



Tales from the road

All Apologies

Electro-Harmonix may have a huge range of FX but, as **Adi Vines** discovers, quality and quantity can co-exist

I feel slightly guilty this month. I haven't misbehaved or anything like that, but I may have held an assumption about someone, albeit only in my own head, that appears to have been incorrect. I'd like to apologise to Electro-Harmonix for this - and I'm very glad to have discovered my mistake.

In the 12 years or so since EHX re-opened for business in New York, they've issued an occasionally bewildering amount of products; reissues of their classic designs have sat alongside modified versions of the same units, new pedals are introduced with increasing regularity, and recently the Nano series has appeared. This range features its own originals as well as mini-sized versions of the EHX greats (some of which are also variations on old themes). So there is a wide range of stuff available from EHX and, being of the cynical disposition that is part of the job, this led me to doubt they could manage to maintain their quality.

This gradually began to change though, firstly with the introduction of the Holy Grail reverb which a couple of very well-known musicians that I have great respect for came to swear by. Then, more recently, a friend of mine whipped out his POG and contributed some fine Hammond organ sounds via his Les Paul Custom at a studio session and also showed me a trick with the Stereo Memory Man with Hazarai which allowed me to access an uncanny imitation of the My Bloody Valentine *To Here Knows When* guitar sound.

However, what sealed the deal and made me realise I was missing out on some great FX was a buying spree in Helsinki last month. I accompanied my employer, who was in a

noisemongering kind of mood, to a local shop where we found ourselves in need of a fuzz pedal to add to a combination of sounds we were attempting. I grabbed the nearest unit, an EHX Double Muff Nano, and plugged in. I was astonished to find that, instead of the creamy buzzing warmth I had been expecting, this unit was an awesome crunchy overdrive that took the thin, wiry-sounding Strat we were demoing with and turned it into a roaring rock monster with the depth and articulation of a classic humbucker - all in a unit which fitted in the palm of my hand and cost about 40 quid. Who could say no? My companion was equally enamoured with the Pocket Metal Muff and its amusing ability to obliterate the true voice

of any guitar/amp combo and turn it into Metallica circa *And Justice For All*, so that went into the shopping basket too.

All this excitement prompted me to do a Big Muff shootout. The NYC reissue, the Little Big Muff and the Pi version with Wicker (which got a great review in *G&B* not

long ago) were all very good, but something stayed our hand. Fate was about to intervene. I later found an MP3 file online of Smashing Pumpkins' *Cherub Rock* with the guitars isolated (google it - it's worth it) and was blown away. So was my employer. Within five minutes, a V4 op-amp Big Muff from the mid-1970s was on its way to him from eBay.

So, from old classics to potential new ones, the quality has not dropped. I was wrong. EHX is still delivering great sounds, and some of them are cheaper than ever.

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Adi Vines has worked with Radiohead, the Sex Pistols, the Darkness, Razorlight and others. See www.xselectronics.co.uk