

EFFECTRODE DELTA-TREM

A VALVE-DRIVEN TREMOLO USING VINTAGE-STYLE OPTICAL CIRCUITRY HAS DAVID GREEVES ALL A-TREMBLE



Effectrode's range of valve-powered, retro-styled effects pedals are the brainchild of Phil Taylor. A passionate believer in the value of valve technology, he set out to take the same no-compromise approach to pedals that 'boutique' builders take to their amps when he started the company over a decade ago.

Since then, Effectrode has turned out some great sounding (and great looking) pedals, such as the highly rated Tube-Vibe. The latest creation is the Delta-Trem, a stereo panning tremolo that uses optical photocell circuitry, just like a vintage valve amp. While it has some much more advanced and unexpected features, if the Delta-Trem can reproduce the lush tremolo of a 'blackface' Fender combo, for example, that will be more than enough for many players.

CONSTRUCTION & FEATURES

Like the rest of the Effectrode range, the Delta-Trem could not be called compact, and the enclosure is made even bigger by a pair of chrome rails that serve to protect the two 12AX7 valves protruding from its top. The whole thing feels very solid and well-built, and the pots, footswitch and jack sockets are all high-quality.

There are three jack sockets at the rear (a single input and stereo outputs), alongside the input for the included 12V DC mains adaptor – that 12V is then converted to over 300V to run the valves at proper plate voltage, so a 9V battery just isn't going to do!

There are three knobs on top of the pedal, labelled 'shape', 'depth' and 'speed'. While the last two are pretty self-explanatory, the shape knob lets you sweep the tremolo through triangle, sine and square waveforms. The simplicity of these three controls is rather deceptive, however. Turn the

speed knob fully anti-clockwise and you can choose from a number of modes using the shape knob.

While the mode described above could be regarded as 'standard', you can also opt for a sawtooth wave. In this mode, the shape knob moves from a rising sawtooth to a falling sawtooth at its extremes, centring on a symmetrical triangle wave.

The fun really begins when you start exploring the Delta-Trem's dual-LFO modes. These are only applicable when you have the pedal hooked up in stereo. In the regular sine and sawtooth modes, the signal simply pans between left and right. However, in dual-LFO mode, the depth knob becomes a second speed control, letting you set the rate of the effect on the left and right independently. (LFO stands for 'low frequency oscillator', which sets the speed or 'frequency' of the pulses.) This opens up a whole host of possibilities. Sine and sawtooth variants are again available, with the shape knob altering them as before. A pair of LEDs (one red, one orange) give a visual indication of the tremolo pulse on the left and right outputs, which are especially useful for keeping track of those dual-LFO modes.

Finally, an internal 'dwell' trimpot lets you adjust the level of the effect to match the dry signal. By turning the depth knob fully anti-clockwise so that the effect is effectively off, you can use the Delta-Trem to give your signal a healthy valve-powered boost.

SOUNDS

That's not really what we came for, however. We want trem! This pedal uses an optical photocell arrangement (effectively, a small lamp coupled with a light-sensitive resistor) and this produces an exceptionally smooth and buttery tremolo effect. Even when the shape and depth knobs are turned to their most square-wave, abrupt

settings, the effect still has a soft, rounded edge. This means that if you're looking for choppy, extreme trem sounds, this pedal is not for you.

That is to take nothing away from the sound of the Delta-Trem, which is impressively warm and full while remaining completely transparent. It works brilliantly for vintage-style tremolo sounds, which are lush and engaging. We found the controls took a little time to get to grips with, however, and plenty of experimentation is required. The sawtooth mode and shape knob add variety, but again, these changes are fairly subtle, and the Delta-Trem's smooth character persists.

Hook up a couple of amps and you'll discover that the pedal sounds even better in stereo, from a subtle shimmer to a more pronounced throb, while the dual-LFO modes are tons of fun. Set the speed of the channels a small way apart, and they will slowly move in and out of phase, while setting one fast and the other slow can create an almost Leslie-like effect.

CONCLUSION

The Delta-Trem is a very well-built pedal that exhibits great clarity and warmth, with absolutely no discernible background noise. The cost reflects this high level of quality, but it is in the same price range as most other high-end stereo tremolo pedals. In mono mode, it produces some wonderful vintage trem tones, but it's important to note that it really comes to life in a two-amp setup, where its dual-LFO modes allow you to really get creative. This is perhaps not the pedal for more extreme effects, but it excels when it comes to smooth, shimmering tremolo. **GB**

GBINFO

EFFECTRODE DELTA-TREM

PRICE: £285

TYPE: Stereo tremolo

FEATURES: Shape, depth & speed controls, mono input, stereo outputs, 2 x 12AX7 valves, sine & square wave single- & dual-LFO modes

POWER: 12V DC mains adaptor (included)

DIMENSIONS: 95(h) x 170(w) x 120(d) mm

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GBVERDICT

EFFECTRODE DELTA-TREM

GOLD STARS

★ Warm, transparent valve signal path

★ Lush vintage optical tremolo sounds

★ Dual LFOs work brilliantly in stereo

BLACK MARKS

● Doesn't offer more extreme, choppy sounds

GBRATING

