



# Strymon BigSky £429

A torrent of big ideas from one skyscraping reverb pedal

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**D**espite its relatively short existence, the name Strymon already commands plenty of kudos in pedal-loving circles. Thanks to sophisticated effects such as the El Capistan, TimeLine and Flint, the Californian company has become synonymous with unparalleled attention to detail and tonal integrity – and its latest creation, the BigSky, aims to be the pedal that is to reverb what the TimeLine is to feature-rich delay: a pro-quality stompbox that does it all.

Packed into the BigSky's lightweight aluminium chassis are 12 'reverb machines', which offer different sizes, effects and dimensions of sound, controlled by seven fundamental knobs: Decay, Pre-delay, mix, tone, Mod, Param 1 and Param 2. The latter two control functions specific to particular reverb machines – anything from additional EQ options to pitch-shift intervals or room size.

Three footswitches give you instant access to three presets at a time – you can store up to 300

of them across 100 banks, which can then be edited on your computer using the Strymon Preset Librarian. Hitting the left and middle footswitches sends you down a bank, while middle and right sends you up; saving a preset simply requires a quick press and hold of the Type knob.

Those footswitches are for more than just switching sounds, though. Hold down the switch for the currently selected preset and you'll activate the Infinite Sustain or Freeze functions. Infinite

Sustain causes the current reverb trail to decay indefinitely, adding each subsequent note you play to the reverb signal, while Freeze offers the same infinite sustain effect, but also allows you to play over the sustain without adding to the reverb. You can choose which function is activated via the BigSky's easily navigated menus, which also give you the option to choose between buffered and true bypass, and spillover and Reverb Persist modes, which cause reverb trails to continue when switching patches and bypassing the pedal, respectively. There's also an assignable +/- 3dB boost to ensure your reverb'd guitar signal doesn't get lost in the live mix, and even switchable cabinet emulation for playing direct and recording.



## The Rivals

Similarly priced to the BigSky, the **Eventide Space** (£499) boasts 12 hugely adjustable reverb sounds, while **Strymon's own BlueSky** (£279) still offers stunning reverb algorithms and ease of use. **TC Electronic's NR-1 Nova Reverb** (£199) is a cheaper option, but features considerable control over its six reverb types

## Sounds

Considering the borderline academic nature of Strymon's research, you'd be disappointed if the BigSky sounded anything less than extraordinary. All that homework paid off: the 12 reverb machines are as natural or fantastical as you want. In part, that's down to the flexibility of each machine – for example, the spring setting is utterly convincing, and allows you to nail the exact sound you love, right down to the number of springs themselves.

Much of the BigSky's appeal lies in its more atmospheric settings, and Strymon has amply provided for ambient and post-rock musicians. The pitch-shifted Shimmer setting is particularly impressive, offering two chromatically shiftable voices for painting ridiculously grand soundscapes. Then



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there's the Chorale setting, which applies a vowel filter to its 'verbs' – it's almost like a vocal choir backing your every note.

## Verdict

As hefty as that price tag is, we can't help but fall in love with the BigSky. It makes us want to write poetry to the soundtrack of its glorious ambience – while

it's so chock-full of features there isn't space to do more than mention its additional multi-head echo (Magnet) or studio-faithful Plate settings. But while the functionality is staggering, it's the sounds that make your jaw drop and your playing soar – and it's that which could end up justifying the lofty asking price. **G**



Each of the BigSky's 12 reverb 'machines' can be refined by seven further parameters

## Strymon BigSky

**PRICE:** £429

**ORIGIN:** USA

**TYPE:** Digital reverb stompbox

**CONTROLS:** Type, Value, Decay, Pre-delay, mix, tone, Mod, Param 1, Param 2, cab filter switch

**PRESETS:** 300

**REVERB TYPES:** Room, hall, plate, spring, swell, bloom, cloud, chorale, shimmer, magnet, nonlinear, reflections

**OTHER FEATURES:** Infinite Sustain, Freeze; spillover and reverb persist; analogue dry-though; cab emulation

**CONNECTIONS:** Left/right inputs, left/right outputs, exp out for expression pedal, MIDI in/out, power adaptor (supplied)

**POWER:** 300mA via 9V DC mains adaptor (supplied)

**DIMENSIONS:** 130 (d) x 171 (w) x 44.5mm (h)

**WEIGHT (KG/LB):** 0.664/1.46

**MusicPsych**

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**www.strymon.net**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★	
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

**Guitarist says:** This kind of quality doesn't come cheap, but reverbs don't get much better than this – a superlative stompbox in every way