

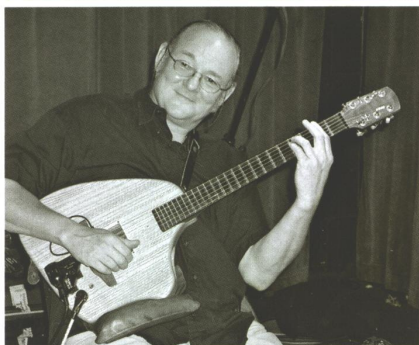
enough to find a guitar that offers extraordinary tone by chance, we hesitate to mess with it, and necks can vary significantly, just like guitars. However, we thoroughly enjoyed having the True Temperament Mojo here to experience first-hand, as well as delving into the realm of temperament, which has remained familiar to pianists, piano tuners and composers for centuries. Seeing is believing, and that applies to the Ruokangas' web site as well, where you can 'build' a custom guitar in the Virtual Workshop, creating your personal combination of finishes, wood, and neck configurations with custom pickguards, electronics and hardware. Short of making a trip to Finland, it's the best way to appreciate the work of one of the most innovative, imaginative and skilled electric guitar builders in the world today. **To**

*Ruokangas Guitars, Hyvinkää Finland
www.ruokangas.com, 358 19 452 864*

*True Temperament, Paul Guy Guitars, Stockholm, Sweden
www.true Temperament.com, 46 (0) 8 644 14 40*

with Adrian Legg

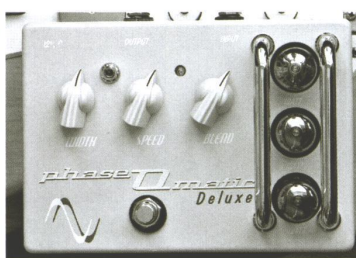
Effectrode Phase-o-matic Deluxe



Londoner Adrian Legg is one of the most imaginative guitarists you will ever hear – a composer and performer completely un-

cumbered by convention, and a pioneer in the exploration of tones that can be rendered from an acoustic guitar (amplified, and often tastefully enhanced with effects). It will do you good to become acquainted with his music – all of it. Meanwhile, please enjoy Adrian's review of the Phase-o-matic Deluxe...

Of the several well-known Phil Taylors in our world, this concerns the one who is most significant to us as working musicians. He was, amongst other things, principal electronic engineer at Cardiff University Department of Earth Sciences, senior test engineer at BSS Audio, has a wall full of certificates and is now working at Oregon State University developing very deep ocean exploration machines and completing a PhD. Impressive as the c.v. is, more importantly for us, he is the owner of the Effectrode tube effects company, and a self-outed valve geek. His Phaseomatic Deluxe is an extraordinary



stomp box – far more than a robotic donkey's electronic eeyoreeyoreeyor, and the opposite of the usual phaser's being the least useful pedal in the junk box.

It's all tube (3x 12AT7s), and uses four triode phase splitters with a photocell in each section optimized for deep notches, shifting 720 degrees. An external mini switch picks a lighter or a more intense resonance, and if you are so inclined, you can disconnect the mains to remove the possibility of a 350 volt shock and twiddle a couple of internal trimmers that govern feedback (turn your amp down before reconnecting!) and sweep. The leftmost (width) knob governs the wave shape of the photo-optical bulb driver, rotating from seven o'clock to five o'clock, from smooth triangle, through sine, rounded square, 3 step (a cheerful waltz setting), 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 step soft jumps. The indicator LED brightness syncs with the sweeps and steps to give you a conductor for tempo, though it takes some practice to follow it. The center knob governs speed, from an almost imperceptible but thickening slow with a sine wave on the width knob at about nine o'clock and a light resonance, up to and beyond a credibly righteous Leslie wobble. The rightmost knob controls blend. With the resonance switch set to light, at seven o'clock you get an unaffected tube buffer which softens attack transients, warming and sweetening tone very nicely. At five o'clock, you get all effect. With resonance set to heavy, you get the least blend at twelve o'clock, and maximum on either side at seven or five o'clock. The on/off foot-button is true bypass. When it's off, the phaser is out of the signal line altogether.



