

Solid Rocks

THREE BRAND NEW STOMPBOXES FROM MARSHALL GUARANTEE TO LEND A NEW AMBIENCE TO YOUR GUITAR SOUNDS. **TIM SLATER** GOES IN SEARCH OF SPACE...



There are stompboxes and there are stompboxes. Some are very straightforward affairs that simply perform a particular specialist function, while others are virtually multi-FX units in disguise, offering everything from painstakingly detailed simulations of legendary artist tones to fully-programmable effects patches.

The latest batch of Marshall pedals fall somewhere in between the two, each pedal offering six different variations of their respective effects within the user-friendly format of a conventional stompbox. These three Marshall pedals are the latest additions to Marshall's stompbox line up; taking the form of a stereo digital delay, a modulation pedal offering six different chorus, phaser, flanger and rotary speaker effects, and that rarest of things: a stereo reverb pedal.

With Marshall's legendary build quality also well to the fore, these three pedals look tempting enough even before we plug in but, the proof of the pudding is in the listening; let's give 'em a whirl.

BUILD & FEATURES

The first that strikes you about Marshall's new digital effects pedals is their powerful air of sheer roadworthiness. Heavy-duty steel shells and robust metal jack sockets and footswitches create a convincing impression that you are looking at some serious kit; you'd never believe that these pedals were manufactured in China until you see the proof inscribed on the pedal's CE labels. Each pedal is powered by a choice between a single nine-volt battery and a nine-volt negative DC mains adaptor (probably a more sensible option in the long term, considering modulation

and reverb's voracious appetite for batteries). The battery compartment is accessed by undoing a single screw underneath the unit, the only real problem being that the Marshall pedal's sturdy design means that the battery compartment feels as secure as Fort Knox, requiring a coin or a screwdriver to unlock it when the battery needs replacing. This is fine on paper, but it boils down to the fact that battery changes are a somewhat fiddly and time-consuming exercise; a quick release lid would be an improvement without forcing a compromise on the pedal's otherwise rock solid design.

Despite this minor gripe, these pedals more than compensate by offering an extra degree of control over individual effect parameters via an external expression pedal connected to each pedal's Expression or Tap Tempo input. Using the external expression inputs allows

GBINFO

RG-1 REGENERATOR MODULATION

PRICE: £60

BUILT IN: China

TYPE: Modulation pedal

FEATURES: 6-way mode switch. Vintage chorus, multi chorus, vintage flanger, phaser, step phaser, vintage vibe (rotary speaker sim) speed, depth & regeneration rotary controls. Expression pedal input. Stereo outs, 'spill-over' feature on output 2 in mono mode

POWER: 9v battery and 9v DC mains input

CONTACT:

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GBOPINION

MARSHALL RG-1 REGENERATOR

GOLD STARS

- ★ Great effects
- ★ Fair price
- ★ Good build quality

BLACK MARKS

- Selecting between effect modes is a bit fiddly to execute

GBRATING

★★★★★



■ The Regenerator covers a whole host of modulation effects

"THE STEP PHASER IS A GREAT TOOL FOR WRITING NEW RIFFS"

hands-free control over modulation, speed and reverb decay on the Regenerator and Reflector pedals, plus the Echohead's delay speed is more easily adjusted on the fly with a tempo control pedal, connected via the Tap Tempo pedal input. Dual outputs on all three pedals function as conventional stereo outputs, but using Output 2 as the sole output in mono mode activates an interesting feature: the Spill-Over. Using the Spill-Over output causes the effects to naturally decay instead of cutting off abruptly when the effects are switched off; something probably best illustrated by the Echohead.

This kind of detail is occasionally found on top-drawer rack gear, but it remains a comparatively rare feature on stomp boxes – top marks to Marshall for including it.

RG-1 REGENERATOR MODULATION

The Regenerator contains virtually all of the most popular modulation effects – including chorus, phasing and flanging – plus a couple of more unusual options: a step phaser and a superb vintage-style rotary speaker simulation effect.

The six different effects types are selected with a six-position rotary Mode knob, with a further three more individual knobs controlling important parameters, including effect speed, depth and a regeneration control that adds a more extreme edge to the flanger mode. Two different

chorus modes include a 'vintage' chorus, that sounds very close to the ubiquitous feel of an industry standard chorus unit such as a Boss CE-2. More dramatic but arguably less appealing, the second Multi-Chorus mode sounds more like a combination of a Leslie-type rotary speaker simulation and a flanger; its faster modulation and stronger chorus effect are fun to use, but they have effect of making you feel queasy after a while.

