# Moog MF-108M Cluster Flux \$599

Another effects module emerges from Moog HQ. JoE Silva joins the 'chorus' of the curious...

## WHAT IS IT?

The 'lost' sound of vintage chorus and flanging in a single pedal

## CONTACT

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## **HIGHLIGHTS**

A great tool for harmonic manipulation Simple and effective compressors
3 Full sounding preamps with plenty of clean gain

**FutureMusic** 



he latest transmission put forth by Moog Music arrives in the form of another chunky MoogerFooger unit, adding to the ever-lengthening line of analogue kit they've produced over the past forty plus years. This pedal sets about mashing up delay-based effects with multi-form LFO modulations to produce complex yet playable chorus, vibrato and flanging sounds

Built up from the remaining supply of high-voltage Panasonic Bucket Brigade Delay (BBD) chips that are out there, the MF-108M is designed to deliver those uber-clean and highly desirable chorus/flanger effects in a package that's as classically modular as it is classically Moog.

With its solid organic-meetsindustrial housing, sturdy knobs and switches, plus the flexibility that comes from both MIDI and control voltage (CV) manipulation, we are instantly set to wondering if this is the last ever chorus/flanger pedal that we need think about owning.

From left to right, the Cluster Flux is laid out simply enough. The first column houses the delay section that includes continuous Time and Feedback pots, along with a red rocker switch to move between chorus and flange. Three mini-pots in the centre section cover input (Drive), output (Output Level), and Mix functions. In the remaining column is the rotary switch selecting which waveforms (Sine, Triangle, Square, Sawtooth, Ramp and Random Stepped) are available to the LFO waveforms, and two more pots under it adjust the oscillator's Rate and Amount.

Three independent LEDs below the controls reflect MIDI activity, level intensity and whether the unit is bypassed (red) or in play (green). Beneath them the LFO Tap Tempo and Bypass switches complete the face of the MoogerFooger's control panel.

Round the back of the unit are a good number of 1/4" jack points. CV inputs for Feedback, Time, LFO Rate, Mix, and LFO Amount sit alongside Left and Right outputs, a MIDI jack, and a Feedback Insert (which allows the feedback signal path to be processed separately via a standard 1/4" TRS patch cable). But gah! there is no on/off switch. The MF-108M relies solely on its standard +9V 300 mA wall wart to power up and down. That aside, the 4lbs/1.8kg build of the MF-108M is rugged and should live comfortably either on the floor alongside your bog standard stompboxes or racked up with the keyboards make up your current rig.

Now that we've had the tour, we can gently tap the Cluster Flux's hardy wooden endpieces (as per the manual's instruction) and "wake it up after the long journey to its new home" to get it ready for use.

In order to key you in quickly to the sonic possibilities of the MF-108M. Moog have include a handful of useful 'patches', all nicely illustrated in the manual, to get you started with the Cluster Flux. You can dive straight in with a classic flanger effect built up from a healthy amount of triangled LFO to hear the rich, jet-like sound





that takes you back to Bowie's Station to Station or the Beatles Blue Jay Way The straight out of the tin chorus is equally lush, and free of the tinny digital vibe that many '80s guitarists who fell prey to the more inexpensive analogue emulators are unable to escape. Plus, if you're so inclined, the internal dip switches inside the Cluster Flux enable you to reconfigure the Right output on the back of the unit to allow for the standard mix of the dry signal and phase inverted wet signal to

then adding fair amounts of Time and Feedback to a warm pad chord while you subtly twist the LFO Amount knob back and forth. Even minor adjustments to this sort of Square Wave Chorus configuration can wind up being rhythmically satisfying.

The same can be said of employing the Random wave in flange mode while tweaking the amount of Feedback run

Once you've gauged where you need the LFO rate to be, the MF-108M usually falls in line by the third time you've tapped the switch. For those with either Moog's EP-2 Expression Pedal or a similar device, you can create wah-wah like effects, especially with some of the flange settings.

As for DAW integration, you can control the Cluster Flux's settings via MIDI CC messages to allow for tempo syncing direct from your sequencer of choice. Beyond the obvious advantages

> of this, you can also extend what the device can do on its own, via specific CC messages such as multiplying the available delay time range for a

broader selection of echo effects or controlling specific rhythmic clock divisions (dotted 1/8 note or 1/16 triplet, for example).

Moog maintain that they plan on keeping the Cluster Flux in production

as long as their supply of BBD chips holds out. So while this unit, like the rest of the MoogerFooger line, does maintain a relatively full-on price tag, its modular flexibility combined with that highly desirable analogue sound might make it worth stretching your kit budget.

# Its modular flexibility and highly desirable sound might make it worth stretching your kit budget

be changed for more sound shaping control (for example; right output dry and mix disabled with the wet signal

With those fairly basic settings test-driven, the real fun to be had here comes from more adventurous twiddling. Take, for instance, dialing up a square wave for the LFO, setting

through the signal. With the LFO Rate and Amount set fairly high the Cluster Flux produces wonderfully interesting types of modulation as you approach either the positive or negative extreme of the Feedback pot - even when you're simply messing around with pink noise!

In terms of live performance the Tap Tempo knob is quite responsive as well.

# An expressive heritage

Since the company's early days in the synth trade. Moog has often meant modular. And as the recent release of their flagship synth (the Minimoog Voyager XL) indicates, it's a legacy that Moog are very interested in reclaiming whenever possible. For those who've yet to dabble in control voltage (CV) manipulation, the ability to connect up other pieces of CV-enabled kit

to control the functionality of a MoogerFooger is quite attractive if you're interested in pushing the envelope of your sound. With Feedback, Time, LFO Rate, Mix and LFO Amount, all neatly labelled with a white stripe on the back of the unit, the possibilities are countless (depending on your set-up). For instance, you could be playing notes on a Voyager while manipulating the

touchpad where the X and Y axis are wired up to the controls of the Cluster Flux. Without taking a finger off the keys or the touch pad, the CV control would enable you to manipulate various effects parameters on the pedal as if you had another set of hands. The potential for expressiveness of that sort, particularly when you're dealing with electronic music, is not to be sniffed at.

# FutureMusic VERDICT EASE OF USE

Another superb addition to the MoogerFooger line that should prove highly desirable

1/4" phone jack accepts any instrument level or line-level audio

1/4" phone jack 1/4" phone jack with adjustable output level for instrument or line level output.

A second output dip switch configurable for either stereo out (two types), delay only out, or dual mono out.

# Stereo

1/4" jacks that accept Moogerfooger EP-2 (or equivalent) expression pedals, or 0-5V control voltages from either two-circuit or three-circuit 1/4" jacks.

TRS insert jack for inserting effects in the feedback loop of the delay chain. Line level output

MIDI IN: A five-pin DIN input for controlling the MF-108 via MIDI control

Dimensions: 229 x 152 x 64mm 1.8kg

# **ALTERNATIVES**



Electro-Harmonix Small Clone EH 4600 Full-Chorus

Popular via its association with Kurt Cobain, the current version of this fully analogue chorus unit features full bypass, unlike the original from the '70s. A smaller, pedal boardfriendly version dubbed the Neo Clone is also available.



# Hartman Analog

Built with original SAD1024 chips, this well constructed stompbox follows in the footsteps of the Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress Flanger and can battery if necessary.