

# TRIPLE TREAT

CLASSIC SOUNDS IN STOMPBOX FORM?  
**PAUL SALTER** SAMPLES A PERFECT  
 TRIO FOR THE SURF SECT



## GBINFO

### MXR CLASSIC 108 FUZZ

PRICE: £159.99

TYPE: Fuzz stompbox

FEATURES: Volume & fuzz controls, buffer switch

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC mains adaptor (not included)

DIMENSIONS: 60(h) x 90(w) x 125(d) mm

### MXR CARBON COPY ANALOG DELAY

PRICE: £199

TYPE: Analogue delay stompbox with modulation

FEATURES: Regen, mix & delay controls, modulation switch, internal trim pots

POWER: 9V battery or 9V DC mains adaptor (not included)

DIMENSIONS: 54(h) x 70(w) x 115(d) mm

### MXR STEREO TREMOLO

PRICE: £219

TYPE: Stereo tremolo stompbox

FEATURES: Mono/stereo in & out, pan switch, depth, shape & speed controls

POWER: 2 x 9V battery or 18V DC mains adaptor (not included)

DIMENSIONS: 60(h) x 100(w) x 125(d) mm

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MXR is one of those brand names everybody seems familiar with. Most electric players have owned at least one MXR pedal over the years, as have some very famous names. Founded in the early 1970s, MXR's very first product was the legendary Phase 90. This became an undisputed classic, especially after it was heavily featured on the first two Van Halen albums.

These days, the MXR brand is owned and operated by the Jim Dunlop company. Along with various reissues of the company's original designs, Dunlop has produced a number of completely new ones. These three pedals are an interesting mix of vintage and modern influences. Let's see if the MXR legend lives on...

### CLASSIC 108 FUZZ

The Classic 108 Fuzz is based on Dunlop's Jimi Hendrix Fuzz Face pedal, which uses a BC108 silicon transistor. Unlike the Hendrix pedal, this stompbox has the added convenience of an easy-access

9V battery compartment and a power adaptor input.

This pedal's cast metal chassis has been treated to a turquoise Hammerite-like finish that's as hard-wearing as it is funky in a vintage kinda way. The volume and fuzz knobs are classic, skirted, hard plastic types that feel positive and smooth, and you get a chunky metal footswitch that's electronically silent but has that reassuring mechanical

click when you stamp on it. This is how we want our pedals built!

In case you miss the click, the indicator LED is a bright blue that really carries in low-light conditions. A smaller LED illuminates the small buffer switch when activated. This is designed to cope with wah pedals placed before the Classic 108 Fuzz in the signal chain.

### SOUNDS - CLASSIC FUZZ

Although some people will tell you that silicon transistor-derived clipping is harsh and unmusical compared

**GBVERDICT**

**MXR PEDALS**  
**GOLD STARS**  
 ★ Durable construction  
 ★ Big sounds and low background noise  
 ★ Handy extra features

**BLACK MARKS**  
 ● The Stereo Trem is a little pricey if you're not going to use the stereo features

**GBRATING**  
 ●●●●●



to the sound of germanium transistors, that's not necessarily the case. The Classic 108 Fuzz certainly has plenty of edge and aggression, but it's capable of producing smoother fuzz sounds too. We're talking vintage Carlos Santana and the Isley Brother's 'Summer Breeze', rather than a wasp in a tin can.

Complex chords are no problem and, when you find that sweet spot, you can ease in and out of the effect with the strength of your picking – it's surprisingly dynamic. Boutique fuzz connoisseurs may not find all they wish for here, as the Classic 108 Fuzz doesn't quite achieve the depth and complexity of the very best fuzz boxes. However, there's still a lot to like, and the additional buffer switch will come in handy for wah fanatics.

### CARBON COPY ANALOG DELAY

If the 108 Fuzz has a butch and workmanlike demeanour, the Carbon Copy is rather more petite and flashy, with a high-gloss, sparkly green finish. Aesthetics aside, this pedal has been built with the same calibre of rock-solid die-cast chassis, a sturdy footswitch and decent knobs, even if they are smaller and placed rather close together out of necessity.

