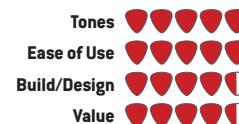


MXR Carbon Copy Mini

BY CHARLES SAUFLEY



RATINGS



Loving delay like I do (some would probably call it a crutch), I'm always itching to try the newest DSP version of some obscure tape/oil-can echo or pitch-modulated, twice-reversed delay machine. I love these pedals and the sounds they make possible. Which makes it curious that I so often return to my secondhand MXR Carbon Copy in a pinch.

Part of my affection for the Carbon Copy comes from its practicality in touring and travel situations. It's small, it always works, it's beautifully simple—even the glow-in-the-dark level indicators are invaluable. But practicality isn't what keeps me from pulling the Carbon Copy off my shelf at home. I do that because it sounds reliably great and gives a lot in terms of inspiration and depth without asking for a lot of fuss in return. It remains, in my book, a steal, and the perfect analog delay for veteran players or anyone just getting started with the type. So what could make the Carbon Copy even more utilitarian and appealing? How about a mini version that's half the size and includes a bright switch?

Mini Mean Green Machine

If you know the original Carbon Copy, you'll know the Carbon Copy Mini. The regen, mix, and delay controls are arrayed in the same triangle configuration as they are on the big version. The small push button that activates the modulation circuit is situated adjacent to the footswitch rather than adjacent to the mix knob as it is on the original. But MXR also made a very simple, but very awesome improvement by making the "modulation-on" LED orange instead blue, which is the color of the bypass LED. Why is that a big deal? Well at the risk making myself look a bit thick here, I can't say how many times, in a flurry of activity on a dark stage, I mistook the old blue "modulation-on" LED for the blue bypass LED and stood befuddled, wondering why my tone was suddenly so thin. So welcome to the party, little orange LED! Where have you been all my life?

Inside the enclosure, the circuit utilizes nearly every millimeter of space on the machine populated board. But they still found room for the two dials that adjust the modulation speed and depth (or "width" as it's known in MXR nomenclature). Unfortunately, it seems there wasn't room to make the bright switch a top-mounted push button like the modulation switch. The good news is that MXR didn't situate it on the


inside either. Instead it's hidden in a clearly labeled slot on the enclosure's side, tucked deep enough that you won't accidentally activate it, but accessible enough that you can switch it on with a small screwdriver or the tip of a pocketknife blade. A side-mounted blue LED indicates when the bright switch is on (and not once did I mistake it for the bypass switch LED).

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There's no letdown on the tone front when you switch on the Carbon Copy Mini. If I had to make a guess, I'd say it sounds about 98.3 percent the same as my old full-sized version. In moments I thought I perceived extra brightness from the Mini. But I'm also about 98.3 percent sure I tricked myself into that perception. At any rate, I would not hesitate to switch this unit in for my original. The repeats are soft, contoured, and slide seamlessly into the slipstream behind the dry signal—just as on the original, which has one of the most balanced delay voices I know. If you want to understand the appeal of analog delay, this is a great place to start.

If you're on the fence between an analog and digital delay because of issues of clarity or darkness, the bright switch may well give the advantage to the Carbon Copy. In bright mode it's brighter than a Boss DD-5. It's even brighter than my amp without the delay on! But I love the effect, and if you're concerned about your echoes lying buried in a mix, Carbon Copy Mini's bright mode may be the fix and then some.

The Verdict

I already love my original Carbon Copy. And if it weren't for my sentimental side and an irrational fear of twisting an ankle while stepping on unsecured mini pedals, I might love the Carbon Copy Mini even more. Just like its big brother, the Carbon Copy Mini is a rock-solid, reliable performer and a great deal too. 

PROS Sounds every bit as good as an original.

Contrasting LED for modulation mode. Super clear repeats in bright mode. It's mini!

CONS Too bad bright switch isn't top mounted.

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