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### SPECS

**BOSS** (323) 890-3700;  
[bossus.com](http://bossus.com)

**MODEL** FRV-1 '63 Fender Reverb

**PRICE** \$206 retail/\$129 street

**KUDOS** Quiet. Fender-y sounds galore. Pings like the real thing. Excellent value.

**CONCERNS** Highs can be slightly harsh, especially when used with distortion.

**LEE JACKSON:** [leejackson.com](http://leejackson.com)

**MODEL** Mr. Springgy

**PRICE** \$389 retail/\$199 direct

**KUDOS** Quiet. Rich, pleasing sound. Plays well with others. Versatile outputs.

**CONCERNS** Less splashy than an actual Fender Reverb.

## Boss FRV-1 '63 Fender Reverb vs.

## Lee Jackson Mr. Springgy

TESTED BY BARRY CLEVELAND

**SPRING REVERB IS UBIQUITOUS IN THE ELECTRIC** guitar universe—and the tube-powered model 6G15 Fender Reverb unit manufactured in the early '60s is considered by many to be the gold standard for classic surf, rockabilly, country, psychedelic, and other sounds that rely on more than a dash of splash. Unlike the onboard reverb units found in many guitar amps, the Fender Reverb was a standalone box that you patched between your guitar and your amp's input, and

more than a few players have found that its tube circuitry enhanced their tones even with the reverb sound bypassed. Both of our contenders were designed to emulate the sound of the Fender Reverb—particularly the coveted 1963 version—but they come at the problem from entirely different angles.

In the digital modeling corner we have the Boss FRV-1 '63 Fender Reverb pedal—the latest in a series of collaborations between Boss

and Fender (see the July 2007 issue of *GP* to learn how the Boss FDR-1 Fender '65 Deluxe Reverb and FBM-1 Fender '59 Bassman pedals stacked up against the corresponding Fender reissue amps). Boasting a textured old-school-brown finish, vintage-style graphics, and three controls that mirror those found on the original device—Mixer, Tone, and Dwell—the FRV-1 employs Boss' COSM (Composite Object Sound Modeling) technology to recreate the sound of audio signals routed through tube circuitry and springs in a metal pan.

In the opposite corner, sporting an elegant black finish, modern graphics, and a sleek single-knob design, Lee Jackson's Mr. Springgy is an entirely analog device that is essentially a modified version of a Belton reverb pan replacement module that Jackson had a hand in developing. The actual circuitry is concealed from view and kept secret by Jackson. Our contestant is a revised version of Mr. Springgy (the original was introduced in 2007), which does away with the reverb level trim pot found inside the earliest units, and adds a Wet Only option that switches the Main output to reverb only and routes the dry sound to a second output for quasi-stereo operation using two amps, or when inserting Mr. Springgy into an amp's parallel effects loop. (You can also get a wet/dry split from the Main output by using a cable with a TRS connector on one end and two mono plugs on the other.)

Most of my testing was done playing a PRS Custom 24 guitar through a Rivera Venus 6 amplifier, with the pedals patched between the two, and also in the amp's serial effects loop. Additionally, I routed the speaker output of the amp into a Palmer DI and my studio monitoring system to really focus in on the sound. Then, I double-checked my results using various guitars and amps, including a vintage Fender Super Reverb. I was listening for overall sound quality, responsiveness to playing dynamics, compatibility with both amp and pedal distortion, and—most importantly—fidelity to the vintage Fender Reverb sound.

First off, both of these pedals were extremely quiet in operation. They hissed a bit when cranked way up, but never at levels even approaching the noise generated by an actual tube reverb. Second, I didn't experience any level or tone sucking with either pedal and it could even be argued that they enhanced the overall sound by increasing dynamic response and bringing out addi-

tional harmonics (though that is obviously a more subjective judgment, and results varied depending on which guitars and amps were used). Finally, both pedals functioned reasonably well when patched into the Venus 6's effects loop, though not surprisingly, there were some level-matching issues, and in both cases I preferred the sound they made in front of the amp's input. In case you're wondering, neither the FRV-1 or Mr. Springgy are true bypass designs, but neither was the original Fender 6G15.

When it came to nailing the Fender Reverb sound, the FRV-1 definitely had the edge, more or less faithfully recreating that unit's characteristic sponginess and splash. If anything, there was a little *too* much splash on tap, with a slightly harsh high end on some settings, making the versatile Mixer and Tone controls invaluable for crafting just the right blend. The Dwell control was similarly versatile, ranging from zero reverb to a relatively long and smooth decay—though even when maxed the decay was shorter than that of the spring reverb in the Venus 6 or Super Reverb amps. With its Tone control rolled back to about ten o'clock to compensate for edginess, the FRV-1 also sounded quite good with various distortion pedals and amp distortion (when used in the effects loop).

Although Mr. Springgy sounds considerably less like a Fender Reverb than the FRV-1, it has a very smooth, robust, and pleasing sound that some players may prefer. There's just the right amount of fullness to provide depth without submerging your sound, the affected frequencies are nicely equalized, and the fixed decay time is perfect for all but the splash-happiest apps. The Mix knob sweeps a useful range, from dry to drenched—and if you desire *just* verb you can activate the aforementioned internal Wet Only switch or go with the TRS "Y" cable option. Mr. Springgy also plays very well with others, and sounds wonderful with distortion, whether from a pedal or an amp.

The Boss FRV-1 sounds more like the standalone Fender Reverb than Mr. Springgy, making it the winner of our competition—but in terms of a head-to-head general competition it was a draw. Both pedals sound a lot like an actual spring reverb (Mr. Springgy coming closer to, say, a Demeter RVB-1), and which works best for a specific player will be more a matter of personal taste than sonic superiority. And if you can't decide, no worries, as they are priced so reasonably that you can simply buy both. ■