

EFFECTS



Carl Martin Red Repeat, Surf Tremolo & Crush Zone £79, £54, & £54

CARL MARTIN VINTAGE SERIES RED REPEAT

PRICE: £79
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Old-style analogue delay
PROGRAMMABLE: No
CONTROLS: Echo, tone, time, repeat
CONNECTIONS: Input, output
POWER: 9V adaptor (not supplied) input or battery power
OTHER FEATURES: Heavy duty bypass switch/on/off status LED
OPTIONS: Currently only the three pedals on review comprise the Vintage Series. Carl Martin's range of Danish effects start at £69
First Line
01392 493429
www.carlmartin.com

CARL MARTIN VINTAGE SERIES SURF TREMOLO

As Red Repeat except...
PRICE: £54.99
TYPE: Old-style tremolo
CONTROLS: Depth, speed

CARL MARTIN VINTAGE SERIES CRUSH ZONE

As Red Repeat except...
PRICE: £54.99
TYPE: High gain distortion
CONTROLS: Level, tone, distortion

Carl Martin moves to China to release this highly affordable trio of retro stompboxes by Dave Burrluck

Regular readers will know we're big fans of this Danish brand's stompboxes that always try to provide good tone over multi-function. The Danish-made pedals, that mostly feature onboard power transformers (so no need for wall warts!), are rugged, stage-ready but not cheap. Carl Martin also offers a smaller range of battery powered pedals that are more affordable, but it is now offering this brand new range of Vintage Series pedals promising Carl Martin analogue tone married with ultra-affordable Chinese manufacturing.

All three units feature the same construction: a rugged metal cast box with metal baseplate creating a solid, weighty pedal that doesn't feel cheap or flimsy in the least. The four rubber feet are screwed in place and that should mean they won't easily come unattached. The retro design certainly evokes the Vintage Series moniker but, as nice as they look, they are not ideal to mount, space-wise, on a pedalboard.

Each pedal has a solid-feeling chassis-mount bypass footswitch and cream-coloured chicken head knobs, although there are no position indicators so you'll need those Chinagraph pencils to mark positions. All three are mono with just chassis-mount input and output jacks, and each has a 9V DC input for a mains adaptor (not supplied). The supplied 9V battery fits into a flip-top compartment on the base, which makes it a lot easier to replace than many boutique pedals that require you to unscrew the baseplate.

Red Repeat

Based on the fabulous Carl Martin Delayla, the Red Repeat is a simple-to-

RED REPEAT	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WE LIKED Design, sound and versatility WE DISLIKED No extras like tap tempo but that's the point 	

SURF TREMOLO	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WE LIKED As Red Repeat WE DISLIKED May just be a little too simple for some 	



The first three pedals in the new Vintage Series bode well for the future

use analogue delay. With a maximum of 600 milliseconds of delay there's more than enough scope for most old-style echo/delay effects. Each of the four controls, which should be self-explanatory – echo (dry/wet mix), tone, time and repeat – has a positive feel and overall, despite its budget price, the Red Repeat has a satisfying quality feel to it.

SOUNDS: If this pedal seems a bit dated without any of the 'tricks' the majority of new delay pedals offer like tap tempo, not to mention modelling

etc, it's clearly by design. This is quite simply an old fashioned delay pedal, state-of-the-art, er, sometime in the late seventies. Along with a transparent affect on your signal chain it's refreshingly easy to use. Four controls... take it away.

There's more than enough mix level (echo) although the tone – which affects the tone of the repeat, not your core sound – is subtle but sweet. There's plenty of time range, too, so you can sweep from organic sounding slap-back to spaced out repeats while the regeneration control increases the



PHOTOGRAPHY: JOBY SESSIONS

CRUSH ZONE	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

- **WE LIKED** Organic metal distortion
- **WE DISLIKED** It's hardly vintage – be warned!

number of repeats to infinite self-oscillation. This is where the Red Repeat comes into its own: turn up the regeneration and experiment with the time and mix control for early synth-like out-of-control feedback textures – something you can't do on a digital or modelling delay.

Surf Tremolo

Carl Martin has a thing about tremolo. In our recent review of the company's Quattro multi-FX, tremolo is included above the more obvious chorus as the only 'modulation' effect. Here, too, this Surf Tremolo (inspired by the Carl Martin Tremovibe) is included in the first wave of this series when an old-style, sweet-sounding chorus may have been preferable. Many modern tremolo pedals go for hard machine-gun, almost gated effects, which can sound spectacular when in time with a song's tempo. This old-style tremolo, however, goes for a much softer wob-wob-wob that is often used to best effect across the beat rather than strictly in time. Depth and speed are the only controls.

