

ALEXANDER PEDALS

OBLIVION

REVIEW BY **ERIC TISCHLER**

STREET PRICE **\$329.99**



According to Alexander, “The Oblivion is our exploration of what exists in the darkest corners of the sonic universe.” Given that, I was totally surprised when I plugged the pedal in and started up the first delay voicing, Analog. So let’s not worry about the marketing, let’s not worry about the name—let’s just talk about how good and tweakable this delay pedal is.

The Oblivion has four basic voices—Analog, Tape, Oil Can, and Multi—and two layers of controls that are adjustable via the knobs; using the Select/Shift button, you can toggle between voicings and

control layers. The “top” layer of controls are Mix (which controls the balance of clean signal to delay), Time (which controls the rate of the delay, although the Oblivion also has tap tempo) and Repeat (which controls the length of delay). The last two knobs are Rate and Depth, and those control the rate and depth of the modulation of the repeated signal (Depth selects the delay patterns when in Multi mode).

The second layer of controls include a volume boost (yay!), a feature that changes the wave shape of the repeated signal (sine, square, ramp up, and ramp

down), and tone control (in Oil Can mode this controls the “age of the oil”). I found it all a bit overwhelming, but you can save settings by holding down the Tap, and you can toggle through up to five presets by holding down the Bypass (on/off) footswitch—more presets are available via MIDI.

It’s a lot to take in, and not always easy to navigate, but it sounds fantastic. The Analog mode was the first one I tried and, as you might’ve gathered, it wasn’t dark at all. Rather, the delays were bright and robust, notable in their own but different enough from the clean signal that they

didn't drown it out. When I think "Analog Delay," I usually think of something like an old Ibanez AD-9—thick and clunky. Instead, this setting reminded me of my old Yamaha E1005, which was a fantastic analog delay. Of course, playing with the Tone control and Rate and Depth knobs, but for big and fuzzy, there was the Tape setting.

I was a little perplexed by the Tape setting, as it was set with fairly intense modulation and a dark voicing. When I think of tape, I think of machines that are well-maintained (and that may be my first mistake) and produce a rich, clean sound. I turned the Rate and Depth down and, once again dipping into the secondary controls, I turned the tone up and got a lovely sound that wasn't as forceful as the initial analog setting and had the nice breadth and depth I associate with a tape delay.

You want murky? Try the Oil Can setting. Truly, this voicing is viscous, with thick, virtually amorphous repeats

that, while not impervious to the controls, were hard to tame or shape; neither Rate nor Depth nor even Repeat seemed to have much control over this beast. Oblivion, at last!

The Multi setting is bright and clean, as befits a setting with multiple delays at work. While the characteristics of the delay itself are unexceptional (apart from sounding really good), the eight options for combining the "multiple playback heads" are at worst fun and at best useful. Even I, who fears to trust an automated polyrhythm, found the first—and most modest—setting to be useful.

I was bummed to find there's no option for driving the Oblivion into self-oscillation, but then I read that an expression pedal can be used to control any parameter (which, obviously, includes Repeat): start with your main Oblivion settings and the expression pedal's heel back. Move the expression pedal to toe down and then change any settings to the far end

of the range and—through the magic of science!—the expression pedal will toggle between the initial setting and the second setting. Even crazier, the Oblivion's draw is a meager 20 milliamps, which means you can run with any center-negative nine-volt power supply. Sounds like a lot of bang for your buck? You're right: It is.

WHAT WE LIKE

A variety of great, tweakable sounds, with the option to save five settings.

CONCERNS

None, but two notes: accessing the full range of features is a clunky process, and it would be nice to be able to segue seamlessly between presets.