

**FACTFILE****Electro-Harmonix Neo Mistress**

DESCRIPTION

Old school Flanger with Rate and Feedback controls along with some nifty mood lighting.

CONTROLS Rate, Feedback, Bypass switch

PRICE £58

CONTACT www.ehx.com

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A little more in the way of a fully featured flanger in a larger enclosure. It costs more but the tones are flange heaven
RRP £199

ELECTRO-HARMONIX

Neo Mistress Nano & Stereo Talking Machine

One is a miniature vessel of swooshy deliciousness, the other a demented tool of the very devil. Which will be right for you? Review by **Hayden Hewitt**

Electro-Harmonix is a brand most of us are more than familiar with. Purveyors of everything from the sublime to the ridiculous (in a musical way, of course), they pretty much produce a pedal for every niche... and if no such niche can be found, then they often carve one out. For this review we have two pedals which fully illustrate the two facets to the Electro-Harmonix train of thought, from the dependable and predictable smoothness of the Neo Mistress Flanger through to the rather bonkers Talking Machine.

Neo Mistress

Let's start with the Neo Mistress - a small pedal with an unpolished aluminium case for that made-in-the-garage vibe, two knobs, a switch and no hidden features... unless you count an LED which changes colour according to the sweep of the effect. As ever with smaller enclosures, you have to break out the screwdriver to get to the battery; this does grate a little, although you can of course power the pedal with a 9v power supply to avoid potentially embarrassing mid-gig rummaging in your bag for a Phillips.

**Sounds**

The Neo Mistress makes a