



Quicktest

TC Electronic Alter Ego V2 Vintage Echo & T2 Reverb

£134 & £118

More new twists on the TonePrint formula

CONTACT: TC Electronic **PHONE:** 0800 917 8926 **WEB:** www.tcelectronic.com



**Guitarist
CHOICE**

TC Electronic is rapidly becoming one of the premier names in delay and reverb, and the company's onslaught of ambience shows no sign of letting up. Hot on the heels of the X4 incarnation, the compact Alter Ego V2 Vintage Echo packs 11 delay types, including Pro Guitar Shop-tuned models based on classic tape and analogue echoes, such as the Binson Echorec 2, Boss DM-2 and Maestro Copykat. The T2, meanwhile, is the sequel to TC's Trinity Reverb, and offers 10 delay sounds focused on atmospheric 'verbs.

The Alter Ego offers the standard array of delay controls – decay, tone, mix, delay type – plus a subdivision switch, which selects between quarter notes, dotted eighths and a dual-delay combination. It also boasts audio tapping, initiated by holding the footswitch down and strumming short 1/4 notes, while switching to the delay type control's LP setting activates the pedal's 40-second looper. The T2, on the other hand, is a simpler affair, with controls for decay, tone, mix, reverb type and a two-position pre-delay switch.

Both pedals include a single TonePrint slot for firing up

sounds from TC's ever-growing library of presets via the TonePrint app or a computer, or making your own using the comprehensive TonePrint Editor. In addition, you get stereo inputs and outputs, plus nine-volt battery and power supply operation, analogue dry-through and a choice of true or buffered bypass.

Sounds

Each twist of the T2's reverb type knob is like entering a new dimension; there's a stunning range of modulated 'verbs, from flanging to chorus-y wobble and painfully slow seasick pitch bends, while huge hall textures instantly conjure Jeff Buckley-esque arpeggios from your guitar. Even at 12 o'clock on the decay dial, each type yields colossal trails, so don't look here for your spring kicks. These hi-fi sounds put the T2 squarely in the ballpark of ambient pedals such as the HardWire Supernatural, albeit minus the pitch-shifted shimmer modes. Yet while the sounds are sensational, the pedal's usability is somewhat hampered by the reverb types being marked by roman numerals, which hardly makes for straightforward preset finding.

If you've played the Alter Ego X4, which we reviewed a few issues back, you'll know exactly what to expect from the V2: you'll find warm, tape-like repeats from the Echoplex and Deluxe Memory Man models, crunchy decays courtesy of the Copykat and swirling detuned ambience from the Echorec and Echoflanger simulations, while new settings such as 2290 Mod and Reverse Mod add a touch of psychedelia to proceedings. Add in the easy-to-use 40-second looper, and it's hard to complain about the feature set on offer here.

Verdict

Although these pedals are more niche than TC's flagship Flashback Delay and Hall of

Fame Reverb, they do what they do extremely well, and with the addition of a TonePrint slot, you can always have a tamer reverb or more modern delay in your back pocket. While it sounds fantastic, the T2's modulated 'verbs could be a little over the top even for ambient fans, but the Alter Ego V2 is equipped to appeal to just about any player, whether you're well versed in vintage delays or not. **[MB]**

GUITARIST RATING

Alter Ego V2 ★★★★★
T2 Reverb ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Two purpose-specific ambience generators, which each offer a broad and arresting range of sounds within their spheres



Peavey ReValver 4 £Free



Peavey's ultra-tweakable amp sim gets a major update

CONTACT: Peavey PHONE: 01536 461234 WEB: www.peavey.com

Peavey's ReValver 4 is a major update to its standalone and plug-in amp modelling software, that allows you to tweak the amps at component level. The company says that it is a complete redesign from the ground up, so that all aspects of the program are new, from the engine of the program to its graphical user interface.

Also new is the pricing structure, which sees a basic version of the program downloadable for free, with additional modules (amps, stompboxes, etc) available for purchase online from \$1.99 to \$799. If you don't fancy doing it that way, there's a ReValver 4 Producer Pack (\$99.99) that comes loaded with all the equivalent amp/stomp/effects/RIR cab modules from version III.V, plus some new stuff. Owners of III.V can upgrade to the Producer Pack for half that amount.