The controls cover the most immediate parameters of a delay effect – 'regen' (short for regeneration, setting the number of repeats),

delay (time) and mix (effect level) – but you also get the option of adding some modulation to the repeats with the small 'mod' button. You can adjust the behaviour of this bonus feature with two internal trim pots.

You will have to get your screwdriver out and remove the whole back plate to access these, or to change the battery – this is the only pedal of the three not to have a flip-top battery compartment. In any case, we'd recommend you sort yourself a 9V adaptor for this one, as delay pedals are always fairly power-hungry.

### SOUNDS - CARBON COPY

Anyone remember carbon copiers? Nasty, primitive and messy things that produced murky-looking copies of your documents that got more indistinct as you went on. The analogue method of producing delay using 'bucket brigade' chips (imagine a line of firemen passing a bucket of water from one to the other) has a similar result. The first repeat is warm but fairly clear, then with each successive repeat the signal degrades.

Rather than being a negative, however, this can sound great. The intrinsic loss of high frequencies means you can have big, friendly slap-back repeats that seem so much more natural and rounded than a crystal-clear digital effect, or a subtle reverb-like effect that gives your tone the aural equivalent of a nice cuddle.

Wind up the level, combine with a little of the fuzz and trem pedals and you get the perfect



setup for a grungy surf sound. If that's not to your taste, set it for a standard delay with the modulation switch engaged and the added shimmer will have you reaching for a Strat and those early U2 riffs by The Edge. All told, the MXR Carbon Copy is capable of some very nice analogue delay sounds, from slap echo to medium-length delays, without producing too much excess background noise.

### STEREO TREMOLO

The Stereo Tremolo is the largest of the three pedals. The base plate is held in place with hex-type screws, so it's just as well that it also has a plastic cavity cover that – rather stiffly – reveals the pair of 9V batteries needed to power it. Again, it might be wise to hunt out a suitable 18V DC adaptor, as buying these batteries in pairs will soon get expensive.

We get a set of knurled metal knobs this time, which take care of tremolo depth, shape and speed. As its name suggests, the Stereo Tremolo is equipped with stereo outputs – hook yourself



up to two amplifiers, stamp on the 'pan' footswitch and the tremolo effect turns into a head-spinning stereo panner. The LED that lives beneath this secondary footswitch lets you know what's going on by pulsing along with the trem speed in green while in mono, and flashing alternate red and green in stereo mode.

If you regularly use a stereo setup, you'll be pleased to see that this pedal is also equipped with stereo inputs, meaning that this needn't be the first effect in your stereo processing chain. £219 is fairly expensive for a tremolo pedal, however, so unless you need stereo ins and outs, we'd suggest looking for a less costly mono unit.

### SOUNDS

Tremolo, which modulates the volume of your signal, is one of the simplest effects around and, in the right hands, one of the most stunning. This MXR is a fine example, oozing a sense of quality as soon as you plug in. There's plenty of headroom thanks to the 18V supply, and this effect certainly sounds very big.

Whatever's going on inside that purple chassis, however, the result is one of those stompboxes that inspires you straight away. You don't so much tweak the controls to get a sound as feel your way through the options until you hit the right spot. With the shape control you can go from a square-wave, on/off effect to the shimmering pulse of the sine wave variety. As part of a stereo rig, the effect becomes even more dramatic. It's quiet when bypassed, and you get a ridiculously huge sound when it's engaged.

### CONCLUSION

These MXR pedals offer good quality effects in a roadworthy package. Each effect is well above average in terms of the actual sound

produced, but they also have the kind of intuitive feel and totally useable range that makes them feel like old friends straight away. Priced from £160 to £219, these are not budget effects and you have a huge choice in front of you when you start laying out this kind of money on stompboxes.

However, swap any of these three with a comparable, similarly priced pedal and we doubt you would have any more fun. **GB**

