





LINE 6

DL4

VS

VOX

DELAYLAB

Two of the best modern echo boxes are put through their paces. Expect long delays – but of the good kind

Words: Ed Mitchell Photography: Simon Lees

THINK of guitarists who feature delay (or echo, as it used to be called) as a main component of their sound and we'll wager that, depending on your age, U2's The Edge or Hank Marvin of The Shadows immediately spring to mind. But those guys are just the tip of the iceberg.

Effects pioneer Les Paul was playing around with tape delay back in the late 40s. The slapback echo sound of rockabilly, created by producer Sam Phillips at Sun Studio in 50s Memphis, helped make legends of Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash And The Tennessee Two, and Carl Perkins. Jimi Hendrix often experimented with delay in the late 60s, while Pete Townshend of The Who used it to great rhythmic effect on the band's *Live At Leeds* version of *Magic Bus* from 1970. Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine uses delay to create beautiful soundscapes, while Matt Bellamy of Muse continues the tradition of using delay to fill out the sound of a three-piece band.

The point is that delay has far too much creative potential to be typecast as just 'a U2 thing'. Hence dedicated workstations such as the pioneering Line 6 DL4 (£229) and new contender Vox DelayLab (£238) provide a staggering range of vintage and modern delay sounds – and an easy-to-employ looper function. We just have to sort the slapback supremo from the repeat offender.



VOX DELAYLAB £238

The new kid on the block packs a real punch

THE DelayLab doesn't have the illustrious history of the Line 6 DL4 to fall back on, so has rightly turned up for this rumble well kitted-out.

A casual glance at the stats shows that it's packing far more effects (30 versus 16), programmable patches (30 versus three) and stereo looper recording time (28 seconds as opposed to 14) than its rival. The cream-coloured, die-cast enclosure and chickenhead knobs shout 'retro' as loud as Noddy Holder's old kipper ties, but the DelayLab is a thoroughly modern piece of kit.

Navigating your way through its smorgasbord of goodies isn't quite as simple as with the DL4, but that's only because there are so many options available to you here. Digging in, you'll find that each point on the effects knob has

three modes that can be accessed with the category button. Say, for instance, you were looking for an old-school 60s echo.

Dial in analog on the effects knob, then press the aforementioned category button. This enables you to switch between standard, vintage and custom modes. The vintage option is a saturated delay, with a gain parameter that emulates the overloading effect original echo boxes had on valve amplifiers. While not all the vintage-style effects on the DelayLab had us convinced – especially compared to the on-the-button vibe of the DL4 – this setting is pretty damn close to the real deal.

Switching the effects knob to modulation brings up an excellent phaser delay setting that works great for choppy rhythm parts, while the vintage setting in the digital mode brings up a cool

lo-fi delay that degrades in quality with each successive repeat, just like the echo boxes of yesteryear. There are so many options here that you really will find what you're looking for, and while we don't think the sounds are as uniformly impressive as those loaded into the DL4, the versatility of the DelayLab should see many of you flocking to it.

One of the coolest aspects of this pedal is how comprehensive it is. That's especially evident in features such as the Fine button,

which enables you to fine-tune whichever delay you're on to within a millisecond. As with the DL4 you can also run the DelayLab in stereo through either a pair of guitar amps or channels in a mixing or recording desk – great for three-piece bands.

The DelayLab is a great bit of kit that's well priced and spec'd to the balls. It has everything you could possibly need in a delay unit, but we've still got the DL4 to check out, so we're not ready to ring the final bell just yet...

SUMMARY	FEATURES				
	SOUND QUALITY				
	VALUE FOR MONEY				
	BUILD QUALITY				
	USEABILITY				
OVERALL RATING		★★★★★			

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Programmable delay and 28-second loop sampler

EFFECTS: 30

PATCHES: 30 user

CONTROLS: Category, pedal assign, effects type, time, feedback, tone/speed, intensity, mix, tap/bank up, channel switch

SOCKETS: Stereo inputs, stereo outputs, power, expression pedal

POWER: 6x AA batteries, PSU (not included)

CONTACT: Korg UK 01908 304600 www.voxamps.com



Each model has three different modes, for a total of 30 effects

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LINE 6 DL4 £229

The old-timer holds its own against a worthy challenger

SUMMARY	FEATURES	
	SOUND QUALITY	
	VALUE FOR MONEY	
	BUILD QUALITY	
	USEABILITY	
OVERALL RATING		★★★★★

SINCE its launch in 1999, the metallic-green DL4 has seen off countless contenders, thanks to its heavyweight modelling sounds and brilliantly easy-to-navigate platform. The latter aspect of its character is a big part of the DL4's enduring appeal. It comes across as much like an old-school stompbox as the classic echo units it emulates so brilliantly.

The 15 onboard effects types include modelled takes on an Electro-Harmonix Memory Man,

a Boss DM-2 analogue 'bucket brigade' stompbox and a Maestro EP-2 Echoplex tape echo, the latter as used by Eddie Van Halen back in the 70s. There are also vintage valve delay sounds, as well as ping-pong, multi-tap and reverse-delay settings. Unlike the patchfest that is the DelayLab's internal memory, the DL4 has a mere three user-programmable spaces available, but given that you can create many delay sounds on the fly with the real-time controls and tap-tempo switch, a trio of programmable

settings is probably enough for most of us. If that doesn't cover your needs, the Vox and its arsenal probably for you.

As with the DelayLab, using the DL4's looper function is a cinch. Although it's listed as a 14-second looper, you can actually double the recording time to 28 seconds if you use the half-speed setting. If you then revert to standard speed, your recorded loop plays twice as fast and an octave higher, which makes for some interesting results. Add to this the sheer quality of the modelled sounds and it's easy to see why players such as John Frusciante and Matt Bellamy have revered the DL4 for so long.

By rights, the DL4 should have had its arse handed to it by the DelayLab. The rookie packs more punch in almost every area than the old slugger. Yet, while serious

delay and looper addicts are advised to put the Vox through its paces without (ahem) delay,

our trusty old DL4 isn't ready to throw in the towel just yet. Remember that this stompbox has been at the top of its class for over 10 years now. That's no accident.

While the DL4's construction has become more robust over the years, little else has changed. It sounds every bit as warm and convincing as it ever has and it remains as easy to use as a conventional stompbox. That's a volley of sucker punches that will convince many to

stick with the DL4 in defiance of the higher-spec, but not quite as tonally enriched, DelayLab. It might have been around for a while, but when it comes to pulling off classic sounds onstage or in the recording studio, the DL4 still performs like a champ.

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Programmable delay and 14-second loop sampler

EFFECTS: 16

PATCHES: 3 user

CONTROLS: Effect select, delay time, repeats, tweak, tweez, mix, record/overdub, play/stop, play once, tap tempo/half speed/reverse

SOCKETS: Stereo inputs, stereo outputs, expression pedal, power

POWER: 4x C batteries, PSU (not included)

CONTACT: Line 6
01788 566566 www.line6.com



What you see is what you get with the DL4's 16 different effects