

MXR BLACK LABEL CHORUS



PRICE
£159



Zakk Wylde already has a couple of stonking signature pedals to his name. Daniel Hodgson finds out if this chorus pedal can continue the trend

Chorus is an effect that can be used to thicken your tone or create swirling spatial effects, but if done badly can make you sound like the cheesiest of '80s soft rockers. Many great chorus pedals have come along over the years, from Boss' original CE-1 Chorus Ensemble to Electro-Harmonix's single-knobbed Small Clone. A more recent device to add to the list is the MXR Stereo Chorus, a pedal that has been a mainstay of Zakk Wylde's touring pedalboard for some time, until now...

Construction & Features

From past experience, we know that Mr Wylde isn't the type to put his name on a product that he has no intention of using – just like his signature Gibson guitars and Marshall amps, his signature Crybaby wah and MXR Wylde Overdrive get put to the test on the road every night.

Now it appears that the large, 18V-powered Stereo Chorus pedal

is out and the new, compact Black Label Chorus is in. Housed in the standard MXR chassis, the pedal is finished in a clear coat over machined metal, with Zakk's 'bullseye' logo surrounding the footswitch. A single input is joined by a pair of outputs, allowing for mono or stereo operation – in stereo, the 'thru' output carries the dry signal while the 'mono' output carries the effected signal. A Boss-style 9V adaptor input is located on the side of the pedal, although you can also power the unit with a 9V battery, accessed by unscrewing the baseplate.

The usual controls for rate and depth are joined by a level control and a pair of EQ cut controls governing the high and low frequencies. These controls are all chassis-mounted and are fitted with small but sturdy knobs with knurled sides. They're set close together and can be a little fiddly in use, though they do feel like quality pots.

Sounds

With a trusty Small Clone chorus in tow for comparison, we set about sampling the warbling delights of the Black Label Chorus. With the level control set midway (which is more or less unity gain) and with both EQ controls set to their middle positions, a nice, bubbly chorus is easily produced, with a clear top end and some nice depth to the tone. It has to be said that this chorus gets neither as deep nor as fast as our Small Clone, but there is still a decent amount of range in both respects.

In addition, the Black Label Chorus is certainly the more tonally 'clear' of the two.

Many chorus pedals would be happy to offer this set of sounds alone, but we've yet to see what those EQ controls can do. Setting the high cut control in its upper registers while tapering off the low content, we get an angelic shimmer around the higher frequencies, which works especially well with picked arpeggios and clean chord passages – Andy Summers eat your heart out!

This hi-fi sheen can be replaced with a thicker, more grungy tone by upping the lows and taming the highs, and these sounds get even better with a big dollop of distortion added to the mix – there's a good chance that the intro to 'Come As You Are' will accidentally fall under your fingers.

Conclusion

As we see it, the MXR Black Label Chorus is a mightily well-engineered take on the classic MXR Stereo Chorus sound. A smaller enclosure and the ability to run from a standard 9V power source have obvious benefits, but at the same time the unit surrenders almost none of its bigger brother's tweakability. There's a good range of chorus sounds on offer, and while the pedal tends to lean more towards the subtle, atmospheric shimmer Wylde favours, it shouldn't have any problems fitting in with almost any genre of music. **GB**



MXR BLACK LABEL CHORUS

Price: £159

Features: Level, rate, depth & high/low EQ cut controls, mono input, mono & thru outputs

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

Dimensions: 55(h) x 60(w) x 110(d) mm

CONTACT DETAILS

John Hornby Skewes & Co Ltd

Tel: 0113 286 5381

www.jimdunlop.com

GB VERDICT

GOLD STARS

- ★ Good range of chorus sounds
- ★ Quiet operation
- ★ Lots of control

BLACK MARKS

- Small knobs can be fiddly
- Some will want more extreme tones

BEST FOR...

Anyone after a chorus with lots of tonal variety rather than one simple sound

GB RATING



WITH BOTH EQ CONTROLS SET TO THEIR MIDDLE POSITIONS, A NICE, BUBBLY CHORUS IS EASILY PRODUCED