

CLEAN SWEEP

EFFECTRODE'S LATEST PEDAL IS INSPIRED BY B-MOVIES AND HAS ITS SIGHTS SET ON THE A-LIST. **PAUL SALTER** LOOKS AT ONE PHASER THAT'S DEFINITELY SET TO STUN



We all know that the best overdriven tones come from valves (they produce the best clean tones too, according to tube fanatics). Beyond the world of amplifiers, some manufacturers have tried to harness this somewhat archaic technology – valves have been around in one form or another since the turn of the last century – to give their stompboxes a tonal advantage.

In the case of Effectrode's pedals, tube technology is combined with the kind of construction and spec that would please any dedicated hi-fi buff. We were mightily impressed with the company's initial release – the Effectrode Tube-Vibe [see issue 57] – so expectations are high for their new baby, the Phaseomatic Deluxe. You can probably guess what it does

from the name alone, but it has a few more tricks up its sleeve than the average phaser.

CONSTRUCTION

With such a wonderfully evocative name, the Phaseomatic Deluxe has a lot to live up to, but this handsome pedal really looks the part. It doesn't take much to imagine the Phaseomatic as part of the console of a spaceship in a 1950's B-movie – chickenhead knobs and exposed valves were the pinnacle of futuristic celluloid chic back then. A big part of this playfully nostalgic look comes from the distinctive finish. Effectrode call it 'Krell-like' (we're guessing this is a reference to the alien race of the same name in classic sci-fi movie *Forbidden Planet*) but we wouldn't be surprised to learn that this colour paint had last been used on a '58 Cadillac.

This image isn't mere whimsy on the part of the designer though – the vintage ethos goes much deeper. Peeking out from between those chrome-plated nudge bars are three 12AT7 vacuum tubes. Effectrode's Phil Taylor says on his website that, as well as improving the dynamic range and response of the signal path, using a valve-based circuit enables "a huge amount of feedback to be injected without overload, for some frighteningly funky phase-wah tones and weird 1950's sci-fi movie tonalities". So there you go!

The chassis itself is a sturdy die-cast aluminium box with a screw-fitted base. Normally this kind of casing would start us off on a rant about lousy battery access, but not this time. Because this pedal uses valves, and a trusty 9V battery won't provide enough oomph to fire them up, →

GBINFO

EFFECTRODE PHASEOMATIC DELUXE

PRICE: £249

BUILT IN: USA

TYPE: Phaser stompbox

FEATURES: 3 x 12AT7 valves, multiple LFO waveforms, width, speed and blend controls, resonance switch, internal feedback trim pot and optional gain resistor

POWER: 12V DC mains adaptor only (not supplied; £12.50 from Effectrode)

DIMENSIONS: 90(h) x 170(w) x 125(d) mm

CONTACT:

G'n'T Guitars
PHONE: 0115 9304935
WEB: www.effectrode.com

POSH PHASE

HIGH-SPEC HEROICS FROM THE PHASEOMATIC DELUXE

■ **The Phaseomatic Deluxe has loads of vintage attitude that starts with the retro image and goes right through to the class-A circuit design.**

It results in a pedal that certainly looks and sounds the part, but on the inside, Effectrode have used only the best modern components. Precision-grade metal film resistors and resin-potted polyester capacitors are the

order of the day, along with Omeg potentiometers for the controls. These pots have conductive plastic tracks (rather than conventional carbon tracks) for a smoother action. Top this off with Neutrik jack sockets and relay-based true-bypass switching with gold contacts, and it's easy to see why there's a clean modern sheen to the Phaseomatic's vintage vibe.

the Phaseomatic Deluxe will only run off a 12V DC mains adaptor. Effectrode supply one, but at an additional cost of £12.50, which is a bit disappointing when the pedal already costs nearly £250. That said, any 12V DC adaptor with a standard-sized, centre-negative connector should do the job. The power socket is joined around the back of the unit by

"THERE'S A HUGE AMOUNT OF VARIATION IN WHAT THIS EFFECT CAN DO"



■ Lashings of chrome, Cadillac-blue paint and '50s styling give this stomper a real retro look and feel

the input and output sockets, so all of your cables are kept out of way.

Even if you don't have to change any batteries, the trio of 12AT7 valves will eventually need to be replaced. The nudge bar arrangement really comes up trumps here, as it protects the valves when on stage or in transit, but you can pull them out and push new ones in without having to remove the bars. Not only that, but because much of the valves' surface is exposed to the air, there's no need for the cooling vents and extra room inside the chassis that there would be if they were mounted internally.

