

# Empress Effects Pedals

£215-£389

Boutique quality from Canada

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PHOTOGRAPHY **Joby Sessions**

Canadian company Empress Effects was launched in 2005 with a remit to come up with a tremolo effect with a set of features that were unavailable on the market at the time. After that first pedal, the range has expanded greatly to cover most effects types. Empress pedals are constructed to a very high standard and feature heavy-duty footswitches and metal knobs and jack sockets. The company can count Adrian Belew, Andy Summers, Dan Auerbach and Prince among its many users.



## Empress Heavy

**PRICE:** £259

**ORIGIN:** Canada

**TYPE:** Distortion pedal

**FEATURES:** True-bypass

**CONTROLS:** Gain, mid, output, weight, gate switch, mid freq switch, hi, low, gate threshold trim pot

**FOOTSWITCHES:**

Heavy, heavier

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard output

**POWER:** 9V battery or 9-18V DC adaptor (200mA)

**DIMENSIONS:** 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

**First Line Distribution**  
01626 853876  
empresseffects.com

**D**esigned as a source of high-gain tones, the Heavy features two independent channels (one with slightly more gain) that can either be voiced similarly so one acts as a boosted version of the other, or can be set up for two quite different sounds. Each channel sports gain and output knobs, a weight knob that changes the character of the low end, and a mid knob that offers a powerful 10dB of cut or boost at a frequency (500Hz, 250Hz, 2kHz) selected by a switch above it. Each channel has a selectable noise gate with a choice of natural or aggressive settings, while the whole output can be tonally tweaked by high and low shelving filters. Whether you want to scoop out some midrange or add girth to your high-gain distortion, the Heavy will cater to your needs, with or without the noise gate to keep hiss in check and your riffing tight and controlled.

### Verdict

Tailor-made for metal players and useful for anyone seeking aggressive distortion.

GUITARIST RATING



**Guitarist says:** Never has a pedal been more appropriately named...



## Empress Tremolo2

**PRICE:** £215

**ORIGIN:** Canada

**TYPE:** Tremolo pedal

**FEATURES:** True-bypass, tap tempo, 8 presets, MIDI control

**CONTROLS:** Depth, rate/ratio, rhythm, output, mode switch, save switch, waveform switch

**FOOTSWITCHES:**

Tap/preset, bypass

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard output, control port

**POWER:** 9V battery or 9-18V DC adaptor (100mA)

**DIMENSIONS:** 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

**T**he latest version of the very first Empress pedal, the Tremolo2 offers a choice of three

waveforms – a standard triangle with a smooth ramp from loud to soft, a gorgeous asymmetrical throb, as found in a 'brownface' Fender Vibrolux amp and a choppy square wave. There's also a choice of eight rhythms for the undulations. Rhythm 1 on the rotary switch is standard tremolo as we all know it, but the others offer musical variations by putting an accent on, say, every fourth beat – there's even one rhythm in 5/4 time! You can set the tremolo rate with a knob or via a tap tempo footswitch, and there are eight footswitch-recallable memory slots. On top of all this, there's an advanced configuration mode, where you can customise the pedal's functionality and control of parameters by expression pedal, CV, external tap switch or MIDI.

### Verdict

As good a trem as we've heard, with an impressively versatile range of facilities.

GUITARIST RATING



**Guitarist says:** An upgraded version of one totally tasty tremolo





<http://bit.ly/guitarist390>

## Empress MultiDrive

**PRICE:** £259**ORIGIN:** Canada**TYPE:** Fuzz/overdrive/  
distortion pedal**FEATURES:** True-bypass**CONTROLS:** Gain volume, 3x filter switch, hi, low, mid, output, mid freq. switch, distortion type switch, internal DIP switches**FOOTSWITCHES:**

Select, bypass

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard output**POWER:** 9V battery or 9-18V DC adaptor (180mA)**DIMENSIONS:** 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

The MultiDrive is designed to create a sound from a blend of up to three elements: fuzz, overdrive and distortion circuits running simultaneously in parallel through a master output section that features a three-band EQ. Each section has a gain knob to set how distorted it sounds and a volume knob to control how much of the effect appears at the output. Each also has selectable high-pass and low-pass filters so you can have just high or low frequencies from any section. The distortion section lets you choose from crunch, mild and lead sounds. The select footswitch toggles between two unique fuzz/overdrive/distortion combinations set by internal DIP switches. Each of the effects types sounds really good, but it's the creation of blends that's the MultiDrive's unique feature, with a huge range of layered tones available.

