Want to scare people with your bass? Of course you do. Joel McIver road-tests EHX’s new Superego Synth Engine and terrifies the neighbours

Imagine the scene. A deep bass rumble fills the air, causing passing birds to drop dead from the sky. Passers-by run for cover, howling ‘Armageddon!’ The terrible, heart-stopping noise from the bowels of the earth is augmented by a fiendish sequence of hellish tones. Cows pass out at 100 paces. The sky turns black… And all the time it’s just you, your bass and a pedal, sitting in a bedsit in Peterborough. Not a bad effect for under 150 notes, eh?

EHX’s Superego Synth Engine pedal is a fascinating bit of kit and, that overblown introduction notwithstanding, is good for much more than simply making a frightening noise. It’s a cunning combination of sampler and effects pedal that we don’t pretend to understand, but which we do know sounds ace when you plug a bass guitar into one side and an amp into the other. What it basically does is capture your bass sound in one of three ways, repeat said sound as long as you like (from a second or two to indefinitely) and allow you to layer more sounds on top of it if you wish.

But, I hear you protest, this has all been done before: we’ve had loop pedals since the dawn of time (the 80s). True, true. The Superego doesn’t pretend to be breaking new ground – but we haven’t seen one as nifty as this for a while, and certainly not at this price. The cleverness in this case comes from its three user modes, triggered by the switch situated above the foot control. It has three modes, Latch, Momentary and Auto, although Momentary isn’t actually marked on there for some arcane reason. In Latch mode, you play your desired note or chord for sampling, stamp on the footswitch and then do so again: you’ll hear the bit of music you were playing with added sustain, infinitely so if you’ve got the Speed control set at full blast. Step on it again and add a new sound; release it, play something else, step on it again and add that sound to the mix; and so on and so on, until you end up with your desired pot-pourri of bass sounds. You can then solo over or under it as you choose. This is where it all gets rather dark quite quickly, with a malevolent drone that threatens to feed back if you’re not in charge of your amp’s gain and volume controls.

In Momentary mode, the effect is only active as long as you depress the footswitch. This was particularly effective for key notes in a bass solo, we found: hit your note at the same time as the footswitch and it’ll ring out with greater presence than otherwise. This bit was great for hand-eye-foot co-ordination: get any of those out of sync with the others and you’ll miss your cue.

Finally, you’ve got Auto mode, where you don’t need to go near the footswitch after an initial tap: it’ll keep adding whatever you play to the batch of sampled, sustained notes, as long as they’re loud enough. At this point you can adjust the Speed control to your desired duration of sustain. Whack it over to full and you’ll soon have a palette of sounds which, unless your choice of notes is harmonically perfect, will soon be overpowering: we found it worked best when set to half-way, allowing you to generate clusters of notes which rise and fall every few seconds. The Gliss control (short for glissando, we assume) comes into its own here, controlling the speed at which the chords or notes which you’re asking the Superego to sustain morph into each other.

Contact Details
www.ehx.com

Technical Specification

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>£149</th>
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<tr>
<td>Built-in US</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controls</td>
<td>Footswitch, three-position mode switch, Speed, Gliss, Dry and Effect controls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>320g excluding battery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dimensions</td>
<td>118mm (L) x 93mm (W) x 36mm (D)</td>
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The other controls are reasonably self-explanatory. Dry controls your unaltered bass sound; it sounds suitably ethereal when you turn it fully off, but then you won’t be able to solo over your sampled sounds, so find a balance that works for the rig you’re using and the environment you’re in. Effect is the opposite of Dry, altering the volume of the sustained sounds. Note that in addition to the standard In and Out sockets, there’s a Send and Return option, allowing you to set up an effects loop. There are real possibilities here. You could spend hours with this pedal. We did...

So what are the applications for bass, given that the Superego isn’t a bass-only pedal? We started with a simple drone line and soloed over it, as the most obvious option. Then we created a three-part chord with separate samples and harmonised with that, amending the chord every few bars using the Latch function. Obviously it helps if you’re playing relatively freeform music that will allow you to stretch out without worrying about time running out: that Pink Floyd or Hawkwind tribute band will welcome you and your Superego with open arms. Most of all, we suspect, this pedal will find a home among the world’s ever-growing legions of home studio users, which is no bad thing. Like other sample/sustain pedals of its type, it allows you to create solo pieces of practically symphonic proportions, given sufficient time and practice—and as we said earlier, who needed those neighbours anyway?

What We Think

**Plus**
- Great for Pink Floyd impressions and horror soundtracks

**Minus**
- Accidentally single-tap or double-tap in the middle of your solo and you’re screwed

**Overall**
- Flexible and slightly sinister. What’s not to like?

**BGM Rating**
- Out Of Five

**Build Quality**
- ★★★☆☆

**Sound Quality**
- ★★★☆☆

**Value For Money**
- ★★★☆☆