FEATURES

The NCO (numerically controlled oscillator) used in the Phaseomatic Deluxe offers a range of waveforms with which to trigger the phase effect, including triangle, sine, square and stepped waves. It's great that there are so many waveforms to choose from, but the downside is the manner in which they're selected. It works like this: when you power up the pedal, there's a minute-long warm-up period for the valves to reach their proper operating temperature. During this period, pressing the footswitch will change the waveform type, toggling through each one in turn. You can't change wave types after the initial period without re-powering the pedal, and you can't hear the effect while you're selecting it. You're given a bit of a visual clue from the way that the LED status indicator blinks in tempo, and if you can remember the sequence of shapes or refer to the manual you're OK, but we can't help feeling that this range of waveforms could have been made more accessible – a separate rotary switch perhaps?

With these waveform modes hidden from view, the Phaseomatic Deluxe looks pretty straightforward, with three knobs to control width, speed and wet/dry blend. These are comprehensive enough to get the phaser to work the way you want, but there's yet more on offer. That mini-switch that graces the top panel toggles between 'normal' and 'metallic' resonance settings, the latter being more intense and therefore more effective at slower speeds. If you're brave enough to unscrew the back plate and really get stuck in, there are even more tweaks to apply.

Removing the 22k resistor that has been soldered to the base of the PCB, or replacing it with one of a different value will change the amount of gain the Phaseomatic Deluxe adds to the signal. As supplied, the unit operates at unity gain (no gain added), while removing the resistor adds 6dB. If you're planning to use the Phaseomatic Deluxe conventionally in front of your amp, you're better off leaving things be. A small internal trim pot, also mounted on the base of the PCB, adjusts the amount of effected signal that's fed back into the phase shifter section. This enables you to increase resonance and even dabble with self-oscillation effects. There's enough range to seriously overdo things, to the extent that any following piece of equipment could be ruined if you're not careful.

SOUNDS

All those tweakables and waveform shapes add up to give a huge amount of variation in what the effect can do. In fact, it's a bit unfair to call this stompbox simply a 'phaser', because with it you can conjure up



DETAILS

A LUSH PHASE EFFECT WITH PLENTY OF SONIC SCOPE



■ The mini-switch toggles between different resonance settings for more or less intensity



■ All the sockets are positioned at the back of the unit, safely away from stray boots



■ The 12AT7 valves are exposed but they're protected by a pair of sturdy chrome roll bars



GBOPINION

EFFECTRODE PHASEOMATIC DELUXE

GOLD STARS

- ★ Sounds amazing
- ★ Solid build
- ★ Loads of options

BLACK MARKS

- Power supply not included

IDEAL FOR...

Adding a lush dimension to your tones

everything from a chorus to a tremolo to a rotary speaker effect. Conversely, the hardest thing to get from it at first is a standard swooshy phaser sound, but once you start digging you'll find plenty of variations on this too.

You do need to allow yourself plenty of time to explore the Phaseomatic and get the hang of its controls and how they interact, and that awkward method of changing the wave shape really doesn't help. It can be quite difficult at times to know what shape you're working with. On several occasions we cycled back around to the stepped wave – as it's the most distinctive – only to find that we were out by a couple of positions.

Each waveform has so much to offer and has its own optimum settings, which only contributed to our sense of disorientation. The stepped wave, for instance, has the greatest impact when set to shift at something approaching the tempo of the song you're playing – it sounds very effective with arpeggiated chords and folksy picking. Move on to the square-wave setting and a slower speed with full-on blend and depth controls will give you a moodily shifting

tremolo. If you try the same settings with the rise and fall waveforms, you'll probably end up feeling a little seasick. The better sounds here are much faster with a shallower depth, which gives a rotary-like effect that combines well with an overdrive stompbox.

If you're after more conventional phaser sounds, the sine or triangle wave shapes are easier to dip into. The metallic resonance option gives you that instant dramatic phasing sound that some people prefer over the classic flanger sweep, but you can also use it at really slow speeds to add some movement to your playing. Whatever kind of phasing you opt for with the Phaseomatic Deluxe, you can be sure it'll sound full, lush and spacious with the minimum of background noise.

GBRATINGS

EFFECTRODE PHASEOMATIC DELUXE

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★☆
FEATURES	★★★★☆
SOUNDS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆
GBVERDICT	★★★★★

GBCONCLUSION

MUCH MORE THAN JUST A SIMPLE PHASER

■ Some of us love simplicity in our stompboxes, amps and guitars, with the bare minimum of options and a real plug-in-and-play vibe. Others love to tweak, and enjoy the quest to get that perfect sound inside our heads to come out of our speakers. The Effectrode Phaseomatic is unusual in that it can appeal to both mindsets.

If you like the simple route, stick with the preset triangle waveform. Using the controls and the resonance switch you can achieve all that most of us desire of a phaser, and with the high quality of effect that's on offer here, you'll probably be a very happy bunny indeed. If you have the urge to coax more from this stylish pedal, there's an impressive array of options to explore. Getting to them isn't always straightforward or intuitive, but you'll be grateful that those great sounds are there. **GB**