In Use

ReValver 4's GUI is more user-friendly than the previous version. Now, rather than one single scrolling rack view, you can call up separate views for the input and output sections, the amps and cabs and the post-effects rack, plus you get a nice virtual pedalboard to drag stompboxes onto. ReValver 4 offers a dual signal chain, so you can run two rigs together with various output options and, with plenty of Peavey amps, plus the popular choices from other manufacturers, there are a lot of great-sounding tonal options available even before you start tweaking. ReValver's unique feature right from the start has been the fact that you can look at schematics and mess around with any amp's components – change valves, swap transformers, et cetera – and now Peavey has refined that with new technology, opening

the route to custom designing your own amps. The speaker side of things has also improved with the RIR 2 Speaker Simulation module, which offers convolution-based cabinet modelling with adjustable mic placement and attention to details such as adjustment of the interaction between guitar and cab.

Two entirely new features are worthy additions to the program. The first is yet another sound-tweaking option in the form of ACT (Audio Cloning Technology). This module offers shaping of the guitar sound at the input to make your guitar sound like a different guitar/pickup combination chosen from a set of profiles – Les Paul, Strat, for example. You can also use ACT after modelling for some final tone shaping. The second new feature is a GIG mode, whereby you can load eight presets into

the memory for instant access. You can switch between these using your mouse, but they can also respond to MIDI control, so you could use a MIDI switcher, making live use a more practical proposition.

Verdict

ReValver's sounds are very responsive to picking dynamics and guitar volume control, making for a satisfying playing experience. With a pair of amps, some cabinets, overdrive, tremolo and reverb, the free version has plenty to get you started and let you know whether ReValver is for you. If it is, we reckon that the Producer Pack is a real bargain. **[TC]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: This massive reworking of the software offers improved usability, adjustability and sonic authenticity



EBS Valve Drive DI

£269

Drive and tonal enhancement for your bass, plus a DI in the same box

CONTACT: Sound Technology **PHONE:** 01462 480000 **WEB:** www.soundtech.co.uk

In this clean and precise digital world, bass players are reminded constantly of just how clinical the sound of their instrument has become, particularly when being forced into using a DI into a PA or studios desks. But, as its name suggests, this EBS unit offers a valve-driven preamp along with an XLR balanced output, plus padding and ground lift switches as required by any good DI box. With input volume, master gain and a three-band EQ with a choice of vintage or normal bias, this is ideal for adding some tonal boost, colour and drive to your sound at the kick of a switch.

Sounds

It's all about a single preamp valve (ECC83/12AX7) adding fully controllable tonal colour and distortion to your bass sound, whether you use it as a DI box or as an effects pedal. Ultra-smooth in operation, it

fattens your bass tone from cool and sophisticated, or if pushed harder it's Cream-era Jack Bruce. The user manual's classic rock, vintage overdrive and crunch setting examples neatly describe what sounds can be achieved. Background noise-free and with true bypass, this is quite simply a great performance-enhancing tool that all bass players will surely appreciate.

Verdict

While there's nothing wrong with a good clean bass tone, there are times when it can lack body, and that's when a little dirt can add some excitement. With the usual robust EBS build quality, this is a great pedal to own. **[RN]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Far more useful than you can imagine – well worth the cost

Mono Guitar Sleeve £99

Guitarist GOLD

Superior case company offers superior gigbag

CONTACT: Westside Dist. **PHONE:** 0141 248 4812 **WEB:** monocreators.com

Not all gigbags are created equal. At a basic level they can be little more than a soft cover, offering no protection for your instrument. At Mono level, however, you have arguably the best money can buy. That doesn't mean cheap, though; Mono's standard range – including the Vertigo gigbags at £149 – can seem costly, which is where the Sleeve comes in, around 40 per cent cheaper.

