

KEELEY ELECTRONICS CAVERNS

REVIEW BY **PHILLIP DODGE**

STREET PRICE **\$249.00**



Come along friends; today, we're going on a journey into America's deepest and most musical cavern—the Keeley Caverns. The Keeley Caverns is a brand new, dual-function, reverb and delay pedal from our good friends over at Keeley Effects. Featuring up to one full second of delay and three reverb modes, the Caverns provides a ton of features in one small package.

Speaking of small packages, the Keeley Caverns doubles down on the space savings by utilizing rear-mounted input, output, and power jacks and six miniature potentiometers. Not only do you get one great delay and three great reverbs,

but it takes up precious little pedalboard real estate. For the delay, you get controls for Time, Regeneration (labeled Regen), and Level. On the reverb side, you get a three-way switch for selecting between Modulated, Plate, and Shimmer sounds. And you get controls for Morph, Decay, Tone, and Blend. Decay and Tone are straightforward and Blend simply balances between your unaffected and the effected tone. The Morph control covers different territory depending on reverb type—controlling modulation pulse, the amount of pre-delay on the Plate, and the intensity of the octave shift within the Shimmer setting.

The personality of the delay in the Caverns is like a great character actor. It supports the scene—neither receding too deep into the background, nor hogging the spotlight. It starts with clear and full repeats of what you feed into it, and allows them to degrade slowly and naturally into the distance. There's no edgy grit or intense modulation, just subtle and realistic echoes that fade into oblivion. Part of the magic of the delay signal is Keeley's new "Inverse Dynamic Modulation." Aside from the cool name, this feature intensifies the modulation of repeats as they fade. Initial repeats are clean and clear with little to no modulation. As the

echoes fade, the modulation intensifies—building a bed of warbling and cascading repeats.

Some delay pedals are amazing because they can be pushed into self-oscillation. The delay in the Keeley Caverns is amazing because it cannot. Instead, it hangs around, just at the edge of madness, allowing near-infinite repeats. I don't know how it achieves this feat, but it doesn't matter. I only know that feeding these repeats into the reverb engine creates a lush and amazing cloud of sound below (or above, depending on perspective and blend settings) what you are playing.

Which brings us to stop two within the Caverns, reverb. Let's start with the Modulation setting. As mentioned previously, in this setting, Morph controls the pulse of the modulation. At low settings, the modulation is subtle. Dialing it up brings on an almost rotating speaker sound; at the most extreme settings, it is downright sci-fi. The Tone control works hand in hand with the Morph control. Darker tone settings mask the modulation and brighter

settings bring it forward in the mix. My favorite setting was with Morph at noon, Tone and Blend at 11 o'clock, and Decay maxed out. Here, you build a beautiful, ambient pad under your playing. As I'm apt to do with long, modulated reverbs, I spent a while in my "Wicked Game" and Mazzy Star zone. I found an equally cool setting with Morph maxed out, Decay at minimum, Tone at noon, and Blend maxed. The resulting tone is like a modulated, reverse, slapback. It's weird, but very cool.

The Plate setting is everything you want it to be—it sounds like a versatile studio plate reverb. The controls are extremely interactive, and there are too many great permutations to describe. If you enjoy the character of plate reverb, you will be pleased.

The only setting on the Caverns I didn't fall head over heels in love with was the Shimmer setting. With the Blend set below 11 o'clock and the Tone set high, it's great. But with higher Blend settings, there is an obvious delay or latency that I found distracting.

It's less obvious when coupled with delay. With the Blend set low and paired with the near-infinite delay mentioned above, the Shimmer is perfect. It adds a subtle, shimmering pad below your playing. It's not the shimmer effect for people who want their shimmer out in front, but it's perfect for more subtle applications.

WHAT WE LIKE

The Caverns pairs two great tastes that go well together (and on their own). It packs tons of features into a small package at a great price. The combined reverb and delay sounds are a thing of beauty.

CONCERNS

The Shimmer setting isn't the best I've heard but the remainder of the sounds more than make up for it. And while the mini-pots are great for getting lots of controls onto a small service, a dial of this size isn't ideal for dialing in accurate delay times. But both of these are concerns I can live with for having this much flexibility in a package this size.