

First Impression
A sturdy black wobble machine and a cool retro repetitor
First Impression



With stage practicality in mind, Carl Martin's latest two effects pedals are a two-in-one tremolo/vibrato and a usefully footswitchable double delay unit. Review by Huw Price

Carl Martin

TremO'vibe & Echotone

Vibrato and tremolo are closely related since both involve the use of an oscillator in the circuit design. It makes sense, then, to make both effects available in a single unit; after all, Vox managed it on the AC15 and AC30, and our own Dave Petersen adds phase shift to the stew on his Shere Sound Whirligig.

As its name implies, the Carl Martin TremO'vibe combines the two; the difference is that you can change from one to the other using a convenient footswitch. This is one of Carl Martin's top of the line pedals with an unusually tall chassis. They're made this way because they're mains-powered with a specially designed and regulated supply circuit intended to provide maximum headroom.

Both sides of the TremO'vibe have identical but independent controls - Depth and Speed. Maximum pitch modulation for the vibrato is +1 semitone and maximum volume modulation in tremolo is +6dB. The speed variation for both effects ranges from 0.5Hz/sec to 20Hz, and the low (600 Ohm) impedance output should drive a long cable to your amplifier without any treble loss.

Besides the plastic control knobs and the no-frills appointments this pedal feels very sturdy and solid. The switch gear and chassis are of decent quality, and the finish standard is very high.

SOUND

The TremO'vibe is extremely transparent. If you turn the two Depth controls right down and switch the bypass on and off, it's hard to distinguish any change in the dry signal besides a negligible volume lift in Vibrato mode. Starting with Tremolo, the TremO'vibe reminds me of the impressive Carl Martin Surf Trem - it's a very straightforward and musical tremolo



with a natural and playable feel. The speed range is about as wide as you'd ever need, and regardless of where you set the depth control there's always some definition to every note you strike - unlike some amp tremos I can think of. It's a similar story in Vibrato mode, where the TremO'vibe has an uncommonly pleasing shimmer with an almost singing quality. This vibrato certainly enhances clean sounds. It's sweet and deeply involving, offering a range of tones you'll recognise

from iconic recordings. At high Speed settings a more contemporary and slightly metallic quality creeps in, although things never get too 'out there'.

At maximum Depth and minimum Speed settings the asymmetric

FINAL SCORE

Build Quality	18/20
Playability	16/20
Sound	18/20
Value for money	18/20
Vibe	17/20
TOTAL	87%
Good for...	amp-like vibrato and tremolo effects with no noise at all
Look elsewhere...	better control over waveform

The TremO'vibe's vibrato is natural and musical, while the tremolo has a pleasing shimmer with an almost singing quality

FACTFILE

TREMO'VIBE

Specs: Vibrato and tremolo pedal. Made in Denmark

Controls: Independent Speed & Depth for each channel, two footswitches

Price: £169

Contact:
First Line
01626 830336
www.firstlinemusic.co.uk

THE COMPETITION

SHERE SOUND

Whirligig
Vibrato, tremolo and phase in one boutique box with great amp-like tone
RRP:

DEMETER

Tremulator
Designed to replicate the tremolo of vintage Fender amps, this is apparently Ry Cooder's trem of choice
RRP: £175

SEYMOUR DUNCAN

Shape Shifter
The ultimate when it comes to user control of vibrato and tremolo, with tap tempo
RRP: £129

Price: **£249**

FACTFILE

ECHOTONE

Specs: Dual mode delay pedal. Made in Denmark

Controls: Echo, Feedback, Tone & Time controls with Echo on/off, Select and Tempo footswitches

Price: £249

Contact: First Line
01626 830336
www.firstlinemusic.co.uk

waveform of the oscillator becomes apparent. This is particularly noticeable in Tremolo mode with a gradual rise time and an abrupt cutoff. The shape is preset, but it's well-chosen if you're primarily interested in vibrato and tremolo with an 'amp like' feel and sound.