Designed for solidbodies only, the black or grey (ash) outer material is both rugged and water-resistant with dual padded shoulder straps, steel riveted side carry handle and that all-important rear carry handle placed midway up the case, as well as an airline suspension hook. The main zip feels really tough and the case is designed to open from the top. Both front and back are padded and the Headlock feature, moulded from shock-absorbing EVA rubber, supports the neck, offering excellent protection.

Where the Stealth really scores is with its messenger-style storage pouch, designed for laptops or tablets, and also the likes of pedals, leads and mains adaptors. Its fold-over cover is secured by seatbelt webbing and a steel buckle. Yup, it looks cool too.

In Use

Packed with a Stratocaster, laptop, a couple of pedals and leads for a good stroll, a couple of crowded buses then London's Underground at rush hour we can't fault the comfort. In fact, our Strat had a much better journey than we did.

Verdict

If you're a travelling musician, just buy one. **[DB]**



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A superbly designed gigbag – we can't fault it: your guitar will love you

Finhol Auto Stomp Player & KickBox Mark III **£267 & £123**

More kit for the one-man band

CONTACT: Thomann PHONE: N/A WEB: www.thomann.de



With a decidedly lo-fi heritage, the humble foot stomp is a great way of giving the solo player a bit of bass-drum like kick. German brand Finhol has applied some serious ingenuity to the Mark III KickBox, with its low-profile walnut box, superb anti-slip matt base and choice of two digital samples – kick drum or cajon.

The small stomp box Auto Stomp Player is classed as a “human controlled drum computer”, and takes an input from the KickBox, or other foot stomps. We have a choice of 12

drum ‘patterns’, from lone bass drum or cajon to bass drum, snare or rim, plus hi-hats; we have similar combinations from the cajon, including a shaker, and both straight beats and a couple of shuffles. In manual mode, as you kick in your quarter beats the snare and hi-hat follow in tempo. In auto mode you set the tempo with four kicks and the pattern plays until you kick once to stop it.

Sounds

Both units sound clean and contemporary. The level

between the different drums on the Auto Stomp is preset, and in drum computer territory it’s basic stuff – there’s no dynamic range, so the beats can sound a little relentless, but it’ll certainly fill out a solo/duo performance.

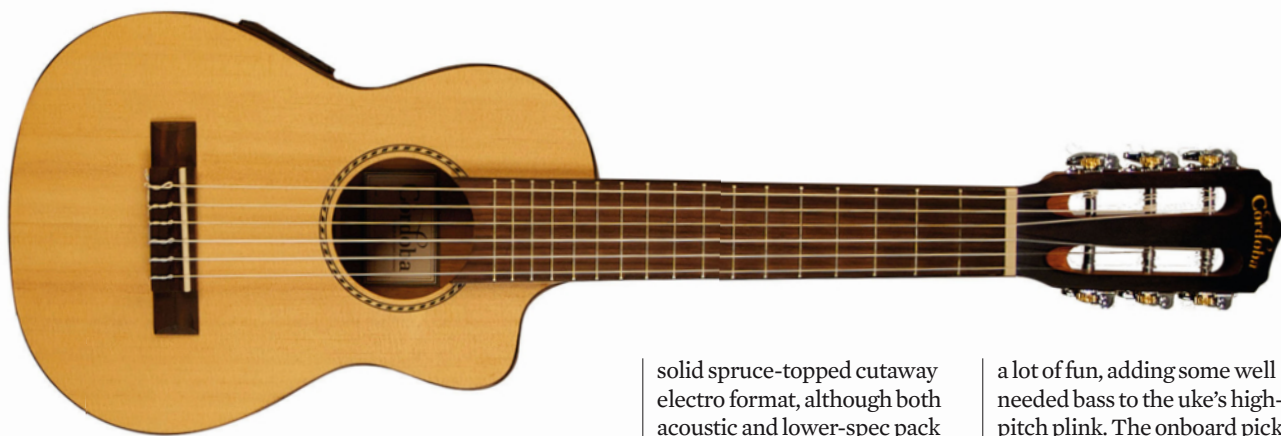
Verdict

The KickBox III is very neat if you want a hi-fi kick. The Auto Stomp Player is ingenious, if a little relentless in use. But both will appeal to the increasing number of us who need to fill out our performances, but retain a human element. [DB]

GUITARIST RATING

KickBox III ★★★★★
Auto Stomp Player ★★★★★

Guitarist says: The KickBox is a modern take on the foot stomp, while the Auto Stomp provides a fuller backing. Here’s to the one-man (or woman) band!



