

ELECTRO-HARMONIX RING THING & DELUXE MEMORY BOY £150 & £125 EFFECTS

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Electro-Harmonix Ring Thing & Deluxe Memory Boy £150 & £125

The latest pedals out of NYC reflect E-HX's legacy while still being right up to date *by Trevor Curwen*

Always prolific, it was perhaps a surprise to some that Electro-Harmonix only launched two new effects pedals at this year's NAMM show. But those two are landmark additions to the range, combining 21st century features with the vintage sounds of earlier pedals. The Ring Thing is a "single sideband modulator" and provides ring modulation (adding new features to the original Frequency Analyzer) while also throwing pitch shifting into the stew. The Deluxe Memory Boy, however, carries on the long tradition of E-HX analogue delay pedals started with the Memory Man in the seventies, but adds new functionality.

Ring Thing

Ring modulation isn't exactly a mainstream effect in guitar

culture. With its droning metallic timbres it's one of those sounds that polarises opinion – often being thought of as unmusical. What Electro-Harmonix has done with the Ring Thing, however, is to provide ring modulation, but also use it as the basis of a new, more harmonious effect that E-HX calls single sideband modulation, which uses just one band as opposed to standard ring mod's two together. In addition to this, the Ring Thing has a pitch shifter that Electro-Harmonix says is capable of transposition, detuning, chorus and vibrato.

Four modes are selectable by pressing a white rotary switch – choose from ring modulation, single sideband (upper band, single sideband), lower band or pitch shift. The switch can also call up one of nine onboard

programmable presets, made active by a press of the preset/tune footswitch, which can also be used to scroll through the presets. Holding down the footswitch also allows the Ring Thing to automatically tune its internal modulator to any single note you play on your guitar. Six knobs enable you to adjust the parameters, the function of each knob (apart from wet/dry blend) varying depending upon which mode you're in.

Sounds

The standard ring modulation effect will give you all the dissonant and bell-like timbres that you need – either transforming your guitar sound or just adding a metallic edge. The single sideband sounds can be a little more musical in colouring the sound and you can dial in a very useful range of

tremolo, vibrato and rotary speaker-like sounds in those modes with careful setting of the controls.

In pitch shift mode you get all notes shifted up or down by the same amount to a maximum of +/- two octaves. The pedal does the standard sub-octave thing very well with really good note-tracking and that goes for any fixed harmony. If you're into Whammy-style pitch-bending effects, plugging in an expression pedal will do the

The Rivals

The **Line 6 MM4** (£269) modulation modeller is a potent force, with ring modulation, chorus, tremolo and flanging. **Eventide's ModFactor** (£397) offers all the modulation effects you're likely to need, while the **PitchFactor** (£468) does the business for pitch effects. For pure Ring Modulation, there's the **Moog Moogerfooger MF102** (£244). Analogue delays with tap tempo are thin on the ground and usually expensive. There's the **Moogerfooger MF-104Z Analog Delay** (£560) or, if you want digital emulation of an analogue delay, the **TC Electronic ND-1 Nova Delay** (£241) is an option.



business – it's especially effective when set to an octave up. Finally, there's plenty of weirdness on tap by turning up the filter/rate knob, selecting a waveform and modulating your pitch shifting.

Deluxe Memory Boy

The Deluxe Memory Boy (DXMB) is a bucket-brigade analogue delay at heart, but comes equipped with three extra operational features to set it apart. Firstly there's Tap Tempo with a dedicated footswitch and a choice of six note divisions. Secondly there's the possibility of adding an expression pedal to control a choice of four parameters, and thirdly you get a send/return effects loop, so you can add another pedal into the feedback loop if you want.

Six knobs control the basic delay functions. There's a gain knob to set the pedal's input up for various signals and a blend knob to set the ratio of dry to effected sound. Delay and feedback knobs set the delay time and number of repeats respectively, while modulation can be added to the repeats by a rate knob and a depth knob that adds increasing amounts of either triangle or square wave modulation. The rate knob (in combination with a button push) can also be used to reduce the low-frequency content of the repeats.

