



Carl Martin HeadRoom £249

It's springtime for your pedalboard, thanks to this analogue spring reverb pedal **by Trevor Curwen**

There are plenty of digital pedals around that aim to emulate the sound of spring reverb. Many of them, it has to be said, do an extremely good job of it, but for some players it has to be the real thing in all of its electro-mechanical glory. So, if that's you, how do you go about adding spring reverb to your rig?

Well, you can target an amp with a built-in spring, assuming that the rest of that amp's sound and features are to your taste and that you can actually justify a change of amps. Then again you can add the daddy of them all to your existing set-up – a standalone Fender Spring Reverb – but that's going to be expensive and maybe just a

little inconvenient for onstage use. The third way is to buy a real spring reverb in a pedal – conveniently at your feet and always ready for action. By necessity, any spring reverb

pedal would have to be a pretty large to fit those springs in but the HeadRoom, the latest from Carl Martin, is not excessively large, being about the size of two Big Muffs side-by-side.



The HeadRoom offers two footswitchable depths of analogue reverb

What's more, it can run off a PP3 or a standard 9V adaptor, saving even further on pedalboard space.

A single input and output unit, the HeadRoom helpfully offers two reverb depths (A and B), each with their own chickenhead knobs controlling tone and level. Two nicely spaced footswitches take care of all the action – one to bypass the unit and the other to switch between sounds A and B. Alternatively, if you want to put the pedal somewhere safe, you also get the facility to add remote footswitches to take over the switching duties.

Sounds

An Accutronics three-spring unit similar to those found in smaller Fender amps is at the heart of the HeadRoom and the sound is familiarly Fender-like. Generated from the same springs, the A and B reverbs are identical, the differences between the two being totally dependent on knob positioning. The level knob takes you from a totally dry sound through to a deep surf twang and all points in between, while turning the

The Rivals

The **Demeter RBB-1 Reverbulator** (£359) is available in the UK but is perhaps not quite as pedalboard-friendly as the HeadRoom, as it runs from a 24V DC supply and has knobs on one side rather than the top. Other real spring reverb pedals are available from the USA. **Van Amps** makes three different reverb pedals but its **Sole-Mate** comes in a specific UK version (\$295 + shipping/taxes). There's also **Mahaffay Amps' Little Lanelei Reverb Pedal** (\$219 plus shipping/taxes). If you can justify the expense, Fender has its vintage reissue **'63 Fender Tube Reverb** (£790) in brown Tolex and Tweed-covered versions.

tone knob clockwise adds in top end for more brash, splash or trash, depending on your perspective. This is quality reverb that functions as an organic part of the overall guitar sound rather than something just tacked on, and with two 'presets' always on tap you can swiftly transition from

an ambient aura to something that's a deliberate 'effect'.

Like any Fender amp with the reverb turned up, if you give the HeadRoom a kick you'll get the usual thunderclap clang and we were initially concerned that we'd get that just by stomping on a footswitch. The designers, though, have done their level best to minimise that happening by suspending the spring tray inside the HeadRoom's chassis for extra isolation and fitting thick

rubber feet on the pedal's base. The result is that if you are reasonably gentle with the footswitch there's no problem, but if the level knob is above halfway and you stomp on the switch a bit too hard you may get an audible muffled thump through the amp. It's no big deal, though, and anyone with persistently clumsy feet can always add a remote switch.

Verdict

Sound-wise it's the real deal, and if you don't mind it taking up the space of two or three conventionally sized pedals on your 'board then the HeadRoom is an ideal way to add real spring reverb to your rig (if underfoot size is an issue you can always stick it on top of your amp and use a couple of small remote footswitches). While there are other spring reverb pedal options out there, the HeadRoom's practicality, realistic pricing and availability are likely to make it the popular choice for anyone who wants some genuine retro shimmer and twang. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Real spring reverb in a pedal; two different settings; 9V operation

We dislike: Battery compartment cover could go walkies

Guitarist says: The smart way to get real spring reverb without buying a whole amp



Carl Martin HeadRoom

ORIGIN: Denmark

PRICE: £249

TYPE: Spring reverb pedal

CONNECTIONS: Standard jack input, output, remote bypass and remote select

CONTROLS: Tone A, level A, tone B, level B

FOOTSWITCHES: Reverb select, bypass

POWER: 9V DC from battery (supplied) or adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 260 (w) x 140 (d) x 70mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.1/2.42

First Line Distribution

01626 853876

www.carlmartin.com



Sound-wise it's the real deal... the HeadRoom is an ideal way to add real spring reverb to your rig



The HeadRoom contains proper reverb springs, just like your trusty old amp...

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★