

FIRST PLAY



**ACLAM THE WOMAN TONE**  
£299

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**WHAT IS IT?** A tribute in a pedal to one aspect of Eric Clapton's sound during the Cream days



# Cream To A T

Eric Clapton adjusted his guitar's knobs to get *that* signature sound, and now it can be yours by stomping on a footswitch

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Olly Curtis



## ACLAM THE WOMAN TONE

**PRICE:** £299  
**ORIGIN:** Spain  
**TYPE:** Tone and drive pedal  
**FEATURES:** Relay true bypass, Smart Track pedalboard mounting  
**CONTROLS:** Gain, Woman Tone, Volume, internal DIP switch (darker tone), Woman Mode footswitch, Bypass footswitch  
**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard output  
**POWER:** 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 40mA  
**DIMENSIONS:** 137 (w) x 88 (d) x 55mm (h)

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1. The pedal's artwork is by Marijke Koger, former member of The Fool, the Dutch art collective that originally painted Clapton's Gibson SG
2. The Woman Tone knob effectively offers the same behaviour as the tone control on a guitar. Roll it back from 10 to take the treble off. If you want a still darker tone, there's an internal DIP switch that changes the tone capacitor value to facilitate that
3. This Woman Mode footswitch activates the Woman Tone knob and slightly increases the gain and low-end at the same time

**W**e've all heard it, haven't we? Eric Clapton's 'woman' tone on Cream songs such as *I Feel Free* and *Sunshine Of Your Love* is legendary. Showcased by the man himself in the documentary of Cream's 1968 farewell concert, it's a fulsome rounded tone that sings with midrange while still being a touch edgy, and is achieved in part by rolling back the tone pots on the guitar. In the documentary Eric demonstrates it using his psychedelically painted 1964 SG Standard through his Marshall stack, but Acclam has rightly concluded that we haven't all got this vintage gear and designed a pedal to get close to the tone – whatever your guitar and amp combination. What's more, the company considered that manipulating tone knobs on stage is a bit of a faff, so by including a footswitch that offered a similar effect they'd be creating a pedal that even the '68 Clapton might have appreciated for freeing up his hands.

The pedal's sound is the sum of two elements: an all-analogue pickup simulation circuit designed to reproduce the tone of a vintage Gibson PAF humbucker, combined with a Plexi-style overdrive governed by gain and volume knobs that can take it from gritty break-up to a stack at full throttle, with plenty in the tank for extra boost.

The knob that fine-tunes the 'woman' tone only comes into play when activated by a dedicated footswitch, which also increases the gain to mitigate any decrease in saturation brought about by the tonal shift, and brings in a little extra low-end. Working much like a guitar tone knob, fully clockwise the knob offers full top-end so you can use the pedal as a two-stage overdrive, kicked in purely for extra gain and girth. Rolling it back from 10 towards 0 takes the top-end down until you reach your own sweet spot for the 'woman' tone (if you want darker, there's an internal DIP switch for that).

Does it work? Absolutely. Your guitar and amp obviously make their own contribution, but we tried it with several different combinations and got pretty consistent results – that instantly familiar, smoothly sustaining distortion sound was always there in full voice.

### Verdict

In basic terms, this is a quality M-flavoured overdrive pedal with the added practicality of a switchable tone preset. But, more specifically, if you want to recreate that Clapton flavour, this will give you instant access. **G**

### THE RIVALS

There are no other pedals designed to specifically give you this sound as far as we know, but there are plenty of Marshall Plexi-style overdrives that you might want to pair with an EQ pedal to simulate the effect of a guitar tone knob. Look to something like the Source Audio EQ2 Programmable Equalizer (£299), a combination graphic and parametric equalizer with presets, or the Wampler EQuator (£185), a simpler parametric EQ. For that Marshall sound, try the Carl Martin Plexitone (£188), Wampler's Plexi Drive Mini (£139) or Plexi Drive Deluxe V2 (£249), or the recently reviewed (in *Guitarist* 485) Gurus Double-Decker MkII (£319).



Combine this straightforward EQ from Wampler with a Plexi-style drive for ballpark 'woman' tone

8/10

**PROS** Classy artwork; solid build quality; Marshall-style drive sound; footswitchable tone alteration for authentic 'woman' tone

**CONS** No complaints about the pedal, but adjusting your guitar's knobs costs a lot less!