

EFFECTRODE TUBE-VIBE & PHASEOMATIC DELUXE BOTH £265  
EFFECTS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP SOWELS



## Effectrode Tube-Vibe & Phaseomatic Deluxe both £265

We've seen plenty of valve overdrive pedals, but Effectrode is now exploring the uncharted underwater world of valve modulation effects... **by Adrian Clark**

**E**ffectrode pedals are hand-assembled in small batches in Oregon, USA, although the company founder and pedal designer Phil Taylor is based in Cardiff. Phil started designing stompboxes in the mid-nineties, intrigued by the feasibility of building valve modulation pedals instead of the more usual overdrive or distortion. His rationale was that the valve-based technology behind so many classic guitar amps and pro-audio equipment could be applied to effects pedals, with the same exacting tonal requirements.

All six pedals in the current range are valve-driven, and involve subtle and interesting interpretations of standard stompbox genres. Phil's next project is an audiophile compressor pedal based on the legendary LA-2A studio levelling amplifier, something that those of us with home studios are eagerly waiting for.

Of course, there's nothing new about valve-powered effects pedals, as you can see from our Rivals section. However, most of the other valve pedals on the market (and a few multi-effects units) run the valves at very low voltages, in 'starvation' mode. On the Effectrode pedals, the valves run at proper amp voltages. As a result, your guitar is effectively plugged into a high-quality valve preamp, and all the dynamic sensitivity of a simple guitar/amp set-up can be maintained.

All of the Effectrode pedals are built for demanding professional use, with sturdy powder-coated diecast aluminium chassis, thick bars to protect the protruding valves, heavy-duty Carling footswitches and Neutrik sockets. A DC power supply is provided as batteries aren't an option and you shouldn't risk using just any old power supply!

The easy accessibility of nine-pin triode valves means that you

can easily alter the basic sounds of the Effectrode pedals: a 12AX7 can be replaced with a 12AT7 for more headroom, or you might have a treasured old Mullard you haven't yet found a use for.

### Tube-Vibe

Does the world need another Univibe clone? Well, perhaps not, but the Tube-Vibe isn't just another clone. While the original Univibe used transistors to create a convenient imitation of the rotating Leslie speaker for organists, the Tube-Vibe is voiced for guitar, and makes use of NOS valves – a 12AX7 and two lower-gain 12AT7s, to be precise.

There are three controls on the upper panel, all of which are self-explanatory: speed, intensity and volume. Along with the input and output, there's also a connection for use with an expression pedal. For adventurous tone hunters not afraid of a screwdriver, an internal trim-pot controls the blend of dry

and effected tone, replacing the simple chorus/vibrato switch of the original Univibe. In addition, a pair of DIP switches allow you to change the modulation waveform.

### Sounds

The first thing we noticed was the extremely quiet switching and low noise floor. Shattering the near-silence with that first chord (inevitably something Hendrix-y!) we then immediately heard the rich, warm tone of the pedal. We've mentioned in the past that it's difficult to judge the validity of low-voltage valves in pedals, as it's difficult to tell how much of the sonic character is coming from other circuitry; there's no such dilemma with the Tube-Vibe – this is 100 per cent valve tone!

The volume control adds enough gain for use as a solo boost. Plugging into a Class A valve amp set to 'clean-ish', the maxed-out

### The Rivals

The **Vox Cooltron** range (£139-149) and the excellent **Radial Tonebone Trimode** (£269) offer several variations on the overdrive/distortion theme, but they all work by 'starving' the valves at low voltages. So how about some classy non-valve modulation boxes? The **Red Witch Moon Phaser** (£184) has both phaser and tremolo effects and sounded gorgeous to our ears, while the **Moogerfooger MF103** (£219) offers more user control than any other phaser we've seen. For Univibe sounds, **Roger Mayer** is the master, and his **Voodoo Vibe Jr** (£240) also has the blend control.



Tube-Vibe's military-spec NOS valves



## The choice of waveforms is where the real power of the Phaseomatic lies

Tube-Vibe pushes the amp's front end into a wonderfully warm overdrive tone. There's only one drawback: the temptation to use the pseudo-rotary effect on all of your solos, just because you can...

