

# Strymon Timeline Pedal Review

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At this point, most guitarists familiar with Strymon are accustomed to having the company knock their socks off. In the last couple of years, this Southern California-based group of hardcore pedal geeks has garnered raves in these pages for their Blue Sky Reverberator (July 2010) and El Capistan tape-delay emulator (November 2010). The company's latest weapon for sonic tweaking, the TimeLine delay, is every bit as impressive. And if you're a studio hound—home, pro, or otherwise—the TimeLine is worth your undivided attention.

## Pure Function

Strymon says the TimeLine is inspired by studio-grade outboard delays, and the pedal's super-functional and get-down-to-business control layout is a reflection of the muse. The gunmetal gray box may look busy compared to other stompbox delays, but given the enormous wealth of functions within, it's actually quite streamlined. The seven knobs, arrayed asymmetrically on the right side of the pedal, modify the delayed signal in both basic ways (time, repeats, mix) and more radical ones (grit, filter, and modulation rate and depth.) An eighth knob accesses additional parameters for each effect. Twelve delay types can be selected with the Type knob on the left, which can also be pushed to save presets. The three footswitches serve dual functions, enabling you to activate two preset banks, control the looper's play and record functions, and tap out tempos.

## Worlds of Echo

There's no way to cover everything the TimeLine can do in a single review, but while it's a pedal of formidable power, it's intuitive enough that you can jump right in and conjure about a trillion cool sounds immediately. The 12 delay "machines," as Strymon calls them, include the dTape tapeecho simulation that's at the core of the El Capistan pedal, the company's dBucket analog-delay emulation, and a

digital delay—all of which will delight discerning traditional tonehounds. But the less-conventional delays are where the real fun starts. Dual delay adds a second set of repeats that lend a spacious, reverb-like ambience that fans of Radiohead's Ed O'Brien and Jonny Greenwood will adore. The Ice setting is similarly cosmic, though it does the cool trick of slicing and dicing the delayed signal and playing them back as though they were shards of a broken mirror. And with a capo on the 7th fret of my Danelectro Hodad 12-string, the simplest folk arpeggios became a celestial choir.

The Filter delays enable the addition of a synchronized low-filter oscillator to the delayed signal, as well as resonance adjustment that lends a synth-like tweak and a little mid-'70s Jerry Garcia vowel tone to the repeats. The Swell setting gives your repeats an almost volume-pedal like bloom. Trem lends a cool pulsating warble, while Reverse, when used on bendy, Eastern-flavored lines with a longer delay time and fewer repeats, is a vehicle for mind-bending psychedelic leads.

The dTape and dBucket machines have their own unique set of functions that are assigned to the Filter, Grit, Depth, and Speed controls. For instance, in dTape mode, the Filter control becomes a Tape Age emulation, while the Speed control emulates Tape Crinkle at various levels of decrepitude. Other delays use the Filter, Grit, and Depth, and Speed knobs in a more straightforward manner. But they are highly editable in other ways through use of the Value knob, which can be depressed to give you access to another level of performance-modifying options. The Ice mode, for instance, has an Interval control that enables you to tailor the pitch intervals of repeats from one octave down to two octaves up, with everything from major thirds and minor sevenths in between. I used this function to craft very song-specific harmonies. All such settings can be stored as presets, as well.

## The Verdict

While the TimeLine is an amazing tool in live contexts, many players will find it incredibly expressive in the studio, too. In addition to the deep functionality of the unit at the most immediately accessible levels, each delay machine can seem almost infinitely tweakable to suit a musical situation. All this processing power isn't cheap, but given that this Strymon may lead you to abandon every delay in your collection except perhaps your bar-gig unit, it could well be worth every cent over the long haul.

### Buy if...

you have a producer's ear for delectable delays and an insatiable appetite for echo in all its forms.

### Skip if...

simply using your existing delay unit's tap-tempo functionality makes your brain hurt.

### Rating...

5 / 5

