

MODTONE AQUA CHORUS, ATOMIC PHASER, VINTAGE ANALOG DELAY, DYNO DRIVE, AND SPEEDBOX



After 20 years in sound reinforcement products (SHS Audio) and bluegrass instruments (Morgan Monroe), SHS International has stepped into the world of guitar effects with their ModTone pedal line. For this review, I received five pedals (listed above); however, the ModTone effects lineup now also includes a Harmonic Tremor Pulsating Tremolo and a Chromatic Tuner (not shown).

FEATURES

Each ModTone pedal is housed in a space-efficient, corrosion-resistant metal chassis and features high-quality components and switches. A hip, comic strip-like style visually sets these pedals apart, as does their unique heavy-duty box with magnetic lid flap. They're all powered with a 9V battery or an optional adapter and feature a classic uncluttered layout. The Dyno Drive and Speedbox pedals include Tone, Level, and Drive (or Gain) controls; the Vintage Analog Delay sports Time (adjustable from 130ms to 350ms), Mix, and Repeat controls; and the Aqua Chorus and Atomic Phaser have Rate and Depth controls.

SOUND

Each one of these pedals delivered their respective tones beautifully with no fuss or extra noise. For classic overdrive, the Dyno Drive delivered faithfully with tones ranging from chiming bite to smooth and creamy lead sustain. The Speedbox, on the other hand, supplies a full-on distorted assault with a beefy, thick sound. Though the Speedbox is perhaps the more versatile pedal, I found that the Dyno Drive aligned more closely with my preference for those crisp, half-dirty tones.

The Vintage Analog Delay was my favorite pedal of the line. With a warm sound and up to 350ms of delay, it's versatile enough to set distinct, timed repeats in tempo with most songs, but I enjoyed it most for its subtle, ambient sounds, with a relatively low Time and generous Repeat and Mix settings.

The Aqua Chorus provided a wide range of sounds ranging from subtle doubling effects to drowning warbles. The Leslie-style sound of this pedal was spot on. The Atomic Phaser provides a thorough range of smooth, useable phase effects, but it will brighten up your tone a bit when engaged. If this is not to your liking, you could roll a bit of tone off on the guitar to counter the effect.

Bottom line: the ModTone line is one of the best-sounding affordable lines on the market today and very well could establish a new standard in their price point (and a good bit above it as well).

—MICHAEL ROSS

IN A NUTSHELL

- Rugged, non-corrosive metal chassis
- High-quality components and switches
- Unique attractive graphics and packaging
- Powered by 9V battery or optional adapter

List: Aqua Chorus \$99.95; Atomic Phaser \$119.95; Vintage Analog Delay \$119.95; Dyno Drive \$99.95; Speedbox \$49.95 modtone-effects.com

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