

TC ELECTRONIC NOVA DRIVE & NOVA REPEATER

NDR-1
NOVA
REPEATER
£129

NDR-1
NOVA
DRIVE
£219

Great Danes? Paul Salter investigates two Scandinavian stompboxes with some handy extra features

Incorporating new effects into your setup requires a lot of careful consideration. Not only is the sheer number of pedals out there completely bewildering, but you also need to consider a whole host of other factors when choosing the next addition to your tonal arsenal.

Danish effects wizard TC Electronic has traditionally hung around the high-tech end of the effects playground, producing all-singing-and-dancing rack units that are most often spotted in top recording studios or the fridge-sized effects racks blinking away behind some pro guitarists. The Nova range is the company's attempt to bring the best of both worlds to the average player and place it right at their feet with as little fuss as possible.

Construction

As we're talking about a brand that is a familiar sight in studio and pro setups, it's no surprise that these pedals give off a seriously expensive vibe. They're heavy, for one thing, with the kind of weight that comes from being well built to the point of overengineering. Their aesthetics haven't been sacrificed in the process, however. The cast-metal chassis of both units feature smooth rounded edges and recessed sections along both sides to keep the retaining bolts flush.

The top sections of each pedal are partly constructed from brushed aluminium, with the rest of the enclosures made up of intuitive plastic control panels and small clear strips containing LEDs that reveal both units' status. It's a good job too, because these use electronic switching rather

than mechanical, so you don't get a physical click with your stomp. Unusually, this doesn't stop the Nova Drive benefiting from true bypass when the effect isn't active.

All of the inputs and outputs are on the rear-facing panels, including the mains adaptor sockets. There's no option to use batteries, and the units won't run from standard Boss-style 9V power supplies, but you do get the appropriate 12V adaptors as part of the package.

Features - Nova Drive

There are a lot of controls here, but it all becomes clear once you realise that the Nova Drive is essentially two effects housed in one box with two completely separate sets of controls. With the NDR-1 set to 'normal' mode, both the overdrive and distortion circuits can be accessed via separate footswitches as if they were individual pedals.

Each effect has its own set of dedicated controls – level, gain, treble and bass for the distortion side, and level, drive, tone and dry mix in the case of the overdrive. It is also possible to select in what order they are applied to your signal thanks to the routing function, effectively allowing you to boost and add a little more clarity and drive to a distorted tone, or hit your distortion channel with a big dose of gain and level for maximum saturation.

If you prefer to keep your overdrive and distortion sounds separate, setting the pedal to 'toggle' mode will mean that pressing the unselected channel while its counterpart is active will



The Nova Drive's presets are arranged into nine banks of two

ALTHOUGH THE OVERDRIVE IS ANALOGUE, YOU CAN STORE UP TO 18 PRESETS



You can route the drives in any order

switch between the two, while pressing the active channel's footswitch will bypass the pedal completely.

Finally, bank mode brings the power of the Nova Drive's programmability into play. Although the drives are purely analogue, this pedal features a digital memory function allowing you to store up to 18 presets, which are arranged in nine banks of two. If all this still doesn't give you enough versatility, there are sockets on the back panel to hook up an external footswitch, TC Electronic's own G-System products or standard MIDI gear.

Sounds - Nova Drive

Initially, this stompbox appears to offer little more than your average drive pedal. The overdrive channel has a lot of mid-range focus yet still an open feeling to proceedings, while the distortion side has a frequency response that is much more even and an intense,

cascaded-style clipping.

The whole thing becomes far more promising when you bring the overdrive's mix control into play, however. Much like Voodoo Lab's Sparkle Drive and its imitators, the idea here is that introducing some unaffected signal to the mid-range-heavy focus of a Tube Screamer-style overdrive will allow for the best of both worlds, and thus makes the drive channel suitable for both rhythm and lead duties without ever becoming 'too much'.

The distortion tones are at their best when given a generous helping of gain, but sound even better once you add some overdrive in front. In fact, this works brilliantly with the reverse approach as well, as a little distortion contributes to a smoother-sounding drive with some extra low-end presence. Whichever way you stack these tones, we feel that using plenty of gain is the most effective way of getting this pedal to really sing.