ECHOTONE

Guitarists tend to use echo or delay in various ways. The classic application is slapback - a throwback to rock's earliest days when tape echoes weren't capable of long delay times. It's still hugely popular for rockabilly, rock'n'roll and roots styles, and the analogue-emulating Carl Martin Red Repeat has a high reputation amongst retro stylists. As analogue and digital technology grew to be more sophisticated longer delay times became possible, and new styles of delay usage evolved with exponents such as Dave Gilmour and The Edge, who often synchronised their delay times to match the drums to create complex rhythmic patterns and atmospherics. Many players enjoy both echo styles, but on a gig that involves the inconvenience of resetting your delay pedal between songs or buying two or more delays. The new Echotone is designed to deliver retro slapback as well as delay times up to 1200 milliseconds that you can set using a tap tempo footswitch.

Although it's closer in style to Carl Martin's arguably better looking Vintage Series pedals, the Echotone occupies the top end of their product line. The colour is a nicely faded white, and we appreciate the stylised tape loop surrounding the product name on the chassis.

THE COMPETITION

CARL MARTIN Red Repeat

If you just want analogue-sounding slapback, the Red Repeat performs more than half the Echotone's duties - but the Echotone offers shorter delay times for small room reverb sounds

RRP: £89

HUGHES & KETTNER Replex

A very convincing tube-driven tape echo simulator with a very high build quality

RRP: £399

BOSS RE20

An acclaimed stompbox offering a good digital simulation of Roland's legendary tape echo units

RRP: £152

The Echotone sounds deep, rich and musical, and will provide instant gratification for analogue delay fans



Like the TremO'vibe this is a mains powered unit with a built-in regulated supply. Echo controls the balance between dry and effected signals, Feedback sets the number of repeats, Tone rolls off the treble of the delay line and Time offers manual control of the delay time. The Echo footswitch provides non-true bypass and Select toggles between manual and tap tempo modes.

Thanks to an effects loop you can also add effects to the delay line while leaving the dry signal pristine. There's even a trail function with a small toggle switch next to the input jack which allows the echoes to fade away rather than cut abruptly when the Echotone is bypassed.

SOUNDS

The Echotone sounds deep, rich and musical rather than dry and sterile like some digital delays, and will provide instant gratification for analogue fans. It's not just a question of treble roll-off; the repeats gradually become more distorted and lo-fi as they fade out. It might just be an aural illusion, but I reckon I can hear a bit of modulation in there, too.

In operation it's very simple indeed, although it takes some time to get your head around the fact that the centre footswitch selects the delay mode rather than on/off. I guess that presupposes that most analogue echo fans keep their delay units permanently switched on, which is isn't too far off the mark in my case.

So the Echotone delivers a sterling slapback that's just as good as the Red Repeat. In fact, there's nothing much to choose between them sonically. But the Echotone's real trump card is the tap

tempo function. It works a treat, and with practice you should be able to tap in delays with triplet feels as well as quarter and half measures.

VERDICT

Some vibrato and tremolo pedals provide the user with more control over the sound and feel of the effects than the Carl Martin TremO'vibe, but most players will probably be content with simple and well-voiced pedals that offer amp like tone. This unit certainly fits that bill and the independent controls and simple foot switching are very ergonomic.

I love the Echotone: my only real gripe is having controls that are common to both modes. For instance I generally favour one repeat for slapback, but more feedback with longer delay times. I'd be quite happy with an independent feedback preset for slapback and an independent control for tap tempo mode. You can also encounter some strange, but brief noises when changing modes. Other than that the Echotone is hard to fault, but you could buy a Red Repeat plus a second tap tempo delay for this kind of money, and enjoy greater control.

FINAL SCORE	
Build Quality	18 / 20
Playability.....	17 / 20
Sound	18 / 20
Value for money.....	15 / 20
Vibe	18 / 20
TOTAL	86%
Good for... retro echoes and delay	
Look elsewhere... pristine digital repeats and independent mode controls	

