

TC ELECTRONIC SHAKER, VORTEX, CORONA & FLASHBACK £105, £105, £105 & £125
EFFECTS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOE BRANSTON



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A new range of stompers that offer the signature sounds of some well-known players *by Trevor Curwen*

Denmark's TC Electronic is an effects legend. The last few years have seen the brand branching out into an innovative range of floor- and pedal-based products, including the genre-changing PolyTune pedal tuner and the successful Nova series stompboxes. The Novas can be quite complex in operation, however, with scrolling memories, double footswitches, 12V power and so on, so the company has now launched a new range of pedals that are very much the opposite. Here we're talking straight-up, simple stompboxes. We have the first four – there are reverb, distortion and overdrive to come.

You get a compact digital pedal that can run from a 9V battery or DC adaptor. Battery access is by removing the pedal baseplate via a large chromed knurled screw that needs a coin or screwdriver to initially loosen it. Inside, there's a pair of DIP switches – one that selects a high quality buffer rather than the default true bypass switching mode (which is

useful if the pedal is at the start or end of a long chain) and a second that offers dry kill for effect only, when the pedal is to be used in an amp's FX loop. The default setting is for analogue dry through signal, where the dry part of the signal isn't converted and passes through the pedal at all times, even when the effect is active. Each pedal has four knobs (one of which is a rotary switch in the case of the delay) plus a three-way switch and features selectable effects variations.

In designing these pedals TC wanted something that was fast, easy and intuitive to use, with the ability to change sounds on the fly with a few knob tweaks. However, it was also aware that most stompboxes have a core sound – a basic tonality that's purely their own. Something that's

fine if you like it, but that you're also unable to change if you grow tired of it. With this in mind it set about building in a feature to allow access to a number of alternative sounds. This feature is called TonePrint: each pedal has a USB connection that allows you to import a new sound, a custom 'tuning' of the pedal, from a computer and store it in a special onboard memory slot called up by the TonePrint position of the pedal's three-way switch (or the rotary switch in the case of the delay).

TC has made a number of these alternative 'tunings' available for each pedal, all easily accessed and downloaded into it from a special TonePrint website. And these aren't just voicings created by some Scandinavian boffin in a white lab coat...

Instead, TC has asked a bunch of the world's best guitar players to make TonePrints for the pedals. The company has given them a specially developed tuning software that allows them to tweak every single aspect of the pedals – parameter settings, what range the pots should have, what the min-mid-max values should be, and so on, to make their own perfect pedal. All of these Artist TonePrints will be available for loading into the pedals.

For starters, among others Steve Morse, Doug Aldrich, Orianthi and Joe Perry have done TonePrints for the delay pedal, while for the Chorus you have the likes of John Petrucci, Richard Kruspe and Bumblefoot putting in their 10 cents. What's more, by the time the pedals get their official launch at the 2011 NAMM show next month, more artists will have been signed up.

Shaker vibrato

The first position of the Shaker's three-way switch offers vibrato that can be turned on and off with the footswitch, but there's also a latch position, which allows the footswitch to apply the vibrato effect as long as you hold it down. As is also the case with the flanger and chorus pedals in this series, the central position of the three-way

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Want loads of delay types in one compact pedal? Here we are then...



switch calls up the selected TonePrint sound.

Sounds

Delivering smooth undulating pitch fluctuation, the Shaker offers cool vibrato sounds and can do a pretty good rotary speaker emulation. There's plenty of variation available –

The Rivals

TC pedals more or less go head to head with **BOSS** in this price range: the **CE-5 Chorus Ensemble** (£89), the **BF-3 Flanger** (£109) and the **DD-7 Digital Delay** (£159), but sadly no dedicated vibrato pedal as the VB-2 is long discontinued. **Line 6's** modelling pedal range has the **Echo Park** (£121) and **Liqua-Flange** (£55), while **DigiTech's HardWire** series has the **DL-8 Delay/Looper** (approx £186), **CR-7 Stereo Chorus** (approx. £162) and **TR-7 Tremolo/Rotary** (approx £150), which features vibrato sounds. For a dedicated vibrato pedal, albeit much more expensive, **Strymon's Ola dBucket Chorus And Vibrato** (£279) features a Ramp function similar to the Latch mode.

the speed and depth knobs work as you'd expect, but the tone knob changes the effect's emphasis on high and low frequencies letting you really focus in on sounds that will sit just right with your tone. The latch function is brilliant for adding vibrato just where and when you want it. It's particularly effective on a sustained note or chord – a 'rise time' knob determining how long it takes for the vibrato to reach its specified depth to provide the full effect.

Vortex flanger

Besides the TonePrint setting the Vortex offers two types of flanging – a basic flanger and a tape flanging emulation, also known as through zero flanging. Four knobs control speed, depth, feedback and delay time.

Sounds

The Vortex is a versatile flanger with plenty of potential variation available from the controls. This is especially true of the feedback knob, which offers variable amounts of both negative and positive feedback. It provides a host of familiar flanging sounds in its standard mode – metallic tonalities and obvious sweeping sounds are all possible. It's the tape option,

The Shaker's Latch function is brilliant for adding vibrato just when and where you want it

though, that's perhaps more interesting in dishing up less common sounds, especially so when phase cancellation occurs at the zero point and the sound disappears completely – something that can create strange tremolo-style effects.