Flangers are more flamboyant-sounding than standard chorus effects, but the Regenerator's Flanger mode covers an amazing range of textures, ranging from lush watery choruses to spine-chilling robotic shrieks. The latter are maybe a bit too extreme to use on every song, but the flanger mode is nevertheless an excellent sounding part of the Regenerator's palette.

By contrast, the Phaser's gentle old school modulation is subtler than the flanger, but certainly no less useful. Like a flanger, phasing is still an effect that you would use to help punctuate a song's chorus or hook rather than leaving it on the whole time, and its warm undulations can certainly liven up licks or chord sequences that might otherwise sound pretty tired. The Step Phaser definitely injects new life into

things, by virtue of the exciting way that it 'chops' its phasing sweeps into tiny steps or rhythmic patterns, rather like a sequencer. The Step Phaser is a great tool for writing new riffs without having to play too many notes, because the steps have a filtering effect that changes the pitch of the steps as they run through a cycle. At times it sounds rather like water gurgling down a plug hole, but it's also a great way to inspire some very cool-sounding new ideas.

The V.Vibe is the Regenerator's sixth and final effect, that claims to recreate the smooth swirling effect of the legendary Uni-vibe rotary speaker simulator as used by Hendrix, Robin Trower and a few notable guitar players since. This evocative sound is similar to chorus, in that it has a very musical-sounding modulation with a very mild pitch change, but the Vibe sounds different to a standard chorus because the modulation effect is 'felt' at the end of the sweep, rather than the continuous motion conveyed by chorus. The V. Vibe is arguably less versatile than the all-encompassing chorus, but with a little practice you can achieve some really spectacular-sounding organ-style bluesy chord vamps, by setting a fairly rapid speed and rolling back the guitar's tone control; very Booker T.



RF-1 REFLECTOR REVERB

When it comes down to naming something that guitarists rarely favour, reverb pedals are usually second only



■ Battery access is via the bottom plate: a tiny bit fiddly, but very solid

to a large tax bill. However unspectacular reverb pedals may initially appear, they do have their uses beyond being an expensive paperweight. As well as supplying vital atmosphere when reverb is otherwise unavailable from your amplifier, digital reverbs are useful for creating unusual percussive effects and other unconventional sounds, and the Reflector manages to deliver in both areas. The pedal has six different reverb types, including a cavernous sounding hall reverb, a plate reverb, two spring reverbs and a weird sounding reverse reverb that swells in volume when you play, instead of dying away like a standard reverb.

The reverse reverb is something of a speciality, but the remaining five reverb modes provide an excellent choice of atmospheric options that really work, insofar as enhancing an otherwise dry guitar sound.

The two incredibly realistic-sounding spring reverb options are particularly impressive; the difference being that Spring 2 is effectively a simulation of a double spring reverb, with an altogether broader, deeper reverb than Spring 1. The reverbs all sound very clean and organic, and surprisingly inspiring when you consider that reverb is usually something that most of us either ignore completely or take for granted at best. The reverse reverb is born to be teamed up with a slide, which opens the door to a truly inspiring set of genuinely spooky and occasionally mind-blowing sounds. Despite initial reservations about how much fun can be squeezed out of a humble reverb unit, the Reflector genuinely surprises, with the sheer variety and quality of the sounds available. Try one of these pedals and you are virtually guaranteed that you

will never view this much-under-represented effect in quite the same way again.

EH-1 ECHOHEAD DELAY

The Echohead features a Reverse mode that promises to inspire creative guitarists, simply because it is so completely different to the other delay types included alongside it. Backwards echo adds a surprising variety of fresh tones, and it can be wrestled into adapting to some pretty surprising musical styles including blues if you try hard enough, although you're best advised to warn your band-mates when a freaky backwards solo is in the pipeline. The other less-conventional echo effect is a Mod Filter, that applies a subtle phaser-like sweep that's synchronised to the delay signal, adding gentle undulations that give the echoes a little extra colour compared to standard delay sounds. Fans of realistic vintage style echoes should focus on the Echohead's Tape Echo patch, which is goosed up with a random modulation effect that duplicates the unpredictable 'wow and flutter' of a tape stretching over the record and playback heads of an elderly vintage tape echo machine. The realistic degradation of the echo signal also feels fairly realistic, although the Echohead thankfully doesn't replicate the irritating mechanical sounds, tape noise and general unreliability that plagues true tape echo devices that haven't been subject to rigorous and expensive maintenance.

For more dramatic, pulsing echoes, there is a Multi-Tap mode that owes its origins to the sounds produced by vintage multi-head echo machines like the Binson Echorec or



■ Six reverb modes with clear labelling: no confusion here

If you've been brainwashed into thinking that you have to pay BIG BUCKS for GREAT SOUND...

