

the radius of that neck. The flat side is there for a more traditional feel, and one more tool without having to change slides.

Because the slide is extruded, my custom capabilities are limited without having to retool for a specific order. So what I have done is design models that most players will be comfortable with, and deliver the tone they want. A perfect example is the latest model – the Shavano. It was named after an Indian Chief of the area and a mountain that's close to the Salida area. It was designed from conversations with players who said they loved the tones they were getting, but wanted a



tighter fit. What I've done is create a slide that is specific to players that have long fingers, skinny fingers, small fingers, or who just like to play with their pinky finger. And the upside is that it will give you more control. When you increase the inner diameter of a slide you will lose some control, but you also have a slide that will never be a "Chinese finger puzzle." You will always

be able to quickly remove or pick it up for fast transitions.

Currently, we're offering five "Tone Specific" ceramic slides and a thick glass model called a Swamp Frog. There are three color options, with a fourth coming in '06 on the ceramic slides, and there are five color options on the Swamp Frogs. Also new for '06 will be a series of "Signature Models" scheduled for release. Among the artists will be Alex Gomez, Tony Vega, Big Bill Morganfield, Seth Davis, Papa Mali and Colin John. I'm blessed to be able to offer these slides and to promote such great players.

Also new for '06 will be two palm slides that I've been working on for over two years. The first one was designed for steel players, but I've had both steel and Dobro players checking them out. It's called the "Rocky Mountain Rail Rock-it" and as far as I know, it's the only ceramic tone bar on the market. It's a rail design that gives a tone all its own that is very comfortable in the hand – not too heavy, but dense enough to deliver the goods. The other tone bar, or palm slide, if you like, is the "Poncha Bullet." It is a combo slide that I thought of while looking at slides in a music store. I liked the idea of a bullet-style slide, but it seemed hard to hold. I liked the feel of the rail-style slides but wanted the bullet end, so I just combined the two together and that's the Poncha Bullet. **TO**

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REVIEW

## DLS Effects

*A reader once asked us why we reviewed overdrive pedals at the exclusion of so many other worthy effects, and while we do believe that acquiring an authentic overdriven tone remains a high priority with many players, we're not indifferent to other effects that offer broad appeal. Two that qualify are the DLS RotoSim Leslie simulator and the Echo Tap. We asked DLS founder Dave Sestito for some background on his company. Our review follows.*

**TQR:** What inspired the creation of DLS effects?

Well first of all, being a musician always stays in your blood, as does the quest for tone excellence. After long, tough days on the music scene, a new wife and daughter forced me to look for more income to support my family. I put the guitar down for a while and picked up a pencil, calculator, and some night courses in electronics engineering. I got to be a pretty good electrical engineering after some years working at it. I got back into effects in 1998 when my young daughter wanted a distortion box for her guitar. I thought that would be fun, so I proceeded to make her one. I dusted off my old gear and I got to thinking, why not design an echo unit? After all, my EH Memory Man did not work well and I thought I could make a better delay. After spending eight months on my first delay design, I scrapped it in frustration because it did not meet my expectations. I came up with a new design approach, and five months later it sounded better than any delay I had ever used. Then I designed a chorus which had similar design basics and it came out sounding beautiful. Those two effects (DLS Echomaster and Ultra Chorus) allowed me to launch DLS Effects in 2000.



We wanted to design a rotary speaker simulator that allows the musician to dial in the type of rotary speaker sound they want without taking over the natural sound of the instrument. We wanted a killer slow and fast speed, quiet operation with no noise, and a reasonable price that wouldn't drive working musicians into poverty. We feel that we succeeded in capturing everything we wanted with the RotoSIM. In all honesty,

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there are other effects that do a decent job, but they may also alter your sound, they don't produce a slow speed very well, they're noisy, expensive, large, and allow little versatility. Many musicians have told us how they were able to dial in the sound they used to get when using a real rotary speaker cabinet, and we always tell them to rate us against a real rotary speaker cabinet, *not* other pedals.

**TQR:** How has feedback from players been used in your R&D?

After our Echomaster delay, musicians asked us for an easy to use tap echo, tone control for the echoes, longer delay times, and independent echo volumes. We designed these features and more into the EchoTAP. For chorus lovers, we designed the Chorus-Vib to fulfill the quest for a deep, well rounded stereo chorus that can achieve chorusing from the CE-2 style to TC chorus styles, plus some nice Vibrato. Two of our beta-testers, Donner Rusk and Michael Lawrence, initially asked us to design a rotary speaker simulator. Once we began asking other musicians about rotary speaker needs, it became clear that the RotoSIM would have to have lots of controls. Musicians were looking for separate speed controls for Tweeter and Bass, ramp time control, expression pedal input for speed control, easy to use switchable distortion, stereo in/outs, 9 volt operation, low noise, and big time tweakability. We also relied heavily on feedback from our other beta testers, Deano George (Deano George Project) and Greg Howard (guitar tech for Greenday and Aerosmith), who helped us tweak in the RotoSIM. We took our time with the design and suggestions for over a year before we received a unanimous thumbs up and launched the RotoSIM.

**TQR:** What are the most significant challenges in creating authentic-sounding delay and Leslie simulation, specifically. They are clearly much more complex than say, building an overdrive pedal...

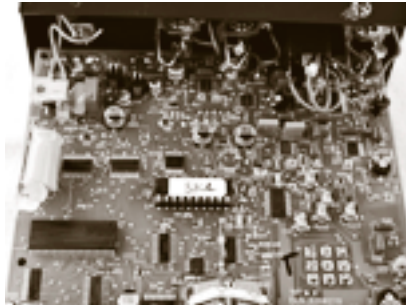


First of all, building a time-based effect such as a delay or chorus is exponentially harder than an overdrive.

