

**gig-fx™**





## Gig-fx Johnny Hiland Kilowah Review

By Jason Spell

Wah - you either love it or you hate it. Soundwise, I'm in the first camp - I'm a huge Hendrix/Vai/Kim Thayil/Theme from "Shaft" fan, so wah is one of the effects I absolutely must have on a pedalboard. But, drawing from my own experience, I've also hated most wahs due to their inability to change features and sounds, and from the way I feel like I've had to fight them, with the rubber bumpers and the toe-based footswitch. So I've been in both camps - I love AND hate most wah pedals. Enter Gig-fx.

In my quest to find the perfect wah, I read up on every wah pedal imaginable, and checked out videos, and did the whole "gear-obsessed-internet-forum-lurker" thing. I had heard about the Kilowah from Johnny, and I decided that I just needed to try it out for myself. The feature set appeared to be unmatched from the get-go. There are 4 different sound modes - "Cry", which I think of as a traditional 60s type (think Voodoo Child), "Megawah", which has an exaggerated low end sweep response (Shaft!), and then two modes I hadn't seen on any other wah - "Trig" and "Auto". The sound of these sweeps is very rich and pronounced - there's no "is it on?" questioning going on at all.

The third mode, Trig, is a triggered wah effect, akin to a traditional envelope filter. The wah effect engages in this mode with each pick or strum, but is based upon your attack level from your hand. Basically, you vary the amount of wah that you want by changing how hard or soft you hit the strings. This mode is great for funk sounds, and some not-from-this-world textures. I've never found an envelope filter to be something I absolutely needed for my guitar rig (I'm all about maximizing pedalboard real estate), but with having it built into the wah and with how neat the effect feels, I'll definitely use it.

The last mode is called "Auto". This could be confusing to some, as most people think of an envelope filter when thinking of an "auto wah", just like the "Trig" setting. But Auto does not behave like Trig - Auto does a complete wah sweep that varies in speed according to the rate knob. It's kind of like a phaser or tremelo in behavior, but a wah in sound character - it can go from very slow washes to faster warbles.



I've never experienced this effect on any other guitar-based effect, so it's a refreshing change of pace that will inspire some creativity. I did feel like the rate knob didn't go as fast as I wanted (a superfast pulsing wah sound with perfect timing would be soooooo cool!), but it got fairly speedy.

Also, and I don't know how technically possible this is, but I thought that the rocker pedal on top should control the rate in Auto mode, so that the speed would be variable without bending down to turn the knob. As it is, in the Trig mode, the rocker pedal only functions as an on/off switch. Minor points, to be sure, but they'd be nice features to have in an already feature-rich pedal.

About the construction of the pedal - first of all, it is very visually striking. The pearl white-colored base has a classiness about it, and the rocker pedal is in the shape of a capital letter "I". I didn't know whether having a smaller surface area to make contact with my foot would make the wah uncomfortable, but it feels just like a wah pedal should. It has an optical switching system, so when the wah is depressed at all the effect is engaged.

This is a boon to me, because the mechanical switches and I do not get along on wah pedals - I feel like I have to put my entire weight on them just to maybe get it to maybe turn off 80% of the time, which can throw off the vibe of a solo. Then, if the alignment on a regular wah gets even slightly out on the switch, rocker, bumpers, or anything, then the whole system is even worse to deal with. The Gig-fx wah's optical system has none of those irritations, and makes turning the wah on or off a snap. It is very intuitive for those inspiring moments when you must wah!

All in all, I think this is a great pedal. I've had my share of many wahs, vintage and modern, and while the sounds may have been cool, the physical limitations of most of them have cut short the inspiration while trying to struggle with the mechanism. The added modes of this wah are really going to come in handy when I feel like I need a "different" effect. And the main two regular wah modes are just butter smooth. This pedal is a winner, and I'm proud to put it on my pedalboard.

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