THINK AGAIN

GBINFO

RF-1 REFLECTOR REVERB

PRICE: £60

BUILT IN: China

TYPE: Digital reverb pedal.

FEATURES: 6-way mode switch. Hall, plate, room, spring 1, spring 2 and reverse modes. Reverb time, damping & level rotary controls. Expression pedal input. Stereo outs, 'spill-over' feature on output 2 in mono mode

POWER: 9v battery and 9v DC mains input

CONTACT: Marshall Amplification Ltd
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GBOPINION

MARSHALL RF-1 REFLECTOR REVERB

GOLD STARS

- ★ Great quality 'verbs
- ★ Versatile

BLACK MARKS

- Is probably best suited to a studio setup than a live rig

GBRATING

★★★★★

DETAILS

AN EXCELLENT TRIO OF EFFECTS PEDALS FROM BLIGHTY'S BIGGEST NAME IN AMPLIFIERS



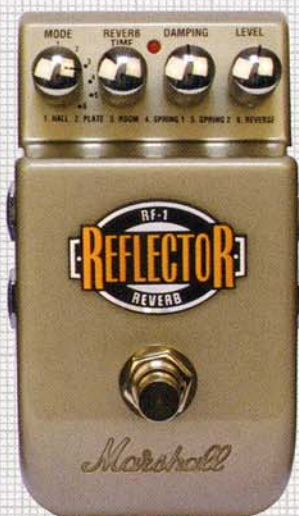
■ Each is powered by either battery or a 9V DC adaptor (not supplied)



■ Stereo outputs offer you maximum spread



■ Six cool modulation effects in one pedal



GBCONCLUSION

THREE FEATURE-PACKED PEDALS FROM MARSHALL, EACH WITH THEIR OWN UNIQUE FLAVOUR

■ All of these Marshall pedals tick the right boxes, both in terms of their truly impressive build quality and, most importantly, the sheer variety and quality of each pedal's effects leaves very little to be desired.

Teaming the Echohead delay with a decent tap-tempo footswitch introduces more of a 'hands-free' element that is welcome when playing live but changing between echo modes remains a bit fiddly due to the mini rotary mode switch. The pedal's compact size does compensate for this, though; it will easily fit onto a pedal board, whereas something like a Line 6 DL-4 requires a lot more space in return for its facility to remote switch between different echo modes or models.

The Reflector reverb pedal is probably the least immediately exciting of the three new Marshall stompers and it might be better appreciated as a studio effect rather than a live gizmo. Mounted on a pedalboard the Reflector is still worth experimenting with.

The Regenerator feels similar to the Echohead by virtue of the trade-off between the pedal's concise size and impressive range of effects versus the inconvenience of no hands-free facility to switch between the different effects modes quickly on stage. If quick sound-changes aren't required, however, all of these pedals are very tempting choices that make a lot of very cool noises in return for a fairly slim wad of notes. **GB**

GBINFO

EH-1 ECHOHEAD

PRICE: £65
BUILT IN: China
TYPE: Digital delay pedal.
FEATURES: 6-way mode switch, Hi-fi, analogue, tape echo, multi-tap, reverse and mod filter modes. Delay time, feedback & level rotary controls. Expression pedal input. Stereo outs, 'spill-over' feature on output 2 in mono mode
POWER: 9v battery and 9 v DC mains input

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the Watkins Copicat – both made use of multiple playback heads to produce 'bouncing' rhythmic echoes. Those Shadows fans amongst you who aren't fussed about recreating Hank's tone on completely authentic gear (there must be a few of them around, surely?) will appreciate that the Echohead's Multi-Tap mode doesn't do a bad job of replicating the trickling echoes cascading through 'Wonderful Land' or 'Apache'. The remaining two modes are Analogue

and Hi-Fi. Selecting Analogue offers up the option of a decidedly subtle, chorus-like modulation, and warmly degenerating repeats, clearly aimed at emulating the Electro Harmonix Memory Man, and possibly a Roland Space Echo. Hi-Fi's icy crystalline-sounding delay, however, sounds almost disarmingly pure, and will most likely appeal more to players who prefer their delay sounds to be neither shaken nor stirred.

■ A highly capable all-round echo and delay pedal



GBOPINION

MARSHALL EH-1 ECHOHEAD

GOLD STARS
 ★ Versatile and very authentic-sounding delay textures
 ★ Great price
BLACK MARKS
 ● Fiddly controls

GBRATING
 ●●●●●