Two presses of the tap button will set the delay time. The DXMB interprets the time between the taps to be a quarter note and sets the time accordingly, unless the tap divide function is active to divide the tap tempo to create shorter delay times in sync with it. A front panel button (with LED indicators) sets this and gives you the choice of dotted

eighth note, quarter note triplet, eighth note triplet or 16th note. A second button with LED indicators lets you choose whether any connected expression pedal will adjust rate, depth, feedback or delay time.

Sounds

Using genuine bucket-brigade chips, the DXMB has the classic analogue delay sound where the repeats are slightly degraded in quality and bed nicely in with your sound. If you want a little more than straight echoes, a bit of modulation will jolly things up. With minimum delay time the modulation controls will give you chorus and vibrato effects rather than repeats, but by turning the delay up to get repeats, you can get a bit of tape echo wobble and some nice rotary speaker-style shimmer at shallower depth settings and, turning up the depth, more extreme stuff including some very out of control sick-sounding repeats. To really change the sound of the repeats you can add another effect pedal via the send and return jacks – you can get cool musical results with a pitch shifter set for an octave up.

Tap tempo, of course, is a great asset, especially onstage if you need to keep in time on the fly; more tactile control is available if you plug in an expression pedal, especially to control the feedback amount, and wavering around the tipping point where the repeats take off into self-oscillation and endless sustain.

Verdict

While the Ring Thing may seem a little complex to set up, that complexity is the key to its sonic versatility and the nuance that's available when dialling-in

a sound and, of course, you do have the presets, which means that there's no need to worry about any knob tweaking onstage – all of that can be done beforehand at home or in the rehearsal room. It might not be a pedal you'd use in every song, but the Ring Thing is versatile sonic resource – a schizophrenic stompbox that can make your guitar nasty, metallic and industrial or, with low settings of the blend knob, sprinkle some sparkly fairy dust on it.

Were the Deluxe Memory Boy just to feature the standard analogue delay with modulation, as made popular by the original Memory Man, then it would be a fine-sounding value-for-money pedal, but the extra features put it into another league – one inhabited by pedals that usually cost a lot more. It's a definite Guitarist Choice. **G**

The Bottom Line

Ring Thing

We like: Onboard memories; varied effects; stereo output

We dislike: Takes time to get to grips with

Guitarist says: This is a very versatile sound creation tool you never knew you needed

Memory Boy

We like: Analogue sound; tap tempo; effects loop; expression pedal option

We dislike: Repeats sound very lo-fi with max delay times via tap tempo

Guitarist says: An analogue delay with a great set of practical features to control it at a very affordable price

Electro-Harmonix Ring Thing

PRICE: £150

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Single Sideband Modulator pedal

CONTROLS: Blend, Wave, Filter/Rate, Fine/Depth, Coarse knobs, Mode switch, Preset/Tune and Bypass footswitches

PATCHES: Nine programmable memories

CONNECTIONS: Instrument input, Mod input, Exp input, L (mono) & R output

POWER: Supplied 9V AC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 150(w) x 120(d) x 60(h) mm

RANGE OPTIONS: Frequency Analyzer (£80)

Electro-Harmonix
www.ehx.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Boy

PRICE: £125

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Analogue delay with tap tempo

CONTROLS: Blend, Gain, Rate, Depth, Feedback, Delay knobs. Tap Divide and Exp. Mode buttons, Tap and Bypass footswitches

PATCHES: None

DELAY TIME: 34-700 milliseconds via delay knob. Tap allows max of 1.5 seconds

CONNECTIONS: Input, Output, Send, Return, Expression pedal

POWER: Supplied 9V AC adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 150(w) x 120(d) x 60(h) mm

RANGE OPTIONS: Memory Toy (£52), Memory Boy (£70), Deluxe Memory Man (£200), Stereo Memory Man (£140)



Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★