



# Good Vibes

ALWAYS A SUCKER FOR A VACUUM TUBE OR THREE, **MICK TAYLOR** CHECKS OUT THIS WARMEST OF WOBBLERS. ANYONE FOR 'STAR SPANGLED BANNER'?

These are undoubtedly halcyon days for those of us with a penchant for specialist, hand-made stompboxes. From overdrives to octavers and compressors to choruses, there's every conceivable cacophonous creation on which to jump up and down. Not only that, but where any old components would once have sufficed, we now demand the likes of true-bypass switching and select-spec-*op* amps before we'd even go near a prospective new pedal-partner with a jack plug.

The latest such device to tempt our attentions is the Tube-Vibe from the US-based Effectrode Tube Effects Company. It's a re-work of the classic Uni-Vibe circuit, itself placed squarely in the history books by Messrs Hendrix, Vaughan and Trower to name but three.

The clue as to the whole ethos of this pedal, and indeed the whole company, is in the name – it's all about the humble vacuum tube. Boss man Phil Taylor replies with an emphatic “no!” when you ask if he makes solid-state pedals, so lets see how he fares in his element.

## CONSTRUCTION

The Tube-Vibe is a beefy box for an effects pedal – you'll need to leave enough space on your 'board for at least two standard pedals. Thankfully though, at just under a kilogram it's not even as heavy as a Crybaby wah.

From the outside, the Tube-Vibe looks substantial; it's housed in a fetching purple powder-coated diecast aluminium chassis, complete with the shiny metal protector bars for the trio of tubes. After that, you get a high-quality metal switch, plus Neutrik jacks fitted with compression washers so they won't come loose. Indeed, ➔

<b>GBINFO</b>	
<i>Tube-Vibe</i>	
<b>EFFECTRODE TUBE-VIBE</b>	
<b>PRICE:</b>	£269
<b>BUILT IN:</b>	USA
<b>TYPE:</b>	All-valve rotary speaker simulator
<b>FEATURES:</b>	All-valve signal path, 'speed', 'volume' and 'blend' pots, expression pedal in, variable LFO wave, 'vibe' and 'vibe/wah' modes. Custom LFO waves also available
<b>POWER:</b>	Requires 12V DC, 1.2A centre-positive mains adapter (supplied)
<b>DIMENSIONS:</b>	93mm (h) x 172(w) x 123mm (d) (max)
<b>WEIGHT:</b>	900g (2lbs)
<b>CONTACT:</b>	GnT Guitars
<b>PHONE:</b>	07980 014552 / 01159 304935
<b>WEB:</b>	www.effectrode.com

## WHO GOT DC POWER?

PLENTY OF JUICE REQUIRED TO GET THE T-V COOKIN'

With its trio of vacuum tubes, the Tube-Vibe has a healthy appetite for power. Batteries are clearly not an option, and don't even think about using it without the correct power supply – you need 12 volts DC, 1 amp current, and with a centre-positive polarity. Luckily, Effectrode supplies just such a device with the Tube-Vibe.



Effectrode makes much of the pedal's extremely high build quality, which continues on the inside; features such as double-sided fibreglass PCBs with 20oz copper traces, precision-grade metal film resistors, Omeg pots, and audiophile-grade resin-potted polyester coupling capacitors. It makes the true-bypass relay switching sound relatively humdrum by comparison, even though all you tone-buffs out there will regard this as Requirement No 1. In any case, it's all high-end stuff, put together with impeccable care, so one thing that's a little worrying is that the pots have very long shafts that poke through the chassis without any support. This means that; a) the first time a pint goes anywhere near the Tube-Vibe, all that lovely, sticky beer is going to run down into the internals (something true of the tube holes too), and b), there's considerable potential for damage underfoot when you're stomping. Effectrode boss Phil Taylor says it's done this way to enable the

**"YOU'RE INTO WIGGED-OUT, WIBBLY-WOBBLY TERRITORY"**



The three tubes are protected by sturdy metal bars

pot to be mounted with its back to the PCB. The first benefit is that in the event of a calamitous stomp, the back of the pot won't be pushed off and ruined, and secondly that these pots benefit from the ground plane screening of the PCB within a shielded enclosure: less noise, basically. As for their vulnerability, he says he's working on making the chassis holes smaller, and including some kind of collar/grommet to prevent the pot's shaft from moving or breaking off.

## FEATURES

All this techy stuff, and not a word yet about what it does! The Tube-Vibe deals primarily with vibrato, tremolo, a bit of phasing and some low-frequency oscillation; something all you tone-hounds out there will recognise as a recipe for a tasty rotary speaker simulation soup: think Uni-Vibe, a la Jimi Hendrix in 'Star Spangled Banner'.

