

5 MULTI-FX PEDALBOARDS TESTED!

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## DigiTech TimeBender

TESTED BY BARRY CLEVELAND

**THE TIMEBENDER (\$449 RETAIL/\$299 STREET)** provides five seconds of true stereo delay in ten flavors: Digital, Analog, Moving Head Tape, Variable Speed Tape, Dynamic Digital, Dynamic Analog, Dynamic Repeats, Time Warp, Reverse, and Envelope. The controls are relatively straightforward, with dedicated knobs for adjusting standard parameters such as Delay Time, Repeats, Mix, Modulation speed, and Tone. Delay time may be displayed in milliseconds or BPM, and set with the Delay Time control, via tap-tempo, or using the *Strum* feature (more on this later). A Multiplier button provides further flexibility by letting you reconfigure the current delay time using whole-, half-, quarter-, and eighth-note values, and a blue LED constantly indicates the tempo to minimize confusion.

The TimeBender also allows you to process delays in various ways. For example, the ingenious

Modulation control lets you apply Slow or Fast modulation and also adjust its depth using a single knob. Even cooler, you can organize delays into rhythmic patterns either by selecting one of ten presets (organized into Simple, Dual, and Multi-tap types), or programming a custom pattern by strumming your muted guitar strings while holding down the right footswitch. Cooler still, you can shift the *pitch* of the delay repeats in various ways, including chromatically (+/- one octave, or two octaves down), as triads (four options), or by scale degree (you hold down the right footswitch and strum a chord to program the key that the scale tones will be derived from). You can also use the *Strum* feature to program the key and the tempo simultaneously by holding down the right footswitch and strumming a chord at the desired tempo.

If you really want to get fancy you can combine

### What's Your Take?

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#### DIGITECH TIMEBENDER

**KUDOS** Robust feature set including rhythmic and pitch-shifting capabilities. Stunning regeneration.

**CONCERNS** Chunky wall-wart.

**CONTACT** DigiTech, (801) 566-8800; [digitech.com](http://digitech.com).

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functions. For example, to create a Root-Based Pattern Delay you select a pattern and a harmony, and the TimeBender generates corresponding arpeggios. Or to create seemingly randomly pitched arpeggios, you select the Envelope delay and one of eight Random Voicings—and you can dial in a pattern for additional fun. (Tip: while the TimeBender works fine in mono, to unlock its maximum rhythmic and pitch-shifting magic you'll want to go stereo.) Oh, and did I mention the dedicated 20-second Looper? It does basic mono looping and overdubbing, automatically tweaks the loop's beginning and end points for increased accuracy, graphically displays the loop information, and works with the pitch function to create harmonized loops.

Programs may be stored in one of four memory locations and recalled using the Store button or an optional footswitch, and connecting an optional expression pedal allows you to morph between any two parameter or effects settings for everything from simple harmony shifts to radical time warping.

The digital delays are crisp and super clean and quiet, the analog delays have just the right amount of vintage-style funkiness, and the Dynamic or ducking versions of both smoothly attenuate the repeats while you are playing and let them surge forth when you pause. The Envelope delay works in conjunction with the Voicings and Repeats controls to slice and dice delayed phrases in myriad ways, the Reverse delay is quite convincing and musical sounding, and the Time Warp delay adds synchronized wide modulation to the Analog delay sound.

My favorite models were the tape delays, one of which emulates a tube Echoplex and other devices that alter delay time by changing

tape speed—including the three-head reel-to-reel tape decks used to produce slapback effects in the '50s and early '60s. You can even mimic the staggered repeats of multi-head units such as the Roland Space Echo and WEM Copicat by strumming in custom rhythmic patterns. And DigiTech has painstakingly modeled the way in which the various controls operate, so that you actually hear what sounds like a moving tape head or a change in tape speed when adjusting the Delay Time knob (and with no digital zippering or other unpleasant artifacts). Dynamic Repeats is a variation on Variable Speed Delay that ducks the repeats, but also limits the regeneration level to avoid over-saturation when the Repeat control is cranked up.

Speaking of which, there's enough *oomph* behind the Repeat control to create fantastic continuous loop-like effects and generate multiple levels of self-oscillation. Starting at about 2:00, the repeats are nearly continuous, with self-oscillation beginning at about 3:00—and if you sweep the delay time you get “spaceship taking off” sounds similar to those created by a tape echo or some analog delays, but with more precision and tightness. And you can change the Delay Type while sounds are repeating *without* interrupting them—and/or change the Multiplier button setting or the rhythmic Pattern—to create sophisticated turntable-like manipulations and other stunning effects.

Finally, while some delay pedals color your tone in undesirable ways, the TimeBender actually *improved* the sound of my guitars, and it worked equally well in front of my amp and in its effects loop. Simply put, this is one of the most versatile and best-sounding delay pedals available, particularly in its price range, which is why it receives an Editors' Pick Award. ■

