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MXR M159 Stereo Tremolo

The M159 ($298 retail/$169 street) uses analog circuitry to work its stereo modulation magic. The device runs on 18 volts for increased headroom and requires two 9-volt batteries or an external supply (not included). The Shape control lets you dial in everything from smoothly rounded pulses to staccato effects, and at all settings the sounds are warm and enveloping. The M159 sounds great in mono, but through a pair of amps it really comes alive—especially with the Pan footswitch engaged, where the ping-ponged pulses create a gorgeous sense of dimension and motion. The Depth and Speed controls allows you to slather the tremolo on as thick as you want, at everything from a swampy crawl to a galloping aural assault that sounds like it could crumble walls if the volume were cranked high enough. The M-159 gets an Editors' Pick Award. *—Art Thompson*

KUDOS Awesome stereo effects. Very compact. Stereo I/O. Quiet operation.

CONCERNS Unattached battery door can be easily lost.

CONTACT MXR, (707) 745-2722; jimdunlop.com

Pigtronix Philosopher's Tone

The adroitly named Philosopher's Tone ($209 retail/$169 street) possesses seemingly magical powers, most notably its ability to sustain single notes and chords nearly indefinitely without the tone squashing or noise common to most "clean sustainers." And the versatile Sustain (threshold) and Blend (ratio) controls let you dial in everything from subtle compression to brick wall limiting, while the Treble (2kHz) and Volume controls compensate for any reduced highs or gain. There's also a Grit control for adding smooth overdrive with or without compression, and with Grit and Sustain turned down, the Volume control provides a de facto clean boost.



The pedal sounded great alone, but patching various fuzz and distortion boxes before and after it yielded truly amazing tones, sustained and otherwise. The first 100 pedals feature a hand-painted, gold sparkle finish. The Philosopher's Tone's supernatural sustain, capacity to blend compressed and overdriven sounds with the straight tone, and Treble control set it apart from the competition, earning it an Editors' Pick award. *—Barry Cleveland*

KUDOS Uncanny clean sustain. Brilliantly implemented controls.

CONCERNS None.

CONTACT Pigtronix, (917) 941-2861; pigtronix.com

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