



FISHMAN AFX ACOUSTIC EFFECTS PEDALS £249 EFFECTS



Fishman AFX acoustic effects pedals £249

Acoustic pickup specialist releases a new range of stompboxes designed specifically for electro-acoustic guitars *by Trevor Curwen*

There are plenty of electro-acoustic guitars being played on stages all over the world these days, and an increasing number via one or more pedals – the BOSS tuner pedal, for one, seems to be a ubiquitous part of the singer-songwriter’s arsenal. However, it’s probably fair to say that most of the pedals on the market are designed and voiced for use with standard electric guitar, with the resulting possibility that the acoustic player isn’t really getting the optimum results from them.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSEWILD

Fishman, the acoustic pickup specialist, is aiming to remedy that with the new AFX range of pedals which are designed to be used by acoustic musicians without having any adverse effect on the signature sound of their instruments. To achieve this result the effects are EQ’d in sympathy with the resonances of an amplified acoustic guitar and, rather than the whole signal getting the full effects treatment, the effected sound is added in parallel with the direct sound proportionally so it can be used

subtly without completely colouring the sound. There are pedals for the three effects types most likely to be favoured by acoustic guitar players – chorus, reverb and delay – and Fishman says that each pedal features effects presets that are voted as favourites by acoustic musicians. Fishman has made the AFX pedal inputs ideal for active pickups and soundhole pickups although for passive piezo pickups in instruments with no built-in preamp it recommends plugging into an impedance matching



Need a pedalboard?
We first featured a tutorial on how to build your own 23 years ago in the May 1985 issue!

preamp to strengthen the signal and maintain proper low frequency content before the signal hits the AFX pedal.

All three pedals are the same size and shape (not unlike an oversized tobacco tin or sardine can) in a very smart brushed aluminium

finish and have some features in common. Power is by a standard 9V battery or by any standard adaptor plugged into the upper left side of the pedal – neither power source is supplied.

The pedals all offer true stereo operation if you want it. There are left and right input jacks to maintain a stereo signal if the pedals are daisy-chained, but either one of them can be used with the single cable from the guitar. The output can be stereo on left and right jacks but again, either one of them can be used to output a mono signal. An input gain switch with normal and



boost settings lets you set the best operating level for your pickup. A front panel clip LED (that can also show battery state) illustrates the signal strength and the right setting to use.

In terms of controls all of the pedals share an effect level control that adds the amount of effected sound to the dry signal and all also have an eight-way rotary switch that selects a preset – each preset being a particular effect type.

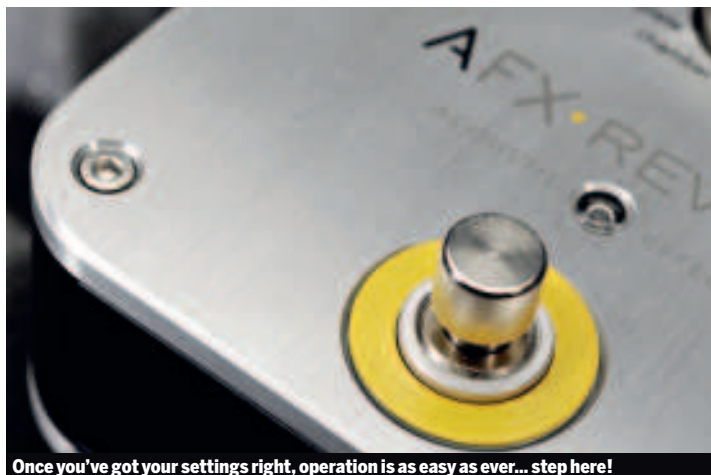
AFX Chorus

The AFX Chorus pedal might be more accurately described as a modulation pedal as it covers a range of such effects. It has three types of chorus, stereo and mono tremolos, flanger, phaser and rotary speaker presets, all adjustable by a tone knob and a speed knob.

Sounds

The first observation, which applies to all three pedals, is that there really is no colouring of the inherent sound coming out of the jack on your electro-acoustic – you get out what you put in and, tonally, the effects combine well. The level control, while expected on a delay or reverb pedal, is more unusual in this context and, when not cranked clockwise for the full effect, is really useful for creating subtle blends with just enough effect to put an interesting slant on the sound without overpowering it. The three chorus settings, progressively exhibiting more chorus depth, are rich and full and can go from just slightly beefing up the sound through to an obvious chorale effect.

The opto-style tremolo is nicely soft-edged in a Fender amp way,



Once you've got your settings right, operation is as easy as ever... step here!

while the stereo tremolo exhibits an impressively wide shimmer at faster settings, but can sound a little strange at slower settings as the panning becomes more obvious. The rotary setting does a reasonable impersonation of a spinning Leslie cabinet and the flanger creates a classic light flanging sound, but without the exaggerated whoosh you can get

from an Electric Mistress. The phaser is a slight sonic disappointment – it's okay but is voiced with a pronounced 'wow', which may not suit all users.

AFX Reverb

What you get with the reverb pedal is a series of presets representing the sound of various real spaces of differing sizes – there are studio, room, stage, concert hall, cathedral and canyon presets plus studio-style chamber and a plate reverbs. There are knobs for reverb decay, time and for tonal changes ranging from 'warm' to 'bright'.

Sounds

If you want to add a touch of ambience to your acoustic sound each preset gives a different but realistic sense of space from the controlled sound of the studio preset to the echoey long decay of canyon. The plate setting is nice and thick with a vintage vibe and the tone and decay time knobs, used in conjunction with the level control, means that there is plenty of variation that can be dialled in to get the sound just right.

