

Moogerfooger MF-107 FreqBox | \$359

Le Freq c'est chic? **Robbie Stamp**, umm, stamps on the latest Moogerfooger pedal to see what crawls out



ON THE DVD

WHAT IS IT?

Half synthesizer, half effect pedal

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Wide range of instant and unique sounds
- 2 Excellent build and sound quality
- 3 Rear panel connections

The FreqBox story is three years old and started with two Moog engineers coming up with the same idea independently just weeks apart – a serendipity the late Bob Moog applauded. The ensuing 'Big Sync' project has finally reached fruition in the form of the MF-107 FreqBox, the latest addition to the Moogerfooger range complete with wooden side panels and old-school Moog knobs.

The ethos behind the design, as with all the Moogerfoogers, is to put a major modular analogue synth building block into pedal form. The FreqBox is a VCO (Voltage Controlled Oscillator) with a sweepable range of waveforms (triangle to saw to square to pulse) and a sync switch for the VCO to track the incoming audio frequency. The VCO is further manipulated by the Envelope and Frequency Modulation (FM) controls. There are also controls for Mix, Input Drive and Output Level.

Power is supplied by a 9V external adaptor and there's no battery powering, which is hardly a surprise as I guess this would eat a mountain of nine volters.

Audio input and output is via quarter-inch jacks and as this unit is set up for instrument input any line-level input/output requires a little attenuation/re-amplification.

The headroom available in this unit is healthy enough to make this level adjustment much less than normal for stomp boxes and it will not sound weak next to your other pedals; in fact, it may

well kick their sorry butts and give your amplifier something to chew on!

In classic Moogerfooger style there are still another seven jack sockets on the back to deal with. Five of them are expression pedal inputs for control of the frequency, waveform, envelope amount, FM amount and mix, while the other two provide CV outputs from the Oscillator and the Envelope, which can then be re-patched to any of the expression pedal inputs (they all accept CV). This capability is a gift for studio use and for integration with an analogue synth set-up (I actually used the CV output from a Novation BassStation to get it burbling and squawking).

Analogue know-how

A pedal like this can call for some prior analogue synth knowledge to speed up the familiarity process, but with the aid of the clear and thorough manual anyone can get up and running quickly. Many esoteric and complex pedals have a tendency to go quiet or fizzy when the



knob twiddling gets going causing frustration as you wonder why that fat filtered distortion has now become a distant fizz. What impresses me about the FreqBox is that this never once happened. With the aid of the input drive and output level knobs things can quickly be stopped from getting too much or too little, and the drive also provides some solid overdrive tones too when pushed.

As a guitar effects pedal the FreqBox has a whole load to offer, especially if you want to get a full monosynth tone in the arsenal. At the subtle end, octaver-style sounds are easily mixable into the signal. Plugging in an expression pedal to the Freq socket provides wah-wah-esque sweeps, and with the FM rolled in there's real whammy beating possibilities. Being a single VCO the FreqBox works best with single notes, staccato and sustained. The Envelope/FM amount knobs really open up the dynamism of the effect with an amazing array of nuances



of sounds. In fact as the FreqBox is pretty much a standalone synthesizer you can have a second patch for an analogue monosynth with just a kick of the footswitch. Integration with a modular synthesizer is simple thanks to the CV input capabilities, adding another valuable and unique oscillator – a real boon.

On transient material things get wild within the 'Electro drums' bracket, even providing some gritty Funk to an acoustic drum mix. Any rhythmic audio

the audio in, and an expression pedal plugged into the Freq input you have a Theremin-style synth. This can delve heavily into the realms of desk-feedback-type noises, which provides the source for some amazing Electro sounds. Using a CV input the FreqBox can be played a little more tunefully. The lack of Gate CV input means the notes are continuous, though use of the envelope and rear panel patching can help reduce the effect of this.

