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## 1 WALRUS AUDIO DESCENT £285

**ORIGIN:** USA

**TYPE:** Reverb pedal

**FEATURES:** True bypass

**CONTROLS:** Dry Mix, Reverb Time, Diminish, Tweak, Wet Mix, Dry Signal, -1, +1, Hall/Reverse/Shimmer switch, preset footswitch, bypass footswitch

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input,

standard outputs (L, R), exp pedal input, Remote (for a dual footswitch)

**POWER:** 9V DC adaptor

(not supplied) 140mA

**DIMENSIONS:** 143 (w) x 117 (d) x 40mm (h)

**FACE** bvba

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**The Descent** is a reverb pedal that may suit players who are keen on altered ambiances. Key to this is the fact you get two knobs to feed octaves – one below and one above – into the reverberated signal. Hall, Reverse and Shimmer reverb modes are selectable from a toggle switch and each has a range of parameters to adjust from five knobs, including Diminish and Tweak knobs, which have different functions for each mode. A Dry Signal knob controls how much of your instrument sound is going through the reverb. Set it at zero and only the octaves will go to the reverb, but at maximum, your whole dry signal goes to the reverb along with any octaves that you've dialled in.

Juxtaposing eight knobs to get to your favourite sounds can be time-consuming, especially as the Descent precludes any

graduation marks around the knobs. However, the unit can store three presets (each indicated by a different colour LED), recalled using the second footswitch. There's the facility to add a two-channel remote footswitch to take care of bypass and preset switching, and an expression pedal can also be connected to control single or multiple parameters.

For standard reverb and ambient sounds, the Hall reverb will give you a range of perceived differently sized spaces from small room to cavernous. Adding in octaves moves things into a different realm: the lower one adds depth and, at full strength, can give the sense of a bass playing along, while the upper octave

provides icy top end shimmer. The Shimmer reverb mode itself sounds like a solid curtain of reverb hanging behind your guitar, which is great for adding texture, but takes on more life when you bring in the octaves – almost like adding a string section with the upper and balancing that with a sense of weighty depth with the lower. Reverse reverb can be a little gimmicky, but there are plenty of parameters here to tweak it and it can also be used as a single repeat delay for retro-billy slapback if you don't want to dial in background ambiances. A carefully set up and wielded expression pedal will let you fade this in and out, creating a shifting soundscape of massive ambiances. **[TC]**

**VERDICT** *The Descent box is packed full of ambiances to fill out your sound with plenty of creative control. Well worth the money, especially if you like to tweak*

8/10

## 2 WALRUS AUDIO BELLWETHER £329

**ORIGIN:** USA

**TYPE:** Analogue delay pedal

**FEATURES:** True bypass, tap tempo

**CONTROLS:** Tap Division, Time, Repeats, Tone, Level, Depth, Rate, Time/Repeats switch, Mod Off/On, tap footswitch, bypass footswitch

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard outputs (1 and 2), FX loop, exp pedal input, tap input

**POWER:** 9V DC adaptor (not supplied) 100mA

**DIMENSIONS:** 143 (w) x 117 (d) x 40mm (h)



**The Bellwether** is an analogue delay that goes beyond what most of its kind can do, not least in that it has a maximum delay time of one second, set by either its Time knob, the built-in tap tempo footswitch or a footswitch connected to the tap input on the side of the pedal. The tap tempo has four selectable tap divisions (quarter notes, eighth notes, dotted eighth notes, triplets) allowing you plenty of possibilities to sync your delay to an accompanying rhythm. Besides delay time, you can set the level of the repeats in relation to the dry signal (they reach parity at about two o'clock, so you can then go on to have the repeats louder than the dry sound), EQ the repeats, and set the amount of repeats with a Repeats knob, which will take you off into self-oscillation from around the two o'clock mark.

Those who like to take their delay sound to the edge of self-oscillation and back for artistic effect will be pleased to know you can connect an expression pedal to do just that. Or you can use the expression pedal to ride the delay time for a more disconcerting effect.

Should you wish to add modulation, there's a toggle that adds chorus to the repeats only, dialled in with Depth and Rate knobs that can take you from a light dusting, through the sort of wow and flutter type warble reminiscent of a tape echo to a more extreme detuning. If you want to further change the repeats, there's an effects loop, so you can insert more pedals – maybe an overdrive to get the repeats to distort more.

As it stands, the Bellwether sound can be the typical warm and saturated analogue delay you'd get from a vintage BBD unit, but it can go much further courtesy of the Tone knob. At its fully clockwise position, the Tone knob offers a voice for the repeats that we found indistinguishable from our vintage Boss DM-2 – dark and fuzzy round the edges – but you can roll the knob backwards and dial in some brightness and a more cutting attack that works well if you're going for a U2-style rhythmic delay. There's loads to play with here, but being able to voice your repeats to suit your sonic requirements may be the Bellwether's most musical asset. **[TC]**

**VERDICT** *If it has to be real analogue rather than digital emulation, then the Bellwether delivers with an excellent set of features*

9/10