

Pigtronix Pedals **£139-£319**

Six quirky new effects boxes from the porcine US maker

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Based in Long Island NY, Pigtronix has been producing effects pedals since 2004, the first being its EP-1 Envelope Phaser – a modulation pedal with a phaser that could be controlled by an envelope follower. That set the mould for a range of pedals that are different from the norm: colourful, quirky and feature-laden, with many offering extra control options over their basic effect. Pigtronix pedals are endorsed by Andy Summers, Adrian Belew and Guthrie Govan, among others.



Pigtronix Tremvelope

PRICE: £189

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Tremolo pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Sensitivity, depth, speed acceleration switch, depth switch, speed switch, waveform switch, envelope footswitch, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, stereo output, trigger input, speed exp, volume/pan exp

POWER: 18V DC from supplied adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 145 (w) x 119 (d) x 38mm (h)

The Tremvelope can be used conventionally, but its standout feature is a switchable envelope follower that lets you control the speed and depth of the effect with your playing dynamics. As a basic tremolo, you get a choice of two waveforms – a sine wave and a ramp (sawtooth) wave with controls to set the speed and depth.

A sensitivity knob determines how the tremolo changes in response to picking dynamics and there are several options as to how it changes the tremolo. Speed and depth both have three-way switches to determine whether they speed up, slow down or don't react to the triggered envelope, while a third selects whether the speed of acceleration/deceleration is slow or fast. More versatility is available via expression pedal and trigger inputs. Once you've set it up, having your picking alter the tremolo creates interesting and musical shading for song parts.

Verdict

Cool tremolo with an extra layer of nuanced expression.

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A tremolo pedal with a difference – dynamic control

Pigtronix FAT Drive

PRICE: £139

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Overdrive pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass

CONTROLS: Volume, gain, tone, hi/lo gain switch, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output

POWER: 9-18V DC from supplied adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 61 (w) x 112 (d) x 25mm (h)

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While most of the Pigtronix pedals are bedecked with multiple controls, the FAT Drive looks like your standard pedal with volume, gain and tone knobs plus a More switch for extra welly.

But the tone knob is actually a low pass filter and has no effect at all on your sound when fully clockwise, rolling it back, though, reduces the top end for a smoother/darker sound, although it's never dull. With the gain knob down, you can get useful clean boosts from about two o'clock on the volume knob. Advancing the gain knob starts bringing in dynamically natural amp-like overdrive that doesn't get much more distorted at its extremities than Tube Screamer-style pedals. Engage the More switch, however, and an alteration in the gain structure brings in a more saturated tone that puts this into stack-in-a-box distortion territory.

Verdict

Can't decide on a mild or full-on dirt pedal? You'll get both here.

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A nice-sounding overdrive with two levels of gain



<http://bit.ly/guitarist393>

Pigtronix Keymaster

PRICE: £239**ORIGIN:** USA**TYPE:** Switching pedal (series/parallel true-bypass effects mixer)**FEATURES:** True-bypass**CONTROLS:** Out boost, in boost, crossfade,

series/parallel switch,

loop A & B footswitches

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, sends A and B, returns A and B, XLR in, XLR out, exp pedal input**POWER:** 18V DC from supplied adaptor**DIMENSIONS:** 145 (w) x 119 (d) x 38mm (h)

The Keymaster is an interface to connect any audio source (instrument, line level, mic) with pedals and return the signal at the correct impedance. Basically, what you get is a pair of true bypass effects loops, each with its own footswitch, that can be run in series or parallel. In parallel mode, there's the option of crossfading between the two by adding an expression pedal.

On a pedalboard, the most obvious use is to bring in two different groups of pedals at any time. But you can also get creative by running two different dirt pedals in parallel for an interesting blend, or with one loop muted, utilising a cross-fading expression pedal as a blender to turn up delay, for example. For recording, the Keymaster is great for re-amping – running the recorded signal out to your pedals and back, or to an amp.