### Phaseomatic Deluxe

The phaser is another example of how transistor technology has evolved to provide a cheaper solution to a valve-era problem, and again Phil Taylor has found his own way of using valve technology to realise the sonic concept. It's almost like a 'steampunk' parallel universe: how stompboxes would have developed if Japanese transistors hadn't driven the market.

The three controls on the Phaseomatic Deluxe are width, speed and blend, although this doesn't tell the full story. As you turn the width knob, it changes the shape of the modulation wave; starting with a smooth triangle wave, moving to a sine wave and then a rounded square wave at the 12 o'clock position. Then there are rising and falling sawtooth waves,

followed by stepped waves with three-eight steps depending on the position of the knob.

The speed control is considerably more flexible than you'd expect from most phasers. The LFO will produce a minimum speed of 1/40Hz, or one sweep every 40 seconds. This means you can easily get some great 'tunnel phasing' effects, where a static or almost-static sweep sounds like you're playing in a tunnel. To heighten this effect, the small switch on the front panel can be set to the more aggressive Metallic Resonance setting. For even more fine-tuning opportunities, there are two internal trim controls: one adjusting the amount of feedback, and the other the characteristics of the phaser sweep.

### Sounds

Once again, we are instantly impressed by the warm, rich sound and seemingly total absence of any frequency loss. Like the Tube-Vibe, the Phaseomatic can produce quite

a bit of extra gain (+6dB) and responds very well with a slightly overdriven valve amp. The wide range of the speed control makes it easy to get a huge range of famous phaser effects; using the slow 'tunnel' settings we nailed Alex Lifeson's Red Barchetta solo tone, before swiftly moving to a fast and wobbly Black Hole Sun by Soundgarden approximation.

The choice of waveforms is where the real power of the Phaseomatic lies, taking its musical possibilities far beyond most stompbox phasers. The step waveforms are more rounded and subtle than Zoom multi-FX users will be familiar with, but the step shape is clearly audible and highly effective if you have the resonance switch on the higher setting. The square wave setting also isn't as jarring as you might expect, producing a very musical pulsating effect.

### Verdict

It can be easy to fall for some of the romantic marketing spiel regarding valve-driven effects, and we're always on our guard with such products. In this case, though, there's no question of retro gimmickry; we're talking pure valve tone here, and it's obvious as soon as you plug in. These are two of the best-sounding stompboxes we've ever heard, especially the Phaseomatic, which is hugely flexible and lots of fun. The only downside is the price, which is probably way above what most people would dream of spending on a single pedal. Given the high-quality components, hand assembly and the maverick path Phil Taylor has chosen, the price isn't all that surprising. And besides, you might think you can't afford an Effectrode, but we think a quick demo might just persuade you otherwise. **B**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Stunning sound quality; creative approach to familiar pedal types

**We dislike:** Apart from the (understandable) price, nothing

**Guitarist says:** Effectrode's pedals are expensive and not for everyone, but what price would you pay for ultimate tone? Exactly. Take a listen.



### Effectrode Tube-Vibe

**PRICE:** £265

**ORIGIN:** USA

**TYPE:** Univibe-style chorus/vibrato pedal

**FEATURES:** Fully valve-powered

**CONTROLS:** Speed, intensity, volume (plus internal blend control and waveform switch)

**CONNECTIONS:** Input, output, expression pedal

**MIDI:** No

**POWER:** DC adaptor (supplied)

**OPTIONS:** None

**Cranes Music 02920 398215**

**www.effectrode.com**

### Test results

<b>Build quality</b>	★★★★★
<b>Features</b>	★★★★★
<b>Sound</b>	★★★★★
<b>Value for money</b>	★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Effectrode Phaseomatic Deluxe

**PRICE:** £265

**ORIGIN:** USA

**TYPE:** Phaser pedal

**FEATURES:** Fully valve-powered, multiple waveforms

**CONTROLS:** Width, speed, blend, resonance switch (plus internal controls for adjusting the feedback and sweep character)

**CONNECTIONS:** Input, output

**MIDI:** No

**POWER:** DC adaptor (supplied)

**OPTIONS:** None

### Test results

<b>Build quality</b>	★★★★★
<b>Features</b>	★★★★★
<b>Sound</b>	★★★★★
<b>Value for money</b>	★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



The Phaseomatic's chicken head knobs for width, speed and blend