

T-REX ENGINEERING SPIN DOCTOR

PREAMP/ EFX

Sending the geeks and freaks into a spin! By Nick Brown.

Relative newcomers on the guitar effects stage T-Rex have quickly carved a name for themselves as quality designers and producers. Established by self confessed 'tech geeks and music freaks' Lars Dahl and Sebastian Jensen in 1996 their combination of analogue warmth and digital precision has proven them popular worldwide with users including Carlos Santana, John Mayer, Joe Satriani and Steve Lukather.

In addition to their pedal line here is yet another cool offering from T-Rex - a multi preset overdrive pedal, preamp and recording pre in one casing. Of recent times many manufacturers have been leaning towards the flexibility of several presets in one unit as opposed to single pedals and T-Rex are not a company to be left behind!

IN THE FLESH

Straight out of the box I loved the look of the Spin Doctor – clearly marked, easy to read fonts, solid construction, sturdy footswitches and bright lights with a hint of old school thanks to the 2 12AX7 tubes that can be seen through the face panel.

T-Rex have steered away from the classic black or silver casing going with a creamy white. Not your typical guitar gear colour but sits well with the overall look and colour scheme. The face panel has a fairly minimalist look with just six buttons and three dials but don't let that fool you - this is still one powerful beast. The four sturdy footswitches along the bottom of the case give you four presets to store/switch between whilst the buttons let you select between which tone control is being edited, an overall boost button for more gain and then a store button for saving those sweet patches you've just put together!

The rear panel has input, output and simulated cab out jacks as well as midi in and the typical dc power in. The cab simulated out has level and frequency controls of the recessed variety making it near impossible for them to be unwittingly knocked or bumped after you've set them but as easy as pressing to pop them out and then adjusting for any tweaks.

IN ACTION

Right off the bat the Spin Doctor has some very usable sounds. Simply flicking through the presets and twiddling the controls can give you a clean, fat boost for pushing an amp right through to an edgy shred guitar tone. There is plenty of scope within each EQ control and the drive, level and boost controls make for plenty of level all the time remaining warm. That's right – warm, like a valve amp not plastic and digital sounding! How? Well, the secret behind the warmth in the Spin Doctor is the use of two 12AX7 tubes that can actually be seen lighting up through the control panel. Although basically operating as a glorified stomp box in this setting the range of warm tube tones and four presets of your choice is a real drawcard.

I was then curious to see whether this tube warmth also relayed into a recording scenario. Plugging straight into my Mbox I was able to coax some very similar, warm tones from just tweaking the 'tube drive' and 'out level' controls. This is a great solution for those wanting real sounding guitar tones straight into their computer with some tube warmth, real drive but all the while remaining quiet and fairly noise free.

IN A SPIN

Others may not get as excited as me but the feel of the tube drive, tone control and output level knobs are great. They are a slightly notched so won't just go spinning by themselves and feel like you have actually made a change when using them thanks to their more solid touch. Now to the best part – they actually spin! When you flick between the four presets the dials spin back to their saved position in that preset showing it's exact setting. So flick rapidly between the presets and you'll have a veritable spinning display right before your very eyes! Sure it's maybe nothing more than a cool visual gimmick but is still a nice touch that adds to the overall look of the unit and combines well with the cool glowing blue and pink lights!

THE BOTTOM LINE

For those with even the smallest sense of music gear nous the Spin Doctor is simple to get up and running. Basically leads in the input and output, hit the power, watch the pretty lights and get tweaking until you find a sound you like! Otherwise the manual outlines the various set up options for use with an amp, power amp or as a studio preamp.

The flexibility of these setups is where the SD really excels and your intended use will really determine whether it is value for money or not. Basically four overdrive pedals in one, as a preamp or preamp styled overdrive pedal the Spin Doctor was great. Smooth slightly boosted tones through to high gain saturation with plenty of EQ room to fit with your existing amp set up. Into the computer I didn't have to sacrifice much tone for the ease of getting a tone recorded without having to mic an actual amp, a blessing for the digital haters.

A serious recording, gigging, live sound tool that can cover the need for carrying quite a few amps or pedals the SD isn't a cheap toy. Hopefully people will give the Spin Doctor a chance to prove itself as its midi capability, presets and tone tweaking options make it a very handy, musical sounding tool indeed however. A simple interface, rock solid design, user friendly clever programming and noise free performance really highlights the T-Rex ethos of blending 'hi-tech innovation with old world craftsmanship'!

SPECS

Made Denmark

Price \$1299

Features

- 4 programmable channels,
- tube-driven tone & controls,
- motorised knobs

CONTACT

Dominant Music

03 9873 4333

www.dominantmusic.com.au

WHAT WE RECKON

PROS

- ▲ Tube warmth
- ▲ Versatile - pedal, preamp, recording
- ▲ Very user friendly

CONS

- ▼ Price may be a put off for some
- ▼ Some may want more presets available

