

SEYMOUR DUNCAN

SHAPE SHIFTER



REVIEW BY **SAM HILL**
STREET PRICE **\$229.00**



Tremolo can sometimes be an afterthought when it comes to shaping your sound. One of the original effects for guitar, it's found on many amps, and not all incarnations of it are particularly inspiring. It probably isn't the first effect you think of when you're preparing to assemble your dream pedalboard, but a good tremolo is essential to any rig. And like all other pedal categories in this current Golden Age, tremolo has improved substantially, moving its way from the "maybe" column to become an absolute necessity. Seymour Duncan, while perhaps best

known for making killer pickups, also makes some outstanding pedals, the Shape Shifter Tremolo being one of them.

The Shape Shifter boasts an impressive feature set, with controls for Wave(form), Shape, Depth, and Speed. Sine, triangle and square waves are available, with unique combinations occurring at certain points on the dial. The Shape control gives access to a wide range of rise and fall times. There are stereo inputs and outputs, with a Phase knob that gives control over stereo separation when using a pair of amplifiers. And of course,

it has tap tempo, so you can keep your trem in time with your drummer and create stuttering soundscapes with your feet. There is also a Rate/Ratio switch. In Ratio mode, the speed knob chooses subdivisions, making the tap tempo function even more useful. And like its analog delay brother, the Vapor Trail, the Shape Shifter's speed knob features a bright blue blinking LED that's easily visible on stage. As a bonus, the Shape Shifter is relatively small considering all its capabilities, ensuring you'll find a spot for it on your pedalboard.

My point of reference

for pedal tremolo is my Fulltone Supa-Trem 2, and it too has three waveforms, tap tempo, and stereo capability. I'm pleased to say that the Shape Shifter holds up well against the Fulltone, and is actually much more versatile with its available subdivisions and shape control. The shape function is what really sets the Shapeshifter apart from most tremolos, whether in pedal or amp form. It's what allows you to get weird backwards sounds and a host of other acrobatic, oddball shifts that aren't standard tremolo volume modulations.

Using the Shape Shifter in stereo is a blast—the entire room becomes enveloped in hypnotic undulations. It's especially cool running into a stereo reverb. I maxed out the Shape Shifter's depth and fed it into a TC Electronic T2 reverb with a generous amount of decay on a lightly modulated plate reverb setting and was carried away to outer space. Then I kicked in some overdrive to take things to the outer limits. The Shape

Shifter plays well with other pedals—I didn't lose any clarity when I kicked in any drive or fuzz, but rather they were chopped up in a delicious manner.

If you're in the market for a tremolo pedal, the Shape Shifter should be on your list. It has an incredible feature set, will easily fit on your board with its svelte size and top-mounted jacks, and you'll never have a wayward, out of time tremolo thanks to tap tempo. It has enough parameters to control without being overly complicated, making it a great option for tremolo nuts or players that just need a quality trem sound with some variety. A lot of tremolo pedals have a fairly pedestrian setup of speed and depth knobs, with perhaps a volume thrown in. That's fine, and those work great for a lot of players. If you're serious about tremolo, and you need more, the Shape Shifter fits boutique form and function into an appealing package that won't require you to shell out tons of cash or stay

on a wait list for six months.

WHAT WE LIKE

Quality tremolo sound with ample controls. Stereo capability and tap tempo. Cool LED indicator for speed.

CONCERNS

Nothing.