

EARTHQUAKER DEVICES

Swiss Things

Pedalboard management from the Swiss Army knife of stompboxes

Words Rod Brakes Photography Phil Barker

Getting the most out of the gear you already own is underrated. Those carefully curated pedals of yours may be doing a great job, but they can often turn out to be capable of giving far more. Taking a fresh look at how your pedalboard fits together can not only end up making everything sound better, but it can also open new doors creatively.

EarthQuaker Devices' Swiss Things is a practical and relatively affordable key to unlocking that potential – the idea being to provide a smaller and more concise alternative to those switching systems that are considered by many to be an overkill in terms of features and price.

Not to be confused with a looper effects pedal, the Swiss Things employs two true-bypass loops, each facilitating simultaneous engagement of any number of active effects in the loop with one push of the switch. Consequently, they can also act as a proxy on/off switch for units that don't possess a footswitch. Indeed, having hooked up a 70s vintage Dynacord Echocord II tape echo unit, this writer stumbled across some interesting

sounds while using the Swiss Things' Flexi-Switch technology to momentarily engage the loop.

Loop 1 is unbuffered for use with gain pedals and low-input impedance devices, such as a Fuzz Face, while Loop 2 is buffered and is best suited for use with modulation and time-based effects. Loop 2 also functions as a mute when nothing is plugged into it, which may be useful when tuning (if you want to avoid amplifying that familiar E-A-D-G-B-E melody we all love so much). Alternatively, plugging in an expression pedal enables dynamic volume reduction and will do the same job. And if you want to go the other way at any point, an adjustable boost delivers up to 25dB of clean gain.

As an AB-Y box, the Swiss Things allows the buffered output signal to be sent via Output A or Output B exclusively (A/B), or simultaneously (Both), thus enabling the use of dual amplifiers and stereo effects. Output B is transformer-isolated to assist with ground hum and features a phase reversal switch to correct any phasing issues with amps and/or pedals.



VERDICT

A neat, utilitarian approach to pedalboard management, EarthQuaker Devices' Swiss Things nails down the essentials in style while maximising signal quality. **G**

PROS Simple and flexible to use; multiple tools in one package; maximises signal quality

CONS Loops do not support stereo; one input only

ALSO TRY...



RADIAL ENGINEERING

BigShot EFX £91

Radial Engineering – Canada's primo audio routing specialist – is a mainstay of pro studios and stages the world over and is known for its rock-solid construction. The BigShot EFX true-bypass dual effects loop switcher features a mute function and independent ground lifts.



THEGIGRIG

QuarterMaster £139 to £269

Available in five versions with either two, four, six, eight or 10 separate true-bypass loops, TheGigRig's QuarterMaster units are a simple and straightforward professional solution to managing your pedalboard while reducing noise, signal loss and tone-suck.



BOSS

ES-5 Effects Switching System £331

A more compact version of Boss's flagship ES-8 Effects Switching System, the ES-5 comes with a handy LCD display and features programmable analogue circuit switching for up to five effects loops with 200 patch memories, including buffering and routing options.

Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Pedalboard utility

FEATURES: Flexi-Switch footswitches; dual true-bypass effects loops; AB-Y output; adjustable 20dB clean boost

CONTROLS: Boost level knob; output B phase reverse switch

CONNECTIONS: Standard (6.35mm TRS) expression pedal jack; standard (6.35mm TS) jacks: mono input; dual mono outputs; effects loop 1 send/return; effects loop 2 send/return; tuner output

POWER: 2.1mm centre negative 9V DC adaptor (not supplied); 40mA current draw

DIMENSIONS: 144 (w) x 121 (d) x 56mm (h) with knobs

8/10