Granted, a good sounding overdrive has many challenges in itself, but uses only analog parts such as op-amps, resistors, diodes, and capacitors. Time-based effects like delay and chorus require clocking schemes, signal storage, microprocessor processing, analog filtering, and blending with op-amps, resistors, diodes and capacitors. Our RotoSIM rotary speaker simulator has time-

based electronics plus phasing, separate tweeter and bass levels and speeds, and other electronics to get the Doppler effect like a real rotary speaker cabinet.

**TQR:** How do you actually design durability?



Quality all starts with the design. For the PCB, we use a double-sided circuit board and utilize surface mount electronics where ever possible. Traditional effects used parts

that are through-hole technology (large parts where the body of the part is large and sticks up off the circuit board and solder leads go through the board for soldering). Surface mount parts are approximately 1/3 the size of through-hole parts and less weight. How is that better? Well, because the mass of the part is smaller, it will not break off from shock or vibration. Also, because surface mount parts are so small and mounted on one surface of the pcb, there is much less effect noise (through-hole parts are noise antennas). We can also fit more parts on the same square inch area, providing more circuitry in the effect and more features for the musician. Don't get me wrong, we also use a small percentage of through-hole parts, but only because the surface mount technology is not available or is price prohibitive for those parts. Mechanically, we use a very heavy steel enclosure, steel pots, steel jacks, and steel switches. Our effects use a highly durable method of painting called powder coating, verses cheaper, standard spray painting. Lastly, we have superb quality control at all stages of manufacturing and testing.

**TQR:** What would you like to develop in the future?

Our next design for 2006 will be to re-design the Ultra Chorus. It will be a dual channel chorus unit with a multitude of input/output options. Although our business more than doubled last year, we only believe in growth that will maintain superb quality in both sound and construction.

[www.dlseffects.com](http://www.dlseffects.com)

## Review

*Our expectations from effects pedals really aren't complicated. We look for bullet-proof construction, very low or zero noise, no change imposed on the fundamental tone of the guitar and amp (unless that's the purpose of the effect), simple, intuitive controls and features that perform a useful function, no puzzling interaction with other effects in the chain, and outstanding performance that produces a variable range of*

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*the intended effect without sounding artificially processed or contrived. In a word, DLS gets it.*

### DLS Echo Tap

The Echo Tap is both simple to use and rich with features that add all the flexibility you could want, including adjustable delay times from 50ms to 3 seconds for Echo, Tap



Tempo delay time from 30 ms to 3 seconds, dual volume controls for Echo and Tap Tempo echo, adjustable echo repeats, a tone control for echoes, an Echo/Tap Tempo

footswitch that switches between Echo1 fixed delay setting or Tap Tempo delay mode on the fly, and an On/Off footswitch with true bypass. Inside are internal adjustment pots for input and output levels. The Echo Tap is ‘analog’ warm and lush, it performs brilliantly with both clean and distorted tones, and it can be quickly set for variable echo repeats and echo volume, even in low light situations. Switching between Tap Temp and Echo is seamlessly simple (two taps), and the bomb-proof steel box takes up very little space on your pedalboard. At \$289.95, the Echo Tap is *highly* recommended.

### DLS RotoSim

Most players agree that short of a real Leslie cab or an old Fender Vibratone, the Hughes & Kettner Rotosphere has been the default move for Leslie simulators. The RotoSim ups the ante with zero noise and excellent stereo and mono performance in a package half the size and weight of the H&K. It doesn’t alter the pure tone of your gear as the H&K can, and



We especially liked the separate level controls for the bass

while the 7 internal adjustment pots can be intimidating, they all have a useful purpose worth exploring and their function is clearly explained in the documentation that accompanies the pedal.

(speaker) rotor and tweeter, the ramp time (up or down) control when switching from fast/slow or slow/fast settings, and the flexibility of the dual A and B outputs with B providing a warmer tone. Like the Echo Tap, every desirable control option has been designed in the RotoSim – even a switchable internal overdrive circuit that simulates the clipping that would occur with a real Leslie. Best of all, the sound is dramatically realistic. Our only caution is that you may need to invest some time tweaking the controls to zero in on your favorite default sound. The RotoSim can also be used with an expression pedal. Price: \$299.95 at [musictoyz.com](http://musictoyz.com). **To**

If a compact echo or Leslie simulator appeals to you, look no further than these two stellar effects from DLS.

## Who's Playing What - Robert Cray

*Robert Cray needs no introduction, so we'll keep ours short. Please see Robert and his excellent band live, and as close to the stage as possible. Watch his technique, and specifically*



*how he unconsciously coaxes so many voices from his guitar simply*

*by moving pick attack from over the neck pickup to the bridge and everywhere inbetween. For the price of a ticket, you'll get a priceless lesson as well.*

**TQR:** You have created one of the most readily recognizable and distinctive, signature guitar tones in the history of electric blues. Where did your journey begin?

The first guitar that I owned was a Harmony solid body with one DeArmond pickup on it, and I went from there to an SG Standard. Back in those days I wanted to get Eric Clapton’s sound from the Cream records, and I kept that guitar for a long time. Then I switched to an ES345 because by that time I was into the B.B. King thing, and I kept that for a while – even after I got my first Fender, which was in 1979. I went to a show and saw Phillip Guy, Buddy’s brother, and he was playing a Stratocaster through a Super Reverb. I don’t know what it was, but he had the right amount of reverb on it and he just had the coolest sound that I had ever heard live, and that was when I

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