Verdict

A flexible tool that has a variety of applications – invaluable in the studio and something that could add real flexibility to your pedalboard.

GUITARIST RATING*Guitarist says:* A well-thought-out utility switching pedal

Pigtronix Gate Keeper

PRICE: £149**ORIGIN:** USA**TYPE:** Noise gate pedal**FEATURES:** True-bypass**CONTROLS:** Threshold, release**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard output,**POWER:** 18V DC from supplied adaptor**DIMENSIONS:** 61 (w) x 112 (d) x 25mm (h)

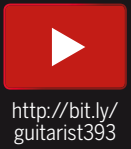
The Gate Keeper is a noise gate designed to keep all unwanted noise from your rig: it basically shuts down the signal when you stop playing and opens up again as soon as you hit a note. Just two knobs control the action – the threshold knob controls how much signal is needed to open the gate, while the release knob determines how long it takes the gate to close after it's fallen below the level set by the threshold, albeit with a limited range. A mute LED shows when the signal has fallen below either threshold.

The pedal certainly works fast and efficiently and doesn't seem detrimental to tone, but you have to be careful to get your knob positions just right, especially so if you're playing sustained notes and don't want them truncated. For certain types of music, perhaps high-gain metal riffing and chords, it can certainly keep your sound tight and controlled.

Verdict

If you have a hissy or hummy rig, this can unobtrusively keep the noise at bay.

GUITARIST RATING*Guitarist says:* An open and shut case for cleaning up your sound



Pigtronix Rototron

PRICE: £319

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Rotary speaker simulation pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass output, high rotor control input, low rotor control input, brake input

CONTROLS: Ramp, slow, fast, depth, slow/fast footswitch, bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS: 2x standard input, 2x standard output, high rotor control input, low rotor control input, brake input

POWER: 18V DC from supplied adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 145 (w) x 119 (d) x 38mm (h)

A dedicated rotary speaker simulator, the Rototron is an all-analogue design that combines various effects to achieve its goal. Operation can be mono or stereo, and fast and slow speeds are selectable with the second footswitch. We get knobs to set the depth (intensity) of the effect, fast and slow speeds, plus the ramp time between the two. The third mode of operation, where the rotating parts are left stationary, can be facilitated by connecting an external footswitch.

First impressions are that it's quite brightly voiced, which helps it cut through, though some may find it a little too trebly. The rotary sounds are pretty authentic, but you can go beyond the traditional by adding expression pedals for remote control of the simulated low and high rotors independently.

Verdict

A decent rotary speaker effect with plenty of hands-free control. We would have liked controls for the high/low rotor mix and/or the tone, though.



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Rotary speaker sim with all the foot control you'd ever need

Pigtronix Philosopher King

PRICE: £299

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Envelope generator sustainer pedal

FEATURES: True-bypass output, hold, sensitivity, volume, compression, treble, sustain, grit, One Shot, speed range, auto reset, swell, fade & bypass footswitches

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, CV in, loop out, loop in, trigger in

POWER: 18V DC from supplied adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 188 (w) x 117 (d) x 38mm (h)

The PK combines a compressor, sustainer, distortion and a polyphonic amplitude synthesizer. It creates a guitar sound with the compression and distortion and then feeds that into an amplitude modulation section for reshaping. Without the envelope-shaping, there's a neat range of compression, with added distortion via the Grit knob, all delivered via a knob that mixes it in with the dry sound for some great blends from really subtle to blistering high-gain sustain.

Hitting the Swell or Fade footswitches brings in the envelope, allowing pick-triggered volume swells that can be controlled nicely by playing dynamics. The synth functionality adds granular textures with variable timing there's quite a range of tones such as backwards tape-style envelopes, stuttery on/off tremolo and staccato single notes.

Verdict

The compression and distortion alone is great, but the tone and envelope-shaping opens up new sonic horizons.



GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A great choice for bringing something new to your sonic palette