THE DELAYS
ON OFFER ARE
EVERY BIT AS
IMPRESSIVE AS
THE FEATURE SET

Features – Nova Repeater

TC Electronic states that the Nova Repeater is 'all about simplicity'. This doesn't prevent it from being loaded with some pretty impressive features, however. As far as the actual effects go, the line-up consists of studio, analogue, tape, dynamic, reverse and ping-pong delay modes, making use of the pedal's stereo outputs. These can all be configured to taste by the usual collection of controls we'd expect from a delay pedal, with knobs for delay time, feedback and effect level. A push button selects from three delay ranges (20-400, 300-600 and 500-1200 milliseconds), within which the time knob provides more precise tweaking.

The tap tempo footswitch not only allows you to input your delay time on the fly, but by holding the switch down, the pedal's output is



muted and you can set the tempo by hitting the strings. The division button divides your selected tempo into quarter notes, eighth notes or, most impressively, dual delays combining the two.

A modulation control brings varying amounts of vibrato or chorus to the party to 'lush up' the overall effect – much the same as the old Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Man did – or even simulate a touch of tape delay wow and flutter at lower levels. The features don't end there either, as you can choose to let your repeats 'spill over' into



You can toggle between the effects, active them individually or recall presets



TC ELECTRONIC
NOVA PEDALS

Built in: Thailand
Power: 12V DC mains adaptor only

NDR-1 NOVA DRIVE

Price: £129
Type: Digital stereo delay stompbox
Features: 6 delay types, stereo outputs, line level or effects loop inputs, controls for delay time, feedback, tone, modulation (vibrato/chorus), FX level and buttons for multiple delay ranges, subdivision of delay tempo, spillover on/off, dry signal on/off, delay type and a tap tempo footswitch allowing for audio time input.

NDR-1 NOVA DRIVE

Price: £219
Type: Programmable analogue overdrive stompbox
Features: Separate overdrive and distortion circuits with on/off footswitches, input, output, ext switch input, MIDI socket, 18 memory patches, controls for overdrive, level, tone, mix, distortion, level, bass, treble, preset switch, routing switch, switch mode.

CONTACT DETAILS

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GB VERDICT

GOLD STARS

- 🌟 Versatile operation
- 🌟 Wide-ranging effects
- 🌟 Top build quality

BLACK MARKS

- More range at the subtle end of both effects needed

IDEAL FOR...

A compact alternative to full-blown multi-effects units

GB RATING



Varying amounts of chorus or vibrato can be added to any of the Nova Repeater's delay types

the bypassed tone, with another option to kill the dry signal completely – particularly helpful when used in conjunction with the reverse delay setting or if you plan on using the RPT-1 in a parallel effects loop.

Sounds – Nova Repeater

The delays offered by the Repeater are every bit as impressive as its feature set. We'd be perfectly happy sticking with the studio-style setting for most of our everyday needs due to its clean, clear and expansive sound. It's pretty addictive stuff once you start picking out arpeggios or spacious melody lines. In our opinion, this is also the best place for the modulation effect to be applied, though we find they are best used in small amounts.

Both the analogue and tape settings work well in conjunction with a rock lead tone thanks to their slightly warmer and dirtier decays, but the dynamic delay is a better choice if you don't want the effect cluttering things up as you're playing, as the repeats are muted while you are playing above a certain volume threshold but return when you stop.

The ping-pong mode returns to territory already covered by the studio delay but adds a stereo pan effect for use with two-amp

setups. Far more interesting, however, is the reverse function. Using the 'kill dry' button and a long delay time in conjunction with this, we're able to produce a backwards effect that is sure to spark your creativity into life or simply provide an instant and effortless dose of psychedelia to anything you might want to play.

Conclusion

A great part of the appeal of these new Nova pedals is that they fall between the two extremes of classic but limited stompbox and high-tech but complicated multi-effects gear. They're easy to use yet offer loads of added functionality, should you wish to explore it. The quality of the effects is easily on a par with many top-of-the-range multi-effects



units, which is great news as far as the competitively priced Nova Repeater is concerned, but it does leave the Nova Drive looking a little overpriced when compared to some more organic-sounding boutique overdrives. However, if flexibility is a priority, no boutique box has the kind of tweakability and stage-friendly features that this pedal can boast. **GB**



The Nova Repeater features stereo ins and outs to cater for two-amp setups