



gig-fx Chopper and Mega Wah Both \$379

Two great pedals prove that there's still some excitement to be had from effects *by Steve Henderson*

It's good to know that there are still some surprises to be found in the world of effects pedals. Guitar designs follow a fairly narrow set of parameters – based partly on the ergonomics required to fit the human form and partly on market tolerance. We drool over Flying Vs and Firebirds today but, when they hit the market in the late 50s and early 60's, the impact they made was less like a resounding cheer and more like a solid thud.

On the other hand, effects pedals originally came in all sorts of shapes and sizes – until MXR made the look consistent and

'sensible', and Boss made them colourful and practical. Lately, there's been a swing back to the unique and weird aspects of pedal designs with boutique companies doing their own thing and not following the Boss/MXR model of a consistent corporate look.

gig-fx have come up with a very clever design for their range of pedals – and in so doing they've solved the problem of where to put the controls on a rocker pedal. Not only that, they can operate as a rocker pedal or as a conventional pedal where the treadle is simply an on-off switch. The switching mechanism is not the usual toe or

heel switch. It is an optical switch which engages when the treadle is in the heel position.

Their I-shaped treadle allows plenty of room for the pots and switches that one might need to define the sound. They seem to be built tough enough to withstand continuous gigging and, for all their features, they won't take up any more pedal board real estate than a conventional wah. It's not a lightweight pedal but there's no give in the general construction. The pedal action is firm and smooth under foot and this is adjustable by anyone with the appropriate spanner – a great idea,

since you can personalize the feel AND tighten the action is it loosens with age.

Two negatives we noticed immediately: the battery compartment is not some flip open cover but a part of the base secured by four screws. We haven't seen this since the original MXR pedals – and it was a nuisance then. Also, the 9v port is in a really strange place, just waiting to get stepped on.

Gig-fx Chopper
This unit seems the more unique of the two under review. It has a couple of new ideas that are sure to find a place in the arsenal of some of the more adventurous players out there. It gets its name from one of its sounds but it does a whole lot more. It feels like two independent effects modules in one pedal: one is the Chopper effect and the other is a group of effects of which one may be chosen.

Gig-fx Chopper

The 'chopper' effect is a square wave, like an on-off switch where

the pedal adjusts the balance between time on and time off. The tremolo, rotating speaker and panning effects are created using a triangle wave and are good sounding effects. The speed can be controlled in real time by the pedal, with the other parameters controlled by the knobs. The rotating speaker effect doesn't sound like a Leslie cabinet but no pedal does. Still, it's a very useful sound and changing the speed with the pedal is loads of fun.

The delay emulator effect is described by gig-fx as having "all the texture of multiple echoes but without the encumbrance of a repeated note" – which sounds a bit like eating a steak dinner without the encumbrance of the meat. An odd idea but somehow it seems to work.

One of the best features is that the effects can be combined in a couple of ways. This gives a new twist to some traditional ideas and the more we played with the combinations, the more useful the pedal became as a texture in the mix.

You can also double the fun by using two amps. This is where the Chopper really came into its own.

happening through one amp there's also an ow-ow coming out of the other. All that in one pedal.

The first thing we noticed was the lack of manual. Not to worry – no self-respecting guitar player would read a manual and, anyway, there's always the internet. The next thing we noticed was the battery giving up! Well, it was quicker to find a power supply and plug that in.

A wah pedal must be the easiest device to test drive. It either works or it doesn't. This one, without fiddling with the knobs, sounded pretty good right out of the box. It has a definite and expressive tone and the treadle has a sensible sweep range without being overly generous. The tension in the treadle can be adjusted to the player's preference (a really nice feature) and, when using it as a tone control (setting it in one position for a particular sound), it has enough resistance to, firstly, find the magic spot and, secondly, to lift one's foot off without changing the setting.

The one thing that took some getting used to was the on/off switch, which is in the heel

The two effects modules... can operate in stereo and achieve some fantastically trippy sounds.

Since the two effects modules are independent, they can operate in stereo and achieve some fantastically 'trippy' sounds. It's easy to over-do it but, with a little restraint, the spatial image accentuates anything else you may be using.

Gig-fx Mega Wah

This is a wah on steroids. It has four modes: cry, mega, trig, auto. These modes emulate a Cry Baby, produce a proprietary Mega wah tone, produce an envelope filter (triggered by one's pick attack), and create an automatic wah (effect can be set by rate knob) respectively.

The wah can be set to work backwards – something we haven't heard for some time, not since the old Yoy-Yoy pedals. Also, it has a volume pedal mode. It has controls for gain, resonance, sensitivity and rate. It can even be used in stereo (mono in/stereo out and discreet stereo in/out) and one side of stereo can be inverted so that while there's a wah-wah

position. It's a silent optical switch that has no feel at all to the mechanism. The actual switching works fine but it means that, when creating the effect, you can't sweep all the way back to the heel position as you would normally because it to bypass momentarily. This creates a 'knee' in the sound as the treadle is swept forward again. It takes just a few minutes to become accustomed to this action – but it was a surprise at first.

The on-board controls offer plenty of range to customize the tone to one's needs and the gain control means that it can also drive the signal a little harder, through the Mega Wah and into the next device. The bypass switching is very clean and smooth – not a squeak to be heard. There are LEDs that indicate status and modulation rates and these are 'ultra brights' – easy to see, even when you're not over the pedal.

The Mega Wah has a lot going for it – a heap of features, easy to

use, solid as a rock and plenty of tonal options. Best of all...it doesn't wash out through the distortion channel and every guitar retains its own character.

Verdict

These gig-fx units have obviously been designed by someone who knows what guitarists really want. They are smartly laid out, cool to look at and deliver some great tonal ideas. You just have to decide if they are right for you. **E**

The bottom line

We liked: Lots of control and good build quality.

We disliked: Hard-to-access battery and the 9v port is in the wrong place – a problem waiting to happen.

Guitarist says: Solid, well designed and clever. Very smooth and a no-brainer to use.



gig-fx Chopper

Price: \$379

Origin: China

Type: Rocker effects pedal

Features: Tremolo, rotating speaker, panning, chopper, delay emulator

Connections: Jack in, 2 x jack out (left, right), DC adaptor port

Power: 9v battery, DC adaptor

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Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Features ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

gig-fx Mega Wah

Price: \$379

Origin: China

Type: Rocker effects pedal

Features: Wah, mega wah, auto wah, touch wah, stereo wah, reverse wah, volume

Connections: Left and right input jacks, left and right output jacks, DC adaptor port

Power: 9v battery, DC adaptor (not included)

Test results

Build quality ★★★★★
Features ★★★★★
Sound ★★★★★
Value for money ★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★