At the very least, you get a high impedance (over 1meg Ohms – near enough for a raw piezo) tube preamp with a sub 10k Ohms output. At the other extreme, you get wheeze-free jets zooming through the mix. Somewhere in

the middle is a soft warmth that breathes gently across an envelope that can be as subtle or upfront as you like – subtle enough to enhance a solo guitar without distracting, or upfront enough to colour in the guitar space in a band with

-continued-

effects

all the chewy modulation you might fancy. It clocked thirty-eight ounces on our kitchen scales, including a 100-240 volt wall-wart switching psu that comes with interchangeable pins for USA/Japan, mainland Europe, or Australia, so it's ready to hit the road anywhere except Italy right out of the box. I tackled it with several guitars; one with Graph Tech piezo saddles, another a bitsa Strat currently carrying a Mississippi Queen in the neck slot and Dimarzio Vintage singles centre and bridge; an acoustic Brook Creedy with a Baggs M1, a small Takamine with a Sunrise, and a maple Ibanez with a Duncan PAF-type humbucker neck and Duncan vintage Strat singles that hum-cancel when used together.

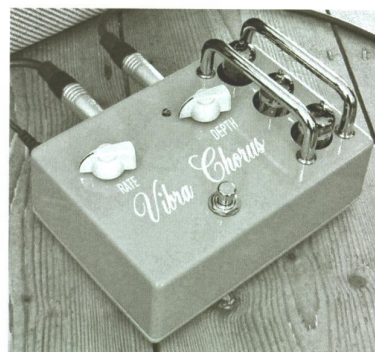


There are tricks in this phaser that take it into the area of practical as well as decorative subtractive EQ. I set the wave form to stepped, the resonance

switch to max (down) and the blend to 5 o'clock. I set the speed in the middle and listened to the stepped notches, and when it hit one I liked, reset the speed to zero. The notch it had reached at that point was held, and one of the tryouts with the various pickups deleted the clarinet-like honk in the Sunrise, giving it a much more woody tone.

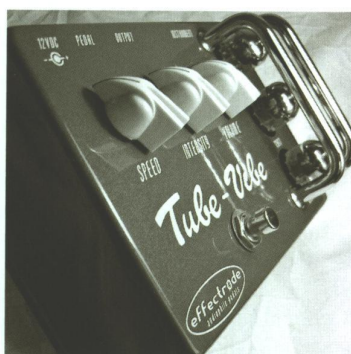
In the Creedy plus Baggs M1 sound, there's a very nasty distortion off the Baggs around B3 (246.94Hz) that I've yet to get around to reducing by padding the pickup mounting lugs – it's a bad lump in the guitar's natural tone that relates to its small body size, and which has previously caused almighty tuning problems in an acoustic recording when the guitar was mixed with a string quartet. Trying the same trick of stopping the phaser notches at the right part of the sweep takes this peak down enough that it doesn't distort as badly. Though it's not a fix, this and the effect on the Sunrise did demonstrate useful potential.

With the mix set to minimum so the phaser operated as a simple valve buffer amp, the Graph Techs' tone was pleasantly sweetened and the piezo attack transients softened. Similarly, the buffering suited the Mississippi Queen very well, warming it and reducing fingernail edge whilst retaining the pickup's naturally open character. In fact, the buffering worked very well on all the magnetic pickups, thickening and strengthening their characters, and fixing the notches offered some fascinating tonal variations.



If you plug in and don't play with the phasing switched on, the circuit is elegantly enough built that it doesn't sit there hissing oowaroorowar through its teeth. On the other hand, turn it on with maximum reso-

nance with your lead unplugged from your guitar but still plugged into the phaser, and it will use the open input to generate clean and loud quivering B-movie aliens and flying saucer aerobatics. Unplug the lead or reconnect the guitar, the input closes, the fun is over and the aliens retreat to their dressing rooms.



The phasing is musical and thoroughly useable, from a fast low resonance vibrato, or high resonance warble, to slow sweeping scoops, with sudden turns in the triangle wave form, smooth dives and climbs in the sine form, and rhyth-

mic changing in the step modes. Syncing with music relies entirely on your own skill; there is no MIDI clock facility, and to be honest, with the fluid qualities of the tone and lack of circuit noise here, I found this a fun thing with which to dawdle. This isn't a phaser that barges in and takes over the show. If you really have to lock effect to tempo, then there's a problem, but I think it's far outweighed by the organic nature of the valve processing, and the surprise that a slow and gentle phase shift can actually work by thickening and enriching a guitar sound without stamping a sterile mechanical character on it.

See www.effectrode.com for updates on dealers, and I would strongly recommend your dedicating a quiet morning to investigating this as a possible good thing to do with a few hundred bucks. It's not your usual phaser, the construction is not compromised down to a price point, and while our purchases are unlikely to tempt Phil away from his deeply submarine fumaroles, we can certainly benefit musically from his valve and high quality component-based audio obsession. **TO**

www.effectrode.com
www.adrianlegg.com