

Pawn Stars

DIGITECH SYNTH WAH

Synthetic fuzzy madness that won't break the bank



The story so far ... As luck would have it, a few years ago I got to meet and ultimately start a new musical project with like-minded soul Mr Dave Gregory, best known for his genius guitar playing with XTC. Being bona fide guitar fanatics, Tin Spirits had one simple overriding idea – let's see what we can do with just guitars. No keyboards, samples or other artificially generated tones.

This may not seem like such a big deal, but when you're playing loads of '70s-style progressive rock from bands like Yes, Genesis, Rush and King Crimson it's quite a big ask.

One tone I use that always

manages to raise an eyebrow or two is a Moog-style synth sound. It's the sound I'm asked about most, and the answer, or at least at the heart of the answer, is this – the Digitech Synth Wah.

The auto-wah and envelope filter effect is one most commonly used by bass players, but for years guitarists have employed them to create some pretty cool sounds. The DigiTech Synth Wah has seven different basic preset tones, comprising envelope filters, an auto-wah and basic synth sounds. The synth presets use a combination of filter and fuzz to emulate tones created by early synthesizers. But here's the rub: the

pedal on its own can sound sterile and a little light. If you simply plug your guitar into this pedal and try to get those buttery organic synth sounds, you'll be disappointed – you see, there is a trick to it.

The way to induce the goods is to juice the front end of the synth wah with a bit of compressed gain. The input of this pedal reacts so incredibly well to a bit of drive, making the created sound touch-sensitive and completely reactive to your dynamics. Throw a bit of delay after it and you're synth-tastic.

Yes, there certainly are other pedals out there, such as the HOG by Electro-Harmonix, that do all manner of amazing synth tones. The difference with the DigiTech Synth Wah is that it is so simple, small and cheap, and set up the way I have in combination with a bunch of different pedals, the sound created is quite unique.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I PAY?

You can get the Synth Wah brand new from £60. Not a lot for such a great sound, but this is about more than just this pedal. It's about a spirit of musical experimentation. It really is worth a small amount of time to just try a bunch of different things in different combinations to see if you find something that

inspires you. And what inspires me is almost guaranteed to be completely different to what floats your musical boat, so enter into this with an open mind and without preconceptions. Why is that so important? Well, for all of my love of things vintage, boutique and analogue, at the heart of the sound that I'm asked about most is an inexpensive mass-produced digital pedal. Say no more. **GB**

THE AUTHOR



Dan Steinhardt has a 200Gb hard drive instead of a brain, where he stores endless effects and electronics knowledge. He's the main man at TheGigRig Ltd (www.thegigrig.com) and we're honoured to have him contributing to the magazine.

