



PEDALBOARD

MANUFACTURER
TC ELECTRONIC

PRICE
£399

MODEL
PLETHORAX5

CONTACT
MUSICTRIBE/TCELECTRONIC WWW.TCELECTRONIC.COM



TC ELECTRONIC

Plethora X5

TC's TonePrint pedals flexibly arranged in one compact floorboard

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Olly Curtis

The concept of a compact self-contained pedalboard with several footswitchable effects is not unique but it's taken on a new flexibility in TC Electronic's hands. The Plethora X5 can store 127 'pedalboards', each with individually footswitchable effects taken from TC's TonePrint pedal range. You can combine any five, including multiple instances of the same one, in any order. At the time of writing, onboard pedals include the Hall Of Fame 2 Reverb, Flashback 2 Delay, Sub n Up Octaver, Sentry Noise Gate, Hypergravity Compressor, Brainwaves Pitch Shifter, Corona Chorus, Vortex Flanger, Quintessence Harmony, MimiQ Doubler, Shaker Vibrato and Pipeline Tap Tremolo. Firmware updates should see more added – the Helix Phaser, Viscous Vibe and a looper are said to be coming soon.

TC's TonePrint concept enables you to instantly load a pedal with a changed set of parameters for a new sound – and it's very much in full force here. Loads of TonePrints are already stored onboard and there are 75 slots per pedal to add via the usual Bluetooth or USB connection. New Artist or TC factory TonePrints or your own variations are created with the software editor.

IN USE

The X5's effects are laid out in a left-to-right chain, which might not please anyone who's used to a standard array of pedals with a signal chain running from right to left – but it's something you soon get accustomed to, especially as each effect is clearly named in bright letters and also colour coded.

Operation is all pretty straightforward using the Plethora's two toggle-switched modes, Play and Edit. Play mode simply gives you pedalboards for performance. You can scroll up and down through the numbered pedalboards with the Board toggle switch or do it via a bit of jiggery-pokery with footswitches 1 and 2. And if you want to change your effects order on the fly, you simply hold down the two footswitches and the assigned pedals will flip around.

The Edit mode is where you set up all of your pedalboards. The Effect knob selects your pedal for a chosen footswitch while the TonePrint knob selects a TonePrint for that pedal, and three basic parameters for it are displayed in the three central windows to be tweaked with their associated knobs. Do that for each

01. EFFECT ENCODER KNOB

Use this in Edit mode to scroll through the list of effects available. Pressing the knob assigns the chosen effect to your currently selected footswitch

02. TONEPRINT ENCODER KNOB

In Edit mode this will scroll through the list of available TonePrints for the selected effect. Pressing the knob will assign the TonePrint. A press-and-hold brings up the tuner

03. PARAMETER KNOBS

In Edit mode, these three adjust the specific effect parameter shown in their adjacent window. A future update will let each knob be assigned to parameters for on-the-fly adjustments in Play

04. BOARD SWITCH

This toggles between the virtual pedalboards. Alternatively, you can use footswitches 1 and 2 – a triple tap on one followed by scrolling with the other. 1 scrolls down, 2 scrolls up

05. FOOTSWITCHES

A press selects that footswitch for editing in Edit mode. In Play mode, besides standard bypass functions, they can deliver MASH expression control or a tap tempo input



Tech Spec

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Effects pedalboard

FEATURES: True or buffered bypass, tuner, tap tempo, selectable global cab sim, 127 boards, 75 TonePrint slots per pedal, MASH footswitches, software editing

CONTROLS: Standard input L (mono) & R, standard output L (mono) & R, standard Send, standard Return, EXP, USB, MIDI In, MIDI Thru

CONNECTIONS: Standard input, standard output, EXP

POWER: Included 9V DC adaptor, 600mA

DIMENSIONS: 298 (w) x 116 (d) x 53mm (h)

Guitarist
CHOICE

9/10

footswitch and your basic pedalboard is ready to go, although there is plenty more you can experiment with here besides.

While the onboard mono effects loop can be used to implement a four-cable connection so you can put some effects in front of the amp's input and some in its effects loop, we see its primary function as adding external pedals to the mix, especially as the Plethora has no drive/distortion/fuzz of its own. The loop can be placed anywhere in the chain, either permanently active or assigned to a footswitch (albeit at the expense of one of the five effects).

Each of the footswitches can function as a pressure-sensitive MASH footswitch to adjust (with a hold-and-press) a parameter of its associated effect, maybe turning up the feedback of a delay for instance.

There's also the option for any relevant effect's footswitch to have a secondary tap tempo function. Any added expression pedal's default option is as a volume pedal that can be placed at any position on the chain but it can also be assigned to single- or multiple-effect parameters.

The sounds here offer all the quality we've come to see in individual TC pedals but the Plethora setup offers far more flexibility than a bunch of those plugged together. Here, you can build a pedalboard for each song in your set with all the necessary pedals set to exactly the right sound, or give yourself similar functionality to a Flashback X4 by having a 'board with four delays (there's not enough DSP for five delays or five reverbs). This is one well-thought-out unit that uses its underlying technology to full advantage.

VERDICT

Add one of these to your dirt pedal(s) and you'll have a complete tap tempo pedalboard that can also fulfil a 'fly rig' or emergency backup role straight into a PA as it has a globally switched cabinet simulation onboard. Alternatively, it represents a great way to expand your existing pedalboard with a range of complementary effects without excessive cabling and power requirements. **G**

PROS Compact all-in-one unit; ease of setup and use; variety of effects; MASH and external pedal expression ability; promise of constant firmware updates

CONS 'Back to front' display might throw a curveball to some users; at the time of writing there's no user manual available and some functions are not yet implemented