### Verdict

Some unique tone combinations and practical switching options. An excellent, versatile pedal.

**GUITARIST RATING**

**Guitarist says:** Three-in-one dirt blender that saves pedalboard space

## Empress Phaser

**PRICE:** £299**ORIGIN:** Canada**TYPE:** Phaser pedal**FEATURES:** True-bypass,

tap tempo, MIDI control

**CONTROLS:** See website for full details**FOOTSWITCHES:**

Tap, bypass

**CONNECTIONS:**

Standard input, standard output, control port, blend/exp socket

**POWER:** 9V battery or 9-18V DC adaptor (120mA)**DIMENSIONS:** 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

If you are used to a phaser with one sound and a single knob to change the speed, it's time to be amazed by this pedal. The Empress Phaser has five knobs and five three-way switches, as well as tap tempo, MIDI control and the possibility of using an expression pedal to control parameters. There's a choice of two- and three-stage phasing besides the more standard four-stage, and you also get a choice of eight different waveforms that offer more angular options than the normal rounded sweep. There are plenty of phaser flavours here, from really subtle to the more obvious, with a defined 'wow' switched in with a resonance switch that offers 'little' or 'lots'. You also get an Auto mode with eight different options for changing parameters in response to picking strength and volume, that's capable of funky auto wah among other things.

### Verdict

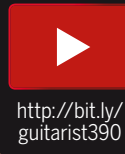
Possibly the most comprehensively adjustable pedal delivering a single modulation effect we've seen.

**GUITARIST RATING**

**Guitarist says:** All phases of phasing in one impressive pedal







## Empress Nebulus

**PRICE:** £259

**ORIGIN:** Canada

**TYPE:** Chorus/vibrato/flanger pedal

**FEATURES:** True-bypass, 8 presets

**CONTROLS:** See website

**FOOTSWITCHES:** Preset, bypass

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard output

**POWER:** 9V battery or 9-12V DC adaptor (300mA)

**DIMENSIONS:** 114 (w) x 89 (d) x 57mm (h)

An all-in-one modulation stompbox, the Nebulus delivers chorus, vibe or flange, each with three variations for a total of nine effects (basic or multi-chorus, chorus with tremolo, univibe, vibrato, rotary, tape flanging, 70s pedal flanger or thru-zero flanging). On top of that, each can have a switched tonal character of 'bright' or 'warm' besides the normal sound, and can likewise have 'little' or 'lots' of an effect-specific modification, such as regeneration for the flanger. There are standard rate, depth and output knobs, plus a mix knob that sets a dry/wet blend. Eight onboard presets can save all knob and switch positions, and these can be scrolled through with the preset footswitch – each indicated by a different coloured LED. Chosen well to cover the most favoured modulation types for guitar, the sounds are classy, and offer real flexibility for gigging.

### Verdict

A great choice if you want a single pedal with a relatively small footprint.

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★

**Guitarist says:** A modulation get-out-of-jail card



## Empress Vintage Modified Superdelay

**PRICE:** £389

**ORIGIN:** Canada

**TYPE:** Delay pedal

**FEATURES:** True-bypass, tap tempo, 8 presets

**CONTROLS:** See website

**FOOTSWITCHES:** Tap tempo, presets, bypass

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard output, exp pedal input

**POWER:** 9-12V DC adaptor (300mA) supplied

**DIMENSIONS:** 145 (w) x 100 (d) x 70mm (h)

The Vintage Modified Superdelay is a tweaked version of the standard Superdelay pedal with enhancements to the tape delay emulations. You get several delay types, including reverse, a rhythm mode where you can set the intervals between multitap repeats with the tap tempo footswitch, and a looper. Each delay type also has three selectable variations. The tape delay mode has standard tape delay, tape delay emulating an old machine with wow and flutter and tape delay from a tape that's past its best. All repeats can have either top or bottom end rolled off with a filter switch and can have slow or fast modulation applied. Come across a sound you really like and you can save it – the pedal has eight preset slots – and you can plug in an expression pedal to control delay mix or feedback.

### Verdict

It's expensive, but it's a practical all-round delay with a range of sounds, including some of the best single-head tape echo emulations around.

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★

**Guitarist says:** Multi-faceted delay with great tape echo emulations

