

## Review: Carl Martin Octaswitch



If there is one thing that guitar players with a lot of pedals hate, it's the need to precisely tap dance all over their pedalboard just to produce the sound that they're after. Having multiple pedals of different shapes and sizes can also create the hazard of mistakenly turning on the wrong effect at the wrong time, due to cramming all of them into the smallest amount of real estate possible. And finally, after years of searching and experimenting, when you've filled your pedalboard with every effect you've searched for and you're ready to create that sound you've been after for so long, you find that multiple internal buffers in so many circuits is killing the strength of your signal.

The Carl Martin Company aims to help resolve these issues with one of their newest creations: the Octaswitch. At around twenty inches long, the slender board attempts to take the place of your pedal-dancing system completely, by presenting eight conveniently laid-out switches that can be programmed to activate multiple effects at the same time. At the top of the device lies a primary input for your instrument, eight effect send and returns, dual mono outputs (which is a very nice touch), and a switch to activate an internal buffer. Carl Martin decided that since your signal could conceivably be processed, morphed, and mangled by as many as eight effects, it would probably be a good idea to put in an internal buffer circuit to eliminate signal degradation. The sheer size of the device commands some floor space, but if you're already using a pedalboard that houses as many pedals as the Octaswitch was designed to handle, that doesn't seem like it would be a huge issue.

The Octaswitch can be powered by an external regulated power supply or by two 9V batteries, which are easily installed in the underside of the unit. Programming the device is extremely simple. Above each switch lies an array of eight mini DIP switches, each wired to their respective loops at the top of the unit. You simply choose the effects that you want to use when the switch is pressed, slide their corresponding switches up, and stomp away. A bright, nicely lit blue LED notifies you of which relay is active.

Being an effects junkie myself, I've always dreamed of a device like this, something that's easy to use, sounds good and is affordable. Giggling musicians can always dream of having giant rack

switching systems at their disposal to create the sounds that they've always desired, but being able to afford one is a dream entirely of its own. Now with the capability in my hands (or near my feet, rather), I eagerly connected some of my favorite effects to each of the loops: a Z.Vex Ringtone, Electro-Harmonix HOG, Sustain Punch Creamy Dreamer (a Big Muff clone), an old Ibanez FL9 flanger and AD9 analog delay, and a Fulltone OCD. Before setting any of the switches, I set the internal buffer to the off position. The first switch was set to activate only the OCD and the delay, which were set to a standard blues-rock tone with a slight slapback delay. All of the response that I have come to expect from the OCD was there with no noticeable degradation, and the delay was still the same clean, warm echo that I've adored since I got the AD9 years ago.

Switching between different programs was very silent with no popping or crackling, which has been an evident problem in a lot of switching relay units in the past. After a certain amount of conservative experimenting, I realized that I had a very versatile tool in front of me, capable of mixing and matching effects in ways that I've always been hesitant to try because it would be such a huge pain to duplicate live. I then programmed one of the switches to mix the Ringtone and the HOG with a long delay, which was a really wild sound—almost as if Gary Numan was coming out of my amp. It was really a great feeling to be able to command such a unique, surprising tone with the stomp of a single switch. I can say with certainty that the Octaswitch could completely change the way that you think about your effects.

**Buy if...**

you want a clean, organized solution to switching multiple effects on and off at once.

**Skip if...**

you only use a few effects in moderation-- the Octoswitch would probably not be an improvement to your rig.

**Rating...**



MSRP \$340 - Carl Martin - [carlmartin.com](http://carlmartin.com)

*Our expert has stated their case, now we want to hear yours. Log on and share your comments and ratings.*