At the time of going to press the list price for the FreqBox is \$359, which makes it one of the more expensive Moogerfooger pedals. Considering the unique nature of

The MF-107 FreqBox has a whole lot more to offer users than its seven knobs and a switch would indicate

possible with just a few tweaks. The waveform control gives the full range of subtle, softer tones at the triangle end, and by the time you get to pure pulse waves things get really fizzy and sizzly in a way that could cut through granite.

Teamed with a monosynth (analogue or digital) the potential is just as deep and can add depth to even the simplest

source can be processed into all sorts of interesting sounds, which are rarely found in any plug-in, and with a bit of further envelope filtering can get extremely wet and wild.

As a standalone synthesizer the FreqBox has a lot more to offer than its seven knobs and a switch would indicate. With the Osc out plugged into

the unit, this is no surprise as the demand may be less than the more universal MF-101 Low Pass Filter. That said, I'd guess there are a lot of Moogerfooger users who are amassing the whole range, as they make an awesome collection of audio tools for the more adventurous musician, engineer or producer. Aside from the excellent build quality, wide range of sounds and applications, this pedal excels in two fields: as an additional VCO/effect for monosynths and as a touch of spice to give the essential 'what's-that-in-the-mix?' element. **FM**

Why pedals beat multi-FX and plug-ins

Pedals like the FreqBox aren't cheap when compared to multi-FX units and many plug-in packages, but don't let price fool you.

Firstly real controls (ie. knobs with one job, not jog wheels and menus, or clickety-click mice) can make the process of moulding a sound a more direct and pleasingly tactile experience.

There's a lot to be said for having a box that does (within certain boundaries) one thing reliably and in a

way that pleases you, as it will cut down time during experimentation and help keep proceedings fresh.

Building a chain of effects pedals to further modify your sound is also a rewarding process and you don't have to worry about your effects chain limit or CPU usage – it's as long as your collection, give or take the odd S/N ratio increase!

I look at it as I did with Lego: with a box of Lego pieces I could let my imagination run riot within

the boundaries of the selection available and thus produce a finished product quickly, unimpeded by an excess of choices.

If my box had been full of virtual 'could-do-anything' pieces I'd have probably changed my mind so many times I would have walked off to pull the other arm off Action Man or set fire to the dog again!

Pedals are fun, they look good and don't need to be authorised on the web!

SPECS

Controls: Drive, Output level, Mix, Frequency (25Hz to 1.6KHz, though the oscillator ranges from sub 20Hz to 20KHz when controlled by CV), Waveform (triangle to sawtooth to square to pulse), Envelope amount, FM amount, On/Bypass footswitch.

Connections: Input and output on quarter-inch mono/unbalanced jack. Expression pedal inputs for Frequency, Wave, Envelope amount, FM amount and Mix on quarter-inch jack. CV outputs of Envelope and Oscillator are on quarter-inch jack. Power input for +9v supply (included).

Dimensions: 152 x 229 x 64mm

Weight: 907g

ALTERNATIVES



Moogerfooger MF-102 Ring Modulator
\$299

A major modular synth component squeezed into footpedal format. Though this is a very different beast to the FreqBox it would be a worthy contender for creating wild and interesting tones. It would also be a great companion to the FreqBox as it features just as many useful ins and outs.

moogmusic.com



Electro-Harmonix MicroSynth
£163

A synth effect for guitar, that can be used on a range of sources, with a mix of octave and sync'd oscillator sounds and an envelope section for filtering. It has ten faders for tweaking, but no extra ins and outs like the FreqBox. A great-sounding unit, but with not quite the same devastating sound-mangling potential as the MF-107.

ehx.com

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD [Progress bar: 10/10]

VALUE [Progress bar: 8/10]

EASE OF USE [Progress bar: 8/10]

VERSATILITY [Progress bar: 8/10]

RESULTS [Progress bar: 10/10]

An excellent addition to the range with an original sound and design that fits in well with the collection.