

TOPANCA BURNSIDE

catalinbread
MECHANISMS OF MUSIC

TOPANGA BURNSIDE

The Topanga Burnside has all the springy, surfy mojo of the original Topanga but now features a Trem knob that controls the rate of a lush tremolo effect. We revisited the original Topanga and found that placing the tremolo between cascading reverb stages yielded the best results—the effect is not too choppy; not too washed out. Many surf rock and skate punk bands use spring reverb, tremolo or both simultaneously in order to get their sounds, and the Topanga Burnside is a nod to them.

“Burnside” is a reference to the famous Burnside skatepark in our hometown of Portland, OR. (shoutout to *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*).

The Topanga is based on an outboard Fender 6G15 spring reverb unit from the '60s. Part of its magic, and how it differs from the internal spring reverb found in most Fender-style amps, is that it is run *in front* of the amp, causing the reverb signal to distort and sound more intense. Because there are additional knobs on the outboard units, you also have more control over the reverb qualities. The Dwell knob controls how hard the springs are getting hit by the guitar signal. The Tone knob allows the treble to be dialed back to just the right degree of brightness. The 6G15's front end is also essentially a tube preamp, so it colors the sound going into the amp. All this adds up to a very distinctive reverb sound with a lot of attitude and complex nonlinearities that are hard to replicate. But we did just that!

QUICK START

Running the Topanga is pretty straightforward. Plug it in, twist some knobs, and go!

Dwell controls the intensity of the reverb - how hard the “springs” are being driven.

Tone controls the tone of the reverb only. Your dry signal is conditioned only by the discrete preamp. Tone ranges from full bright to a really warm reverb tone.

Mix goes from full dry to full wet. So you can use it in a wet/dry rig or you can use the preamp without the reverb for a great boost / tone enhancer.

Volume goes from slightly below unity gain all the way up to a nice healthy, punchy clean boost from the all-discrete preamp!

Trem controls the rate of a tremolo effect. Turning this knob to zero disables the tremolo.



CONTROLS IN DETAIL

DWELL

The original Fender reverb unit's Dwell control was basically the volume control for its tube preamp (which is very similar to the preamp in all Fender amps). So the Dwell knob sets how hard the transformer and springs are being driven. The Topanga's Dwell knob works the same way, controlling how hard the virtual spring circuit is driven, from a very mellow reverb to the over-the-top reverb that made the original famous.

TONE

Essentially, this control is a low-pass filter for the reverb signal coming out of the spring tank. We've duplicated this architecture in the Topanga to give you the authentic sound. Most people run the Tone wide open but you can back off the control to obtain mellower background reverb sounds.

MIX

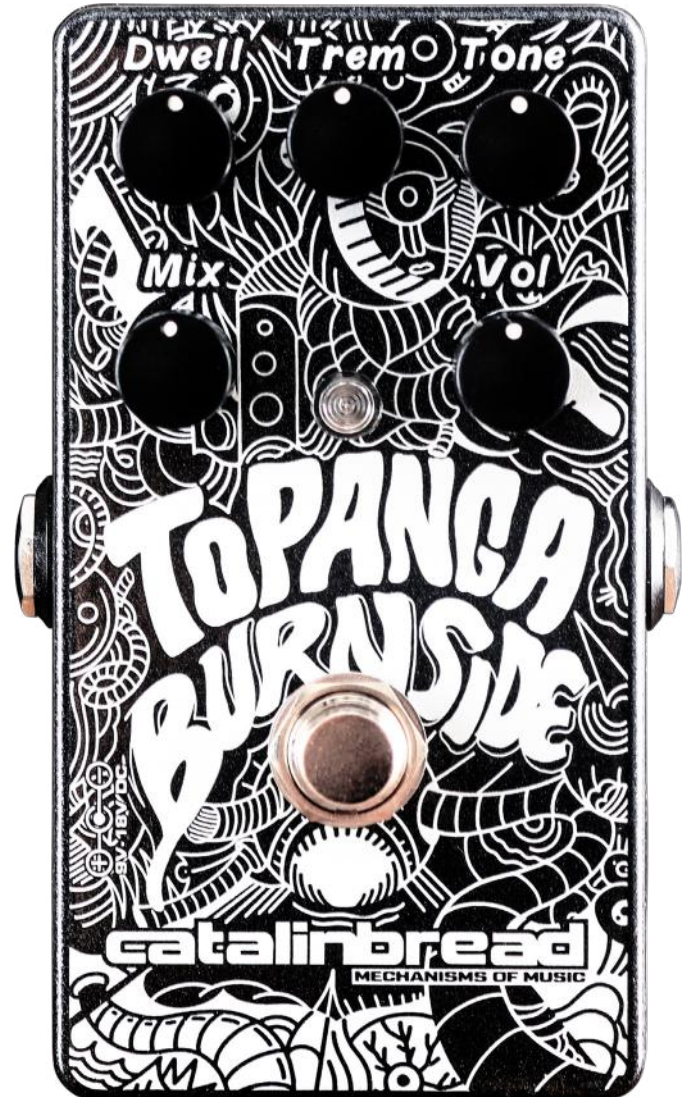
Full counter-clockwise is dry-signal only and full clockwise is reverb signal only. Just set to the amount of reverb you want. Do note though that if you hit an overdriven amp (or overdrive pedal) with the Topanga, you'll need to run the Mix control lower to obtain the same balance. This is true for the original unit too.

VOLUME

We've added the ability for you to control the overall output of the Topanga. The Volume knob controls both your dry signal's volume as well as the reverb and affects the output gain of the discrete preamp.

TREM

The trem knob only controls the rate of the tremolo effect. The tremolo effect is placed between cascading reverb stages. In other words, you cannot remove the reverb effect from the tremolo sound. Turning this knob to minimum removes the tremolo from the signal path.



Under the Hood

There is an internal switch marked “Buff. T.B”. Set it to “T.B.” for true-bypass operation. Or set it to “Buff.” (also referred to as “trails” mode because you can hit bypass and the reverb tail will ring through without being cutoff). Another benefit of using “Buff.” mode is you can use the Volume knob to preset a great clean boost from the Topanga’s discrete preamp whether the reverb is on or not. Or you can set the Volume to unity for an always-on “buffer” for your signal chain so you’ll always have the benefit of the discrete preamp.

Amps

Topanga will enhance the sound of any good guitar amp. If your amp is set to an overdriven sound, you may want to back down on the **MIX**, **TONE**, and perhaps even **DWELL** controls. Or leave them up for great sonic mayhem!

Powering up the Topanga

Topanga runs from 9 to 18 volts using a standard DC center-negative power supply for pedals. Make sure you’re using a supply that provides at least 100mA. 9 volts will sound great all around. But if you want even more output and an even healthier boost to your dry signal with increased headroom, try all the way up to 18 volts! Oh, and Topanga does not run on batteries.

