



ELECTRO-HARMONIX... XO Series

By James Egoft

Electro-Harmonix effects have been known for many things: great value, amazing tone and somewhat delicate cases. It has always been an accepted evil in the price/performance equation, with some people going as far as using loopers to keep their favorite pedals away from threatening feet. Inexpensive, great sounding and sturdy. Until recently, the choice was pick any two.

Mike Mathews, the mastermind behind EH, whose name is synonymous with manufacturing tubes in the former Soviet Republic, subsequent run-ins with the Russian mob, as well as being a true innovator in general, addressed the issue of delicacy recently by shoe-horning a few single knob effects into some sturdier cases, and marketing them as the Nano line. These have been successful enough to warrant sourcing some larger, equally sturdy die-cast cases and giving some larger box effects the same treatment. Dubbed the XO series, the good people at EH were kind enough to send us a few to check out. They sent the Stereo Pulsar

tremelo, the Stereo Polyphase phaser and the Clone Theory chorus. All three pedals feature sturdy-looking corrugated metal enclosures with retro silk screening and true-bypass switching.

The Stereo Pulsar

First we have the Stereo Pulsar (MSRP \$110.00). In typical EH fashion, this pedal is quirky, but yields tons of chewy, organic tremolo. With some tweaking, it will get close to vintage Fender territory, but that is not its forte. Instead, think oddball vintage tremolo, like an old Supro or Selmer amp. It offers plenty of adjustment with Depth, Shape and Rate knobs and a switch that goes from triangle to square wave.

The controls are interactive enough that changing one appreciably will require tweaking at least one other. The Depth and Rate controls are self-explanatory. The Shape knob is where the fun begins. With the wave shape switch in triangle mode, the Shape knob adjusts from rising saw-

tooth, to triangle, to falling sawtooth. When in square wave mode it goes from small pulse, to square wave, to large pulse. The more extreme settings aren't super useful in mono, with most of the good stuff in the middle. In stereo, however, they can create some really incredible sounds, with the pulse modulating useful in virtually all Shape settings across the stereo field.

Switching back-and-forth between square and triangle wave, the shapes produced covered everything from the aforementioned vintage weirdness to a more modern, chopper-blade on-off thing. The Pulsar was able to make unique sounds that could easily become integral to a riff or a song, especially in stereo.

Rating . . .

Tone...	
Craftsmanship...	
Features...	
Value...	
Overall...	