

DIGITECH

OBSCURA ALTERED DELAY

REVIEW BY **NICK RAMBO**

STREET PRICE **\$149.95**



DigiTech has been on a serious tear over the last year, dropping an array of pedals and making a serious statement to the rest of the pedal world: Top this.

Last summer, it introduced us to two isolations of the company's flagship pedal—the much-heralded-yet-somewhat-polarizing Whammy—called the Drop and Luxe. Then, leading up to this year's Winter NAMM, we saw the Polara Stereo Reverb, Boneshaker Distortion and TRIO, each pedal turning more heads than the last. So perhaps it should

come as no surprise that DigiTech's newest creation is packed with great tones and a level of user control that should tempt other companies to up their game.

Behold—the Obscura Altered Delay.

SONIC MAYHEM

The Obscura has four unique delay modes that can be twisted and tweaked in real time to create some of the tastiest oscillating delay textures I've ever heard—but I'll get to that in a minute.

What you need to know first is that the top of the

box features a standard implementation of four control knobs, a true-bypass on/off switch and a mini toggle that turns delay trails off and on (which is really handy). Look closer and you'll see that the two lower controls are actually stacked pots with dual controls. So you've got Level and mode selector knobs on top, and combo controls for Delay Time/Repeats and Tone/Degrade on the bottom.

The Tone/Degrade is where the magic happens. DigiTech's Marketing Manager Tom Cram said it best: "Straight-ahead

repeats are just the starting point for twisting and morphing your delays upside down, inside out and into uncharted sonic territory.”

For each of the Obscura’s four modes—Analog, Tape, Lo-Fi and Reverse—the Degrade knob introduces a unique style of aural depravity. On the Tape mode, for instance, wow and flutter is increased to the point of a curiously delightful wobble. The 8-bit style processing of the Lo-Fi mode is intensified with additional input stage overdrive, and so on. Now, these changes weren’t drastically apparent to my ear in every mode, but cranking up the feedback to the point of oscillation (what DigiTech calls “Repeat Hold” mode) and changing the Delay Time, Tone and/or Degrade knobs got really tasty, really fast. You can definitely hear the manipulations happening in real time, and in no time at all, I was able to come up with some particularly delightful ambient

soundscapes.

ALTERED DELAY

If ambient style playing isn’t your thing, the Obscura shouldn’t necessarily be ruled out. The Tone knob alone is worth the price of admission in my opinion, as shaping the frequency response of the repeats is a fantastic experience. Plus, when you factor in the Obscura’s two seconds of delay time, useful tap tempo feature (with quarter, eighth and dotted eighth capabilities) and stereo capability, it just gets better and better.

STOMPLOCK

When I opened the Obscura’s box, I was understandably excited to play the pedal and almost missed a key feature—the Stomplock. What I thought was just a piece of protective packaging on the top of the pedal and tossed aside was actually a little tool DigiTech designed to keep your settings intact. I’ve seen stuff like this before, but

DigiTech adding this little setting-saver is a nice touch.

It also comes with perfectly cut Velcro—another thoughtful bonus.

WHAT WE LIKE

The Obscura is a surprisingly heavy pedal. No, really—it’s pretty weighty. And there’s something about a really solid feeling pedal that screams quality. I dig that.

CONCERNS

I sort of expected the Degrade knob to do a little more. You can definitely hear the promised “increasing signal degradation and high-frequency rolloff of successive repeats” with the repeats cranked up, but it wasn’t quite as apparent with more moderate delays.