SOUNDS: Here's a pedal that you can't hurry! The speed and depth aren't extreme in any way, although there's a good old-style range. It's not quite as rich sounding to our ears as the tremolo on, for example, Carl Martin's Quattro, but it's close and is a perfect old-style effect that although doesn't technically modulate your sound is a refreshing change to chorus, phasing or flanging. It's got plenty of 'boutique' richness without the associated price tag.

Crush Zone

Described as "a vintage style, high-gain/

distortion pedal" the Crush Zone again centres on simplicity with just level, tone and distortion controls. It may only cost £54 but it has a lot to live up to compared to the number and diversity of CM overdrive/distortions in the existing mains-only and 9V Carl Martin range. Let's plug in...

SOUNDS: Expecting perhaps a Tube Screamer-on-steroids-like overdrive, the Crush Zone turns out to be an out-and-out distortion of the metal mayhem variety. Even with the distortion amount fully off there's still plenty of gain (probably too much) for most classic-styled players. As you wind up the distortion it becomes quite squashed and compressed sounding and quite OTT too. Typically, then, it has quite an open mid-range, easily creating a scooped sound, but it still sounds pretty organic and not contrived. There's a lot of treble here as well and, although the tone control clearly works, it seems to focus on the really high end whereas a broader control would have added to its versatility. It seemed way too bright with the tone full off to emulate an old-style crunchy overdrive and even with a dark sounding Epi Les Paul it appears a little over-gained. Again, compared to the Quattro's overdrive section the Crush Zone seems less useful, but within a long pedal chain it'll certainly retain your high end. A good sounding pedal but hardly what you'd call 'vintage'.

Verdict

With our market flooded with stompboxes at virtually every price point and style, a modern stompbox really has to come up with the goods in terms of price, quality, sound and features to compete. These new pedals certainly aren't the cheapest available but they are ruggedly constructed,

look very retro and certainly create quality organic sounds that are so typical of Carl Martin's high-line Danish-made pedals.

Yet none is exactly feature packed, a fact that will appeal to some players who like to keep things simple, while others will be left wondering what the fuss is about. If you're of the former persuasion, however, you're in for a treat. The old-style organic sounds produced by the Red Repeat and Surf Tremolo really should be heard. The Red Repeat is dead simple to use, and with its ability to provide everything from slap-back to self-oscillation there's a lot on offer. Be warned though, there

They are ruggedly constructed, look very retro and certainly create quality organic sounds that are so typical of Carl Martin's high-line pedals

are no modern tricks like tap tempo or different voicings, it's just a simple no-frills echo/delay. Ditto the Surf Tremolo. It's almost as rich sounding as CM's acclaimed Tremovibe with no frills but a wonderful, and often forgotten, wobbling voice.

The Crush Zone is the oddity. Again it's simple to use but it is a high-gain metal mayhem pedal that seems too brightly voiced

for old-style overdrive and perhaps lacks enough gain for the real hard-core distortion lover. But it's an inspiring pedal nonetheless with a modern, compressed gain that really kicks. While the Surf Tremolo and Red Repeat are no-brainers, the Crush Zone really should be auditioned to check whether its flavour is suitable for your style. Here's hoping we see more pedals in this series – there's always room for classy sounds at these prices. **G**

Carl Martin Red Repeat

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

Carl Martin Surf Tremolo

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

Carl Martin Crush Zone

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

The rivals

RED REPEAT

Danelectro Reel Echo	£109
Ibanez AD9 Analogue Delay	£109
Line 6 Echo Park	£112

Dano's Reel Echo is feature-packed and emulates an old tape echo but with long delay time (1.5 sec). Ibanez's AD9 is a more simple reissue with time, level and repeat controls and dual outs. The Echo Park modelling echo/delay utilises modern modelling technology to create analogue, tape and digital delay effects

SURF TREMOLO

Danelectro Chorus Trem Pedal	£69
BOSS TR-2 Tremolo	£69
Line 6 Tap Tremolo	£89

Dano's Chorus Trem offers two effects, five preset tones, stereo outs and a good price. BOSS's TR-2 updates this classic effect with wave, rate and depth controls for wide versatility. Like the Echo Park, the Tap Tremolo offers a modern take on tremolo sounds old and new with easy-to-use tap tempo and three tremolo modes

CRUSH ZONE

Danelectro Fab Tone Distortion	£69
BOSS MD-2 Mega DigiTech Metal Master	£89

Dano's Fab Tone is a two-control pedal that's a little more vintage sounding than the Crush Zone. The MD-2 takes, "the bottom-heavy distortion sounds heard in today's new-school metal and pushes it to the extreme." We agree! The Metal Master offers modern distortion via its distortion morphing and emulated output choice