Cordoba Guilele **£239**

A uke for guitarists? Yes, as long as you have small hands...

CONTACT: Selectron UK PHONE: N/A WEB: www.cordobaguitars.com

Cordoba makes primarily nylon-strings at a variety of levels, as well as ukes and a smattering of steel strings. With its recent acquisition of Guild and new UK distribution, it’s a

name you’ll be seeing more of. This diminutive Guilele is hardly a new concept – Yamaha’s Guitalele has been around for ages – but Cordoba’s take is different, not least in this

solid spruce-topped cutaway electro format, although both acoustic and lower-spec pack versions are available at £199 and £115 respectively.

Essentially a six-string tenor uke, it’s tidily made with a 50mm string spacing at the bridge – the same as your Les Paul – with a 46mm nut width, slightly wider than your 2015 Les Paul (though narrower than Yamaha’s Guitalele nut width of 49mm). But these are nylon strings, so it feels pretty cramped. Tuned as if you’re capo’d at the fifth fret, it’s easy enough to get used to and once, like any uke or nylon-string, those strings have settled in, it’s

a lot of fun, adding some well needed bass to the uke’s high-pitch plink. The onboard pickup with two-band EQ and volume preamp means it’s perfectly giggable and recordable.

Verdict

If you can’t get on with a standard four-string uke, or if you want a very compact six-string electro-classical, this isn’t such a daft option, Essential? No way. Fun? Definitely. [DB]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Ideal starter for micro-sized beginners or a neat electro uke with bass strings

Fuzzy Rhodes FR75 £119

A supplier of transistors to boutique pedal builders makes its own fuzz

CONTACT: Langrex PHONE: 01403 785600 WEB: www.langrex.co.uk

Langrex may be a new name in effects pedals but the well-established West Sussex company is the largest supplier of valves in the UK and also lays claim to having the largest stock of Germanium transistors in the world! Supplying these transistors to pedal builders gave the company the idea to produce its own fuzzbox, the Fuzzy Rhodes FR75, based on a Sola Sound Mk1.5 Tone Bender from the 60s, the transitional model between the first Tone Bender and the Tone Bender Professional MkII.

The Mk1.5 featured just two transistors in a circuit which was borrowed by Arbiter for the Fuzz Face and also used in Vox

Tone Benders, produced in Italy. The FR75 uses a Mullard OC75 Germanium transistor, like the original, but pairs it with a Silicon transistor to combat volume loss.

In addition to standard fuzz and volume controls, the FR75 adds a pre-gain knob that works well in matching the pedal to your pickups' lower settings, yielding a leaner sound. The knob adds impedance, so you can use a wah in front of the fuzz without the usual feedback/oscillation problems. Soundwise, it's authentic 1960s fuzz all the way, and you get an internal transistor bias trim pot to dial in your preferred sweet spot, too.



Verdict

If you saw our recent boutique fuzz pedal round-up, you'll know fuzz comes in many flavours and can be expensive, but less than £120 for a hand-built fuzz isn't bad if the FR75's flavour is to your taste... [TC]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: One for the fuzz-tweakers out there, but it's still good value for a boutique vibe and sound

PedalDeck Artist Series Board £99

New Brit 'board firm takes on stiff Stateside competition

CONTACT: PedalDeck PHONE: 0161 282 8000 WEB: www.pedaldeck.com

While their proportions have shrunk, stompboxes have never been bigger, and the humble pedalboard now comes in a wide variety of forms. New on the scene is UK company PedalDeck, debuting with the Artist Series Board following 18 months of R&D in the quest to create the perfect off-the-shelf stomping ground.

The product is made from a single piece of high-grade aircraft-quality aluminium, with no welds – and with all design and manufacture taking place in the UK, the company is able to ensure consistency of production. The Artist Series Board measures 610 (w) by 320



(d) by 60mm (h), with more sizes, and soft cases, on the way next year. It costs £99, while the Board plus flight case is £165. If you decide to buy the flight case later, there's a discount voucher with the standalone Board.

