

First Impressions: Hermida Audio Reverb



Alfonso Hermida came to fame with his Zendrive Overdrive pedal—often called “Robben-in-a-box,” in reference to its ability to simulate Robben Ford’s Dumble-driven sound. Hermida offers a few other overdrive pedal variations, as well as a line of speaker cabinets, but the Reverb is his first excursion into non-distortion pedal territory. Given all of the potentially adjustable parameters of a reverb effect: decay time, pre-delay, early reflections, diffusion, etc., it is initially downright shocking to see the Reverb pedal sporting one chicken-head knob. This lone control adjusts the wet/dry mix. As to all the other parameters, they are hardwired into a digital circuit designed by Brian Neunaber, and manufactured by Belton—makers of a respected spring reverb. A mono input and a mono output, an AC adaptor input (the pedal will run on a 9-volt battery, but reverbs tend to eat them quickly) and an on/off status LED complete the minimalist features of this pedal. I tested the Reverb pedal with a 1965 Stratocaster equipped with DiMarzio Virtual Vintage pickups and a Stromberg Monterey with DiMarzio EJ Custom humbuckers. For amplification I employed an Orange Tiny Terror, a Little Walter head, and a ZT Lunchbox combo.

Given Alfonso Hermida’s tone maven bonafides, I should not have been surprised to discover that he chose the perfect version of the Belton circuit. It is available in short, medium, and long decay, with Reverb employing the medium version. Hermida is also responsible for the surrounding circuitry that splits the signal into a dry path that remains analog throughout and a digitally affected wet path, before blending them at the output. The resulting sound lies somewhere between a gloriously warm, high-end digital reverb and an excellent vintage spring unit. The chosen parameters offer enough pre-delay so that your dry sound never gets overwhelmed, and a decay that is long enough to add tail to the notes, without getting in the way when a speedy riff is called for. Unlike some amp spring reverbs, the mix knob brings up the effect

gradually. This allows for a wide variety of ambience—from just a touch to remove the dust of a bone-dry amp, to surf city, complete with some spring-like bounce.

For those who derive their overdrive from the amp, putting a reverb in front of the amp often means that when you increase the gain—either by turning up your guitar or switching to a lead channel—the reverb amount increases to a cavernous degree. The Hermida pedal responds in such a way that if you keep the effect's mix relatively low, when you increase the amp gain, though the amount of reverb increases, it remains within a useable range. Also, the pedal's sound is high enough quality that your amp overdrive remains crisp and unsullied. It will work well in most effects loops, but I like to use it with a clean amp and an overdrive pedal. That way, the reverb level remains consistent, whether playing clean jazz chords, creating ambient tremolo tone, or overdriving fusion solos.

It is hard enough for a full-featured reverb effect to be all things to all people, so the one-knob Hermida Audio Reverb will have to find its niche—folks who need a spacey digital reverb for heavy ambient swells, and/or require stereo outputs are not its market. Still, with its superior sound and minimal price, expect the Reverb's niche to be a large one. —Michael Ross