

## KEELEY ELECTRONICS

## AURORA REVERB

REVIEW BY **ERIC TISCHLER**STREET PRICE **\$179.00**

We're living in a golden age of effects pedals--a tweeker's paradise --where players can capture almost every tone they imagine. Against that backdrop, Keeley might seem like it's bringing a knife to a gunfight: A digital reverb with only four knobs and a toggle? But, after plugging this pedal in, I'm convinced the Aurora has a lot to offer.

Moving left to right (and top to bottom), the Aurora has controls for Decay (the length of the reverb's tail), Slapback (actually a pre-delay control), Warmth (which rolls off top end) and Blend (which controls the mix of the all-analog dry

signal and the 24-bit effect). Sitting between the latter two knobs is a three-way switch that toggles between the Hall, Plate and Room algorithms.

The Decay has a very wide range—particularly when used in the Hall setting—but all three algorithms offer fairly deep tails. The Hall and Room settings resolve in a way that more closely resembles an acoustic space, but the Plate setting, while more amorphous, maintains a fairly linear decay. The biggest difference between the three is the density of the effect. The Hall is the most “damp”—

it has the most body and easily envelopes the guitar's signal (when set to do so). I was surprised by how lively the Plate setting is—it provides a lovely sonic accent. The Room setting is closer to the Hall algorithm in character, but is more modest. It's useful in any number of applications and, of the three, I felt it was best suited for slapback. More nimble than the Hall, it still has the depth most players would look for in this effect.

The Warmth control plays a fairly large role in the pedal's character: Roll the knob counterclockwise (thus deactivating it) and the

trails glisten in a way that's not at all authentic but is certainly lovely—think early '90s shoegaze. As you turn the control up, the shimmer coalesces into a more concrete reverberant image. The corner frequency was very well chosen; this control truly does “warm up” the sound or, more practically, tames too-bright reverberations and helps the trails sound more authentic, as needed. I like a bright but full tone, but I tended to run this control at 4 o'clock and the tone was never murky or dull—it just sat perfectly in the mix.

Of course, Slapback plays into this, too. In theory, this is where the Aurora is weakest—it “only” offers 100 milliseconds of delay. In practice, I found there was ample time for the reverb to breathe on even the spiciest of songs, and I tended to linger around 2 o'clock.

The Blend control has a similarly useful range; turning it back to 9 o'clock had it sitting subtly but distinctly in my signal;

turning it up to 2 o'clock with the Hall setting and I was nailing (the) Verve's ambiance on their first record. The trend here is pretty clear—the Aurora is well-implemented, and as long as users aren't afraid to use the full range of the controls, there's very little in the way of conventional reverb that can't be achieved here.

As effective as the controls are, the sound is what really sets the Aurora apart for me. As noted above, I had an easy time getting an array of settings to work in my rig, but what struck me time and again was how much I just enjoyed playing through it. It's responsive and sounds fantastic—that's a pretty great combo. I was a little concerned about the lack of a volume knob; most reverb pedals don't have them, but most need them. I know my dry signal was receding as I turned the blend knob up, but the richness of the Aurora's reverb seemed to offset it, and I found the change in levels was immaterial—

the Aurora itself picked up the slack. There are a lot of pedals that offer great functionality and perfectly decent sound, but as a guy who just wants a variety of ambience, I've had a hard time getting excited about the tones I've gotten from other modestly priced pedals that offer everything but a good time. For those who've had similar experiences, I think the Keeley Aurora will fill the void.

## WHAT WE LIKE

Truly great sound and a surprising amount of versatility in what at first glance seems a fairly simple configuration.

## CONCERNS

Those who want to use reverb as a “special effect” rather than for “straight” ambience are more likely to want a pedal that offers more features.