

JHS PEDALS

VCR

REVIEW BY **DAVID A. EVANS**

STREET PRICE **\$269.00**



Collaborations between musicians and pedal companies are not new, but they seem to be “trending” as of late. The VCR Ultracolor, which is the latest creation from the hive mind of JHS Pedals and Ryan Adams, epitomizes the tonal benefits of just such a collaboration. Adams’s crystal ear and JHS’s excellent construction deliver shimmering Chorus and Reverb in a unit that also acts as a volume boost. First-time users of the new VCR Ultracolor can be forgiven for their initial confusion about the pedal’s

name and origins. Indeed, this pedal is adorned with so many logos that it’s hard to tell who, exactly, didn’t have a hand in its creation. At the very top of the pedal, one sees “Ryan Adams”; below that, “VCR Ultracolor Volume Chorus Reverb”; below that, “Pax-Am;” and besides that, “JHS.” The pedal even features another logo on its side! But I digress.

The Adams/Pax-Am/JHS collaboration’s design is particularly interesting because each of the three effects can be added to or taken out of the mix with the flip of a toggle switch.

Say that a person wants only to boost the volume for a solo. Well, this person simply needs to flip up the Volume toggle and engage the on/off switch. (By the way, unity is more or less at the lowest knob setting, so the pedal will either boost the output or do nothing to it. The volume boost seemed very transparent to me.) The same can be said of the Chorus and Reverb effects: simply flip on the toggle and engage the on/off switch.

I really liked this design choice. Better to have a few toggles than a slew of footswitches, I say. On the

other hand, I imagine that footswitches for each effect would be more useful for performances. Potential buyers would be wise to consider the merits of the VCR's design in light of their own practices and preferences.

As for the chorus, I coaxed a pleasant and slow undulation with a slight metallic edge from the VCR in the slower settings. The effect cycled about once every second or so when the knob was set to roughly 2:00. Above 2:00, the effect transformed into a warble with a slight detune. At full-on, the chorus resembled the loopy, almost drunken quaver heard in Nirvana's "Radio Friendly Unit Shifter." One caveat: The Chorus appeared to output at a predetermined mix level.

The Reverb, like the chorus, has only one adjustment knob, which increases or decreases the reverb time or quantity. At shorter settings, the reverb reminded me of a spacious room such as a concert

hall. At moderate settings, the reverb began to take on the long-hallway effect, and at the highest settings, the reverb seemed to produce reflections within reflections. A longer decay trail followed, and I felt that the effect was reminiscent of spring reverb cranked to the max. The VCR, then, offers a range of different reverb sounds, although I wish that it gave me the option of adjusting, say, the decay. Still, the default tone the VCR provides is more than respectable.

When combined, the chorus and reverb produce the sort of shimmering, pleasant tone that calls for delicate finger style work or mournful slide guitar playing. The combination of chorus and reverb will surely please audience and player alike. And, if they can't quite hear the shimmering tones in the back row, flip the toggle to boost the volume.

Adams is a consummate showman, and he knows what sounds good live. (Check out his videos online

about his favored Fender Princeton amplifiers to hear what I'm talking about). JHS is a solid maker of pedals. For these reasons, I believe that guitarists everywhere would be well served by the VCR.

WHAT WE LIKE

Individually selectable boost, chorus, and reverb in one unit; pleasant chorus with a variety of reverb tones; a cool design that harkens to the days of VHS.

CONCERNS

Some people might prefer to have on/off rather than toggle switches for the effects; lack of fine adjustments for Chorus and Reverb.

