



GUITAR TECH HENRY TREJO TALKS NUTS AND VOLTS

I'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF WORKING WITH

Omar for 13 years, during which time I've watched him grow as a musician and as a player. I used to have to piece his guitars together every day before a show—and quite often during—and I've seen his backup guitar fly over my head while I was gluing together his main instrument. I've also spent countless hours in studios with him while disregarding holidays, days off, and any sort of social life. I know what Omar likes, what he hates, and what he expects.

Omar's live rig has become simpler over the years. We used to run two Orange AD140TC heads with two Orange 4x12 cabs equalized differently for a fuller sound onstage, along with a third Orange head powering two floor moni-

tors equipped with Celestion Vintage 30s—completely engulfing him in his guitar sound. Before shows I would pass out earplugs to the kids in the front row and explain to them that they may want to back up a bit. Omar uses effects on certain songs that could make ears bleed and he's of the mindset that the more horrible and uncomfortable the sound the better. If people are shielding their ears and making expressions like they are about to be beheaded then he's happy. He'll loop that sound and keep it going while he sips water and wipes his face. In fact, Omar's approach to certain effects, particularly distortion, is to turn all of the knobs all the way up.

Recently we've scaled down to a single Orange half-stack, which is all Omar really needs.



Trejo (left) adjusting Rodríguez Lopez's Ibanez before the Mars Volta's August 30 performance at the 2009 Outside Lands Festival in San Francisco. The guitarist's touring pedalboard (above) after the show.

I try to keep his stage level bearable by using a Shure ULXP4 wireless system, which is cool because the body pack has a gain control. Of course we do the opposite of what is recommended and turn this all the way up, which allows me to bring his stage level down a bit while overdriving the crap out of his amp with virtually no hiss. We have so many pedals in line that his signal is nothing like what it would be if he were plugged straight in, but that's what makes his sound. Orange amps suit his sound better than other amps we've tried, and we couldn't imagine doing a show without them.

Omar has a lot of guitars in his studio, but most often he uses his Ibanez signature models. He has two different body types, but otherwise they are identical. The one available in stores is the ORM1, which has a mahogany body and a three-piece mahogany neck, rosewood fretboard, and medium frets. The electronics are simple: one Seymour Duncan Little 59 pickup and a single volume control. The guitars are fitted with Ernie Ball medium gauge

strings.

Omar's pedalboard is constantly changing depending on the set list. Before a tour we'll sit in his studio, where he has shelves upon shelves of pedals, and pull out what we think would be cool. Then we'll narrow it down to the essentials and a few "toys." There are several pedals, however, which have a permanent home on his pedalboard. These include the Line 6 DL4 Delay Modeler and FM4 Filter Modeler, Ernie Ball Wah, MXR Micro Amp and Phase 90, Majik Box Body Blow distortion, Moogerfooger Ring Modulator, Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Man and Poly Chorus, DigiTech WH-1 (an original and a new model), and of course the Boss DD-5 delay and TU-12 tuner. This may seem like a lot of pedals, but his rig has ranged from 45 or so to the current and "baby" rig of 26. Stagehands in almost every city say, "You must lose so much signal with all those pedals," but they quickly change their minds when I take his amp off standby and blow their ears off, because he has plenty of tone and a massive sound overall.