



1 Meris Enzo
£319

2 Electro-Harmonix Mono Synth
£119



3 Keeley Synth-1
£179

Guitar synth pedals

Guitarists have long lusted over the sonic capabilities of the synth, but there have always been limitations to how a fretted instrument can control electronic circuits. Let's compare five of the latest, and see what they offer the avid synth shredder

Pigtronix Mothership V2
£299

4



1 Meris are well-known for their innovative, great-sounding, DSP-based effects boxes. The Enzo is no exception, with the clue in the title of “Multi-Voice Instrument Synthesiser”. The first thing you’ll notice is the astounding pitch-tracking capabilities. Throw anything at it, and it copes – and that’s before you realise it’s also capable of tracking polyphonic material. As well as working like a conventional monosynth-style pedal, it can create polyphonic and arpeggiated material from its dual-oscillator synth section. Add a bunch of filter modes, stereo output, and a delay with modulation, and you have the makings of an exceptional pedal. The only significant downside here is price.

meris.us

VERDICT 9.5

2 Electro-Harmonix need no intro in the guitar pedal world. As the name suggests, the Mono Synth can only sense monophonic playing. Once detected, the pitch info is used to drive one of the 11 selectable synth types. One or two parameters for each can be edited using the onboard CTRL knob and external expression input. There are decent sounds in the Mono Synth, but you have to adapt your playing style to avoid odd glitches.

ehx.com

VERDICT 7.0

3 Robert Keeley is a boutique pedal designer, known for colourful designs with a great sound. The Synth-1 styling nods to early Roland Juno synths, with functionality kept to a bare minimum. This box is strictly monophonic, so when thrown some chords, things get unpredictable.

FM VERDICT



TOP DOG The Meris Enzo is innovative, with a wide tonal palette, and amazing polyphonic pitch tracking. If price is no object, this is one to try.



BANG FOR YOUR BUCK The Boss SY-1 offers a wide range of polyphonic tones in small footprint. Quick to use and lots of fun.

However, if you stick to single notes, the Synth-1 will deliver a serious dose of retro synth fuzz. Though you can tailor the sound using the Waveform Selector, Filter and Attack controls, the options are fairly limited. However, for bombastic fatness, volume swells and '70s-ish synth lines, it is a lot of fun.

robertkeeley.com

VERDICT 8.1

4 The Pigtronix Mothership V2 claims to have ‘the world’s fastest tracking circuit’, but this is hard to prove without resorting to the lab. It did work well, though this is of the more conventional monophonic style of synth pedal. Via the use of dual-concentric controls, there’s quite a bit you can do to change the sound of the underlying 3-voice analogue synth. However, it does take time to dial-in effective tones, and the range still feels limited. That said, if you’re after classic monophonic guitar synth tones, the Mothership delivers – at a price.

pigtronix.com

VERDICT 7.9

5 Boss (and parent Roland), have a long history in guitar synthesis. The SY-1 distills much of this heritage into a classic Boss compact guitar pedal format. There are 121 sounds broken down into 11 categories, covering everything from leads, pads, strings, organs and basses, to bell sound effects and sequenced patterns. There is limited editing via the Depth and Tone/Rate knobs but, like the Enzo, the SY-1 can track polyphonically (reliably), as well as offering real-time control via the expression pedal jack.

boss.info

VERDICT 9.1

5 **Boss SY-1**
£179

