

CARL MARTIN QUATTRO £339

EFFECTS CD TRACKS 6 & 7



Carl Martin Quattro £339

Nothing to do with lil' Susie, but this 'antique' non-programmable analogue multi-FX could well restore organic tone to your sound chain by Dave Burrluck

We first spotted this mini multi-FX about two years ago and it has taken its time getting into production. But the Quattro you see is a very different animal that completely bucks any contemporary trends in multi-FX design. First off, the four FX are all analogue – based on the best-selling stompboxes in Carl Martin's extensive and highly regarded range. The metal-shrouded mains powered unit takes up about the same space as four or five regular stompboxes, but is beautifully simplistic. The onboard mains adaptor means there are no additional trailing leads, and once plugged in it's all tidy and convenient.

Six metal chassis footswitches – one for each effect, plus echo tap tempo and drive selection for the two-in-one overdrive section – access the goodies: each has a bright blue LED to indicate which effects/functions are active.

The control functions all have chicken-head knobs and each is clearly labelled with function legends underneath. Along with single 6.4mm jack input, we have dual stereo jack outputs and simple serial FX loop placed after the compressor and overdrive, and before the tremolo and echo effects.



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SOUNDS: According to Carl Martin, the Quattro is not 'true bypass' but the output buffer should ensure long cable runs without signal degradation. Either way, plugged in it's super quiet and we couldn't detect any signal loss whatsoever. With the majority of units of this kind, if not all, at this stage you'd

be trawling through over-effected chains of multi-FX that may sound interesting in isolation but are typically over-done for most serious applications. Not here. The Quattro is just like a row of single-sound stompboxes. The FX choice is interesting however...

The rivals

Korg AX3000G	£249
BOSS GT-8	£349
Vox Tonelab SE	£399

The Quattro is seriously out-spec'd by all the above multi-FX, and we haven't included DigiTech GNX3000 or Line 6's PODxt Live (both £399). But none of these are analogue and none are as simplistic. Should you need programmability these are the sort of units to go for but don't blame us if you find 'em complex to use! As for products like the Quattro – aside from a line of single stomp boxes, it's unique

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PRICE: £339

ORIGIN: Denmark

TYPE: Non-programmable analogue multi-FX

FEATURES: Four switchable analogue effects with integral mains adaptor, FX loop, drive select and tap tempo footswitches

EFFECTS: Compressor, overdrives (drive one, drive two), tremolo, echo

PATCHES: None

MIDI: No

DISPLAY: No, just blue LED on/off indicators

CONNECTIONS: Input, stereo/mono outputs, FX loop

POWER: Integral mains adaptor and trailing lead

EXT CONTROLLERS: None

OPTIONS: Carl Martin's range of Danish effects start at £69 and the new Far Eastern effects range starts at £49

First Line

01392 493429

www.carlmartin.com

The Quattro's echo has four controls: echo, repeat, tone and tap tempo



→ Compression kicks off the chain and with just compress and level controls, it's super easy to use and highly musical sounding, rounding off your tone's edge and smoothing out volume peaks. There's plenty of level here and you can use it as a clean boost with little or a lot of compression added.

The Overdrives section offers two overdrives (drive one is crunch; drive two has more gain) with a single tone control and overall level. The drive sounds are quite fulsome and, with drive two engaged, there's plenty of gain on tap. However, subtler colouration is possible too for slight crunch and body.

Tremolo might seem an unusual choice compared, for example, with the more popular chorus. But again, the leftfield choice really suits the unit,

especially when combined with slight drive one crunch and a little compression. The speed and depth are certainly noticeable but this tremolo is really old school. Not like a modern machine-gun-style effect, it's lush and seriously addictive.

With three rotary controls – echo (amount), repeat and tone – the echo's delay time is set by the tap-tempo button only. It means setting general delays is easy enough but more specific dotted rhythms are tricky at best, and simple slap-back

echoes need a very quick foot! Being able to set times manually, as well as with the tap tempo, might have been more helpful.

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Despite the relatively small amount of FX, there are a lot of sounds to be had here. The Quattro excels at older styles: clean and punchy with a dab of tremolo and rounded echo

CARL MARTIN QUATTRO TEST RESULTS

Build quality	★★★★★
Usability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★


WE LIKED Compact, hassle-free multi-FX that sounds fantastic

WE DISLIKED Lack of manual echo time control; many would have preferred chorus instead of tremolo; how about some power outlets for other stompboxes?

had here. The Quattro excels at older styles: clean and punchy with a dab of tremolo and rounded echo. But then more classic rock sounds are easy to evoke with drive one and a more generic 300msec-style delay. Huge, compressed Gilmour-like solos are beautifully musical here, and even the high-gain overdrives (drive two) remain organic and unfizzy.

Verdict

As a general all-round multi-FX this takes some beating, not because it is full of bells and whistles but because it genuinely sounds so good – it really enhances your guitar/amp tone. Not everyone will prefer a tremolo to, for example, a chorus, and this writer found the lack of a manual time control for the echo too austere. Aside from that, though, it's the neatest little FX board going: no fuss, no hassle.

For sure, we'd love a programmable version, but in the meantime buy yourself a set of coloured Chinagraph pencils and mark away – just like the old days! For those of us that can't abide digital menus and push buttons, not to mention the hassles of plugging in numerous solo stompboxes, the Quattro is a elegant and smart answer. But above all, and we'll say it again, it sounds fantastic! 

Carl Martin Quattro

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★