The original Uni-Vibe uses phase shifting to simulate the classic Leslie combination of a high-frequency horn-plus-bass driver, albeit with "cheap silicon transistors", in the words of Phil Taylor. The Effectrode Tube-Vibe ups the ante with military

spec NOS valves to do the same job, that are then fine-tuned in the circuit to frequencies appropriate for electric guitar, rather than the organs for which Leslies were designed. In addition, the Tube-Vibe's input section is 1000k (relatively high impedance), which enables more high-end to get through than the UV's original low-impedance input, which could load single-coil pickups. That may all be part of the Uni-Vibe's charm of course, so doing it this way shouldn't necessarily be considered as 'better'.

The three pots on the top panel are: 'speed' for the rate of the effect pulses, 'volume' for the overall level of the pedal, and 'blend' to mix the dry and wet signals, enabling you to get the optimum balance of effected signal. The latter is particularly useful, as rotary speaker sims can often induce a little aural sea-sickness, so it's good to be able to back off the intensity in relation to your clean signal.

To get the best from the Tube-Vibe, it's a good idea to use an external expression pedal into the 'pedal' jack to be able to vary the speed of the rotary simulation. This is brilliant for adding texture and mood to your playing.

## WHO HE?

## BACKGROUND ON THE BOSS

Effectrode is based in Oregon, USA, and headed up by British expatriate Phil Taylor.

His early interest in science led him to repairing hi-fi amps and building effects pedals at just 14 years old!

"I hold several graduate and postgraduate qualifications in electronics and acoustics," says Phil on his website. "I now work at Oregon State University where I am completing

my PhD and working as an embedded firmware engineer developing machines for exploration of the deepest oceans in the world. My passion for designing tube gear culminated in the formation of Effectrode Tube Effects Company in 1996. My design philosophy is to build outstanding effects pedals in the true spirit of innovation, rather than simply recycle old circuit designs by changing the odd component here or there."



**DETAILS**

TUBE-POWERED HENDRIX TONES IN A WELL-THOUGHT-OUT PACKAGE



■ The three controls make for a no-fuss setup with which to control your sound



■ The casing is sturdy, and can take a beating



■ The indicator LED pulses in time with the effect when it's switched on: neat



**GBOPINION**

**EFFECTRODE TUBE-VIBE**

**GOLD STARS**

- ★ Unique design
- ★ Extremely high quality tone
- ★ More versatile than other rotary speaker sims

**BLACK MARKS**

- Pot shafts vulnerable

**IDEAL FOR...**

Rotary speaker sim fans wanting quality, versatility and incredible tone

**SOUNDS**

Fired up through a suitably high-quality tube amp, the basic tone of the Tube-Vibe is a real treat. It's warm and particularly swampy, something that you can make less so with an internal trim pot, for a less 'chewy' sound, as Effectrode describes it. But if it's Hendrix you're after, you're right there already with all the munching, vocal-like textures essential for that seminal tone. You're into wiggled-out wibbly-wobbly territory; it's a real churning feeling.

To be honest, Jimi was probably using some god-awful cable, going through god-knows what, generating more background noise than Madonna at Midnight Mass. In that respect, all this high-fidelity, super-clean signal path and multi-option operation might seem like overkill. In the modern studio environment, however, the infinitesimally small amount of background noise and high headroom is going to be a real boon. The tubes and high voltage operation means the Tube-Vibe does nothing to squash your tone, making it an ideal partner for very high quality amps and guitars: you lose nothing. There's little doubt

that the audio quality here is significantly better than the original (or modern reissue) Uni-Vibe, while retaining the classic pedal's sonic signature.

There are more tonal options too, in the form of two mini DIP switches. These enable you to select two different wave forms for the LFO (low frequency oscillator, that deals with the phase shifting). One is voiced similar to the original Uni-Vibe with 'rising peaks', while the other is a smoother triangle wave for a more uniform sweep. This will already be too much for players who just want a great Uni-Vibe sound – it's already that and more – but if either of those don't suit, you can even customise the LFO to give any wave shape you want – contact Effectrode for more on that.

Back down to earth, one really handy feature is that the status LED pulses in time with the speed of the effect – very handy for a quick visual guide as to where you are. Also, it's worth reiterating that the Tube-Vibe operates with virtually no background noise at all, despite putting out a really healthy output – that's great news for the studio in particular.

**GBCONCLUSION**

PURPLE AMAZE? THE TUBE-VIBE DOES JIMI AND MORE

■ **The Tube-Vibe is a highly impressive first show for the Effectrode brand. It's built with the kind of obsessive detail you expect in a boutique stompbox, yet still weighs in at a relatively Earthly price.**

Those of you who want to use an occasional rotary-speaker sim are probably better off sticking to the less expensive Uni- and Roto-Vibe models from Dunlop, but anyone looking for more versatility, less noise and a less compromised signal path will find all that and more in the Tube-Vibe. Specialist maybe, but oh-so special. **GB**

**GBRATINGS**

**EFFECTRODE TUBE-VIBE**

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★★
SOUNDS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
<b>GBVERDICT</b>	★★★★★