Confused? Let's try an example....

*Guitar -> wah -> treble booster -> fuzz -> phaser -> DLS MkII -> delay -> reverb -> amp.*

In this example, the treble booster and fuzz is overdriving the DLS MkII, just like you would use these pedals into an actual cranked Marshall. The delay and reverb is between the DLS MkII and the amp, which is our virtual "effects loop". The delay and reverb after the DLS MkII and into your amp (which is set clean), remain clear instead of being distorted and smeared.

## GETTING MORE GAIN:

The DLS MkII was designed to have a gain range of somewhere between plexi levels up to 800 levels. And just like the real amps and most of the classic recorded sounds, you'd boost it by plugging in some sort of dirt box in front of it. A Rangemaster "treble-booster" style pedal is great in front of the DLS MkII. It tightens up the sound and makes it explode with rich harmonics! (spam alert: Check out the Catalinbread Naga Viper booster which was made to go with all our amp drives!) Fuzzes and TS-style overdrives sound great in front of the DLS MkII too! Basically, most dirt pedals will be the best plugged in front of the DLS MkII. One exception to this is that you may want a clean boost pedal after the DLS MkII to bring up the volume level of your entire sound (provided that your guitar amp is still has clean headroom left!).

Having said all this, there are no absolute rules! Experiment to find your own sound!



## AMPLIFIERS

Generally speaking, the DLS MkII works best into a tube guitar amp set relatively clean and neutral. However, it can work great to further overdrive an amp that is already overdriven as well, although this was not its design intention.

## POWER SUPPLY

You can power your DLS MkII with any quality power supply designed for use with effects pedals. The output should be a negative tip DC from 9 to 18 volts.

If you want more volume, headroom, and percussive attack, try running an 18 volt power supply. A 9 volt power supply will have a slightly softer sound that saturates more easily - it's sort of like the difference between a 50 watt and 100 watt amp!

You can also try a battery that is slightly drained to 8 volts or so to get an even softer sound that is great for late night jam sessions when you don't want to wake anyone up!

18 volts is great for playing with the band. You'll get great attack and clarity with power to cut through the mix.

We encourage to try these different powering options to see what you like the best!

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to drain your toner cartridge.



## DESIGNER'S NOTES

Why a MkII? Well, we've learned a lot since we introduced the original Dirty Little Secret in early 2009! Through our other development efforts we've picked up a bunch of new ideas and maybe, just maybe, our ears have gotten even sharper. (Although I'm not sure how that could be given all the pummeling the old ears have been subjected to in the past few years of pedal designing!)

So I volunteered to try to make a better wheel.

I started from a completely blank slate while still utilizing the same all-discrete jFET building blocks.

My design goals were:

- Get even better harmonic overdrive tones, sounding and responding even more like a real cranked amp
- Better control over the EQ, especially the low "cab thump" frequencies
- Better range of gain with a higher maximum gain setting while still getting great medium gain sounds
- Better clean-up from the guitar's volume knob
- Better response when boosted by another pedal
- Better playing feel or "touch responsiveness"

I'm a big Marshall fan. I own several old Marshalls and have played, listened to, and thought about this sound for a while now. But old Marshalls are glorious and LOUD... and we can't always be loud even though we want that sound. In a lot of playing situations, I've had to use a Fender combo amp in order to keep the decibel levels down. So the idea of a pedal that can give me a similar response at a lower volume level was very compelling to me. I've worked on my Marshalls and know the schematic like the back of my hand (probably better, I never stare at the back of my hand).

The resulting circuit is a combination of key circuit elements from the actual Marshall pre-amp, tuned for a jFET pedal format in conjunction with very careful parts selection. Every capacitor and resistor in the circuit was carefully scrutinized not only by value but by type to get the desired end result. A lot of time was spent tuning the circuit to stack well with other pedals, especially other gain pedals pushing the DLS MkII.

I hope your Dirty Little Secret MkII brings you many years of rock and roll glory!

- Howard Gee, Catalinbread



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# DIETARY INTAKE SECRET MKII

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