Corona chorus

Besides its TonePrint sound the Corona delivers a standard chorus effect inspired by the vintage TC Stereo Chorus Flanger plus a Tri Chorus, a variation of the regular chorus that uses three stereo choruses with various offsets for both depth, speed, phase and chorus delay time to produce what TC describes as a unique, very broad and lush chorus.

Sounds

If you like clear as a bell chorus sounds, the Corona won't disappoint but, for a different chorus flavour, the Tri Chorus offers a more complex sound that's denser and more static than the standard setting. Both sound good in normal use, but also offer plenty of scope for

recording a big stereo sound using both outputs. And if it's subtlety you want, the FX level knob lets you add just a tickle of chorus to your dry sound.

Flashback delay/looper

The Flashback recalls TC's Nova Delay in the number of distinct effects it offers. Its fourth knob is a rotary switch that can call up nine different delay effects plus the TonePrint setting as well as setting it up as a looper. The smaller three-way switch sets the timing division for the tap tempo function and offers quarter note, eighth note or both for a multi-tap repeat pattern – tap tempo being implemented by pressing the footswitch and rhythmically hitting the strings (the pedal mutes when you do this).

Sounds

Displaying a comprehensive selection of delay types, there's little extra that we could ask for in a delay pedal, especially one as compact as this. The 2290 setting offers clean-as-you-like ➤



digital delay, but if you want degraded repeats there are three different flavours of them as well as a lush modulated delay and a very useful dynamic delay that lets the repeats come to prominence at the end of phrases. With 40 seconds in mono and 20 seconds in stereo, the looper offers a useful level of practicality, and whacking the strings for tap tempo makes perfect sense for guitarists.

Verdict

These are excellent pedals and are sensibly priced. They'd be very good value even without the TonePrint feature, but it's this that really sets them apart from the herd. TC has brought something to the table that other compact pedals don't

have – effectively these pedals are updatable.

In all four pedals, the TonePrint sounds that came straight out of the box offer a useful and nicely programmed variation on the named effect but, as at the time of testing the TonePrint website wasn't live, we weren't able to try out any of the signature sounds.

Nevertheless we're pretty sure that the likes of Jeff Beck and Steve Vai aren't going to put their names to something that sounds less-than-good, so we expect there will be some cool sounds coming down the road. And as long as TC can keep up a constant stream of artists willing to share their sounds, you'll always have something new to try out. **G**

The Bottom Line

Shaker

We like: TonePrint function; Latch mode; broad tonal range

We dislike: Nothing

Guitarist says: A cool pedal with an effect that's not heard as much as other modulation effects, but deserves to be

Vortex

We like: TonePrint; range of adjustment; unusual tape setting sounds

We dislike: Not much

Guitarist says: A flanger that goes beyond what many compact flangers can do

Corona

We like: TonePrint; two distinct chorus flavours; subtle blends

We dislike: Not much

Guitarist says: Two very different takes on the chorus effect in a single pedal

Flashback

We like: TonePrint; variety of delay effects; tap tempo

We dislike: Pedal doesn't mute instantly when holding down the footswitch for tap tempo

Guitarist says: A contender for the most versatile compact stompbox delay available



TC Electronic Shaker

PRICE: £105

ORIGIN: Denmark

TYPE: Vibrato

CONNECTIONS: 6.4mm jack input and output jack input, USB

CONTROLS: Speed, depth, rise time, tone, vibrato/toneprint/latch switch

FOOTSWITCHES: Bypass

POWER: 9V DC power from battery or adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 72 (w) x 122 (l) x 50mm (h)

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Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



TC Electronic Vortex

PRICE: £105

ORIGIN: Denmark

TYPE: Flanger

CONNECTIONS: 6.4mm jack inputs (L/mono, R), 6.4mm jack outputs (L/mono, R), USB

CONTROLS: Speed, depth, feedback, delay time, flanger/toneprint/tape switch

FOOTSWITCHES: Bypass

POWER: 9V DC power from battery or adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 72 (w) x 122 (l) x 50mm (h)

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



TC Electronic Corona

PRICE: £105

ORIGIN: Denmark

TYPE: Chorus

CONNECTIONS: 6.4mm jack inputs (L/mono, R), 6.4mm jack outputs (L/mono, R), USB

CONTROLS: Speed, depth, FX level, tone, chorus/toneprint/'tri cho' switch

FOOTSWITCHES: Bypass

POWER: 9V DC power from battery or adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 72 (w) x 122 (l) x 50mm (h)

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



TC Electronic Flashback

PRICE: £125

ORIGIN: Denmark

TYPE: Delay and looper pedal

CONNECTIONS: 6.4mm jack inputs (L/mono, R), 6.4mm jack outputs (L/mono, R), USB

CONTROLS: Delay, feedback, FX level, mode switch (2290, analogue, tape, lo-fi, dynamic, mod, ping pong, slap, reverse, loop, toneprint), interval switch

MAX DELAY TIME: 7 seconds (40 seconds in mono and 20 seconds in stereo for the looper)

FOOTSWITCHES: Bypass

POWER: 9V DC power from battery or adaptor (not supplied)

DIMENSIONS: 72 (w) x 122 (l) x 50mm (h)

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★