AFX Delay

The delay pedal follows the recent trend of providing both the clean sound of digital delays and the softer sound of vintage analogue delays. To this end there are four 'Classic' and four 'Modern' presets – each category having short (up to 350ms), medium (up to 1.5sec), long (up to 2.9sec) and stereo ping-pong delays.

There's a knob for adjusting the actual delay time and one for setting the number of repeats. The pedal also includes a tap feature – there's a footswitch input jack so you can add a momentary switch

The effected sound is added in parallel with the direct sound proportionally so it can be used subtly



The AFX Chorus pedal in fact offers a variety of modulation effects

The Rivals

AFX Chorus

Being more specific and looking at standard effects pedals, for a little more outlay **Eventide's Modfactor** (£299) has a range of modulation effects to rival the AFX Chorus. Roland pioneered electronic chorus so the **BOSS CE-20** (£164) has to be worth a look for variations on the effect and there's the **DigiTech CF-7 Chorus Factory** (£99) for those on a tighter budget.

AFX Reverb

For reverb the **TC Electronic NR-1 Nova Reverb** (£182) is a compact box with a comprehensive range while the **T-Rex Room Mate** (£239) packs an onboard valve for a warmer sound, then there's the versatile **BOSS RV-5** (£140) which displays a lot of versatility for a compact pedal.

AFX Delay

For vintage style delays the **BOSS RE-20 Space Echo** (£152) is hard to beat while **TC Electronic's ND-1 Nova Delay** (£182) is a versatile little performer. **Eventide's Timefactor** (£299) costs more but has a more comprehensive range of delays and the **Line 6 Echo Park** (£116) is versatile for a budget pedal. All have tap tempo.



All AFX pedals feature stereo inputs

to create eighth, dotted eighth or quarter notes automatically.

The footswitch can also initiate a Delay Hold feature for short phrase-sampling that lets you play along to infinitely repeating short loops of up to 2.9 seconds.

Sounds

Tonally, the 'Classic' side of the pedal works best for us, as repeats gradually lose top end and blend in more than the repeats on the 'Modern' side that stay pristine and just get quieter – you may prefer that of course, so it's good to have the option. Apart from the ping-pong delay, which can be a bit gimmicky, this pedal provides straight down the line linear delays with enough variation in delay time to set up sounds from metallic sounding reverb through short slapback, rhythmic repeats and the type of long delay that lets you layer sound and play along with yourself. The footswitchable functions work fine but you do need an extra switch and, as there are plenty of delay pedals out there that offer inbuilt tap tempo as well as more delay variations like multitaps etc, the feeling is that Fishman might have taken this particular pedal a bit further.

Verdict

If you play an electro-acoustic on stage and want more variety in your sound or just more control over it, rather than leaving it to whoever is working the PA, then the AFX range may be for you. The pedals are a little pricey so will probably only appeal to the really committed, but what you get is classy sound and a build quality that looks like it would last a lifetime, so the expense could be justified. **G**

The bottom line

AFX Chorus

We like: Simple operation; excellent build quality; a sound that works for electro-acoustics; nice range of effects types for extra shimmer and widening

We dislike: Phaser sound could be more subtle

Guitarist says: If you want a range of modulation sounds to suit acoustic guitar, this is your pedal

AFX Reverb

We like: Simple operation; excellent build quality; a sound that works for electro-acoustics; comprehensive range of reverb sounds

We dislike: No spring simulation

Guitarist says: A range of ambiances designed to sit your electro-acoustic right in the middle of any mix

AFX Delay

We like: Simple operation; excellent build quality; a sound that works for electro-acoustics; modern or classic flavour choice

We dislike: Extra footswitch needed; more variations of delay would have been good

Guitarist says: A decent enough performer but if the 'designed for acoustic' features are not that important to you there may be better options



Fishman AFX Chorus

PRICE: £249

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Chorus pedal

FEATURES: Eight programs – chorus 1, chorus 2, chorus 3, stereo tremolo, narrow tremolo, flanger, phaser, rotary

CONTROLS: Level, tone, speed, eight-way selector, input gain norm/boost

CONNECTIONS: Input jacks (L&R), Output jacks (L&R)

POWER: PP3 battery (not supplied) or 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 100 (w) x 144 (d) x 57 (h) mm

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 0.6/1.32

Sound Technology 01462 480000

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Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Fishman AFX Reverb

PRICE: £249

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Reverb pedal

FEATURES: Eight programs – studio, room, plate, chamber, stage, concert, cathedral, canyon

CONTROLS: Level, tone, decay time, eight-way selector, input gain norm/boost

CONNECTIONS: Input jacks (L&R), Output jacks (L&R)

POWER: PP3 battery (not supplied) or 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 100 (w) x 144 (d) x 57 (h) mm

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 0.6/1.32

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Fishman AFX Delay

PRICE: £249

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Delay pedal

FEATURES: Eight programs – short, medium, long, pong (classic), short, medium, long, pong (modern)

CONTROLS: Level, repeats, decay time, eight-way selector, input gain norm/boost

CONNECTIONS: Input jacks (L&R), Output jacks (L&R), tap tempo footswitch socket

POWER: PP3 battery (not supplied) or 9V adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 100 (w) x 144 (d) x 57 (h) mm

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 0.6/1.32

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★