

AMPTWEAKER SWIRLPOOL

REVIEW BY **YOEL KREISLER**

STREET PRICE **\$299.00**



If you would think a man known for his dirty and delicious sonic specialties could not make a modulation pedal worth its salt, think again. The mind behind the audience-favorite dirt company Amptweaker has succeeded in creating a modulation pedal that traverses old and new territory alike, combining the best of amp-inspired modulations (and otherwise) under one comprehensive box. This is Mr. Brown's first excursion into the land beyond the dirty, and it represents an interesting promise for the future of the Georgia-based effects outfit. Does it swirl

or does it slosh? Let's find out.

Like all Amptweaker effects before it, the Swirlpool is housed in a rugged metal enclosure, complete with roller bar and heavy-duty knurled metal knobs. I am a big fan of the Amptweaker enclosures, since I feel like I can throw them around guilt-free. It's heavy enough to feel solid, and it's a bit on the big side for those of you who worry about pedalboard real estate. Thankfully, this swirly dude has a lot of tricks up its sleeve, and does an incredible job at replicating amp-like mod tones and otherwise.

On the front, we have two footswitches. One engages the effect, and the other switches between the two preset "stages". You can switch between two different identical circuits, each with controls for Speed and Vibe (the latter controls the amount of phasing in the signal). The tremolo is a master circuit, so it reigns over both channels, but you can mix in more or less phasing (or vibe) for each side, creating some really cool effects when you switch between the two channels. The Tremolo control is essentially a mix control for the tremolo side of the circuit, which

can add a bit of rhythmic peppering above your dry signal, or completely take out your dry signal and create an incredibly deep and overwhelmingly huge tremolo effect. There are some various switches for taking the waves in and out of sync, changing the waveform of the tremolo to be more jerky (closer to a triangle wave than the stock sine wave), a Surf Tone switch (which essentially turns the soft phasing of the Vibe setting into a deep, Uni-Vibe esque throb), and the Ramp speed, which allows you to create faux-Leslie ramps between the two channels. Being a big fan of anything that spins, I was entranced by the slow ramp setting. Mixing together the lighter vibe effects while adding in a hair of tremolo created a nice approximation of an old Leslie pedal (like the Shin-Ei Resly Tone), with a bit more added authenticity thanks to the slower ramp speeds. I find that the Swirlpool excels with clean tones and light overdrives, but you may want to be wary of your

volume when using louder distortions or fuzzes. You may find yourself cranking the volume of the pedal to hear it more, but if you have the volume of your fuzz or distortion cranked along with it, it can act like another boost stage, which can get a little loud. The Swirlpool has a bit of an effect on your tone when engaged, making it just a hair brighter than you would expect. This is not a deal breaker, but it may change the fundamental tone of your other pedals when stacking. Some pedals had a more noticeable change than others, such as my Tone Bender, but as I'm sure many of you are aware, those old vintage fuzz circuits can be quite fickle. Putting these pedals in the included effects loop just about alleviates this issue however, but you may not want to switch around your effects order.

The Swirlpool is an incredibly interesting take on some classic effects. It mates many parts of what we enjoy about modulation, and adds a few tweaks to

make it more useable and intuitive. It not only sounds great, but feels great to use, and makes me do things with tremolo and vibe sounds that I would never dream of doing until now.

WHAT WE LIKE

Warm sounds, plenty of versatility and incredibly intuitive to use. The Ramp switch takes this pedal where no tremolo has gone before, and inspires new ways to play and experiment.

CONCERNS

Tone with effect engaged is changed to be a bit brighter when stacking other effects.