In Use

The Artist Series Board comes with two metres of self-

adhesive Velcro for attaching your pedals, plus a full set of brackets and bolts for securing a Voodoo Lab power supply beneath the frame – there's no need for the time-consuming pre-drilling of holes here. The underside of the unit also features cutaways to allow access to the VL Pedal Power 2's sag switches, as well as three

inputs for AC power cables. It's a sharply designed system, with well-cut holes and an unyielding, sturdy frame.

Verdict

We commend any new contender in the pedalboard arena, and while PedalDeck doesn't have the most original design, it brings a number of well thought-out tweaks to the formula, which make it a smart buy. [MB]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A UK-made 'board that has well-considered features, with plenty of room for pedals and power supplies alike



Strymon Deco £279

Tape saturation and double-tracking effects housed in a convenient stompbox format? Yes please!

CONTACT: MusicPsych PHONE: 0207 607 6005 WEB: www.strymon.net

It's no secret that Strymon pedals have become a fixture of pro and well-heeled amateur pedalboards the world over, with units such as the BigSky, Mobius, TimeLine and Flint delivering the kind of functionality and sonic performance required by demanding effects nuts. Housed in a smart, brushed metal enclosure manufactured from nickel-plated aluminium, the Deco harks back to the age when the physical effects achievable through clever manipulation of reel-to-reel tape machines were king.

Best situated at the end of your effects chain when used within a traditional electric setup, the Deco offers a range of digital approximations of the kind of effects achieved in the recording studios of the 50s and 60s by manipulating vintage tape recorders. Your key control on the left-hand side of the pedal is Saturation, which when engaged, apes the warm overdrive and dynamic compression that occurs when

tape machine inputs are run hot and overloading; crank it up and think Keef's raunchy 'acoustic' guitar on *Jumpin' Jack Flash* and *Street Fighting Man*.

Over on the right, we're into the world of simulated ADT – automatic double tracking – the precursor to all of the time-based effects we take for granted. The rotation of the lag time control encompasses flange – so named because the engineer had to physically slow down one of a pair of tape recorders playing back identical signals by lightly pressing on the flange (rim) of the playout reel to achieve the swooshing filter effect – chorus, slapback echo and tape-style echo with a short maximum delay time of 500ms.

Volume and blend offer control over output volume and dry/wet blend respectively, while wobble dials in random modulations akin to manually varying tape speed. The three-way type toggle switches the virtual tape decks from in-phase (sum) to phase-inverted (invert), to stereo ping-

pong or mono double repeats (bounce), depending on how the unit is hooked up. There's plenty of stealth functionality; holding down the doubletracker bypass footswitch introduces through-zero flange on the fly, while high trim, low trim, auto-flange time, wide stereo mode and +/- 3dB boost/cut are all accessible in 'hidden' mode. You can also plug in an expression pedal, add an external tap switch or plug in a 'favorite' switch to save and recall a favoured preset.

Sounds

Whether as part of an everyday mono guitar rig or hooked up in stereo (there's an internal jumper that facilitates the use of a TRS stereo input cable) as an outboard studio effect, using the Deco is almost like stepping back in time – witness the pretty damn authentic Sun Studio-style slapback echo – yet many of the sounds are also curiously contemporary. In a climate where mainstream guitar playing has become less strident

and more textural, and bands such as Tame Impala have popularised guitar tones that sound like an overdriven mixing desk rather than a wall of Marshalls, the colouration and tone-shaping options here make the mundane a whole lot more interesting and the already interesting take flight. Of course, the Deco's scope isn't limited to guitar; watch our video demo to hear the mind-bending results when you apply it to every instrument in a mix.

Verdict

Whether you want to add a retro flavour to your live sound or channel the spirit of Abbey Road in 1967 in the studio, paradoxically, the Deco's emulations of vintage effects sound fresh and inspiring. [CV]

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: The sounds that were previously limited to high-maintenance machines and DAW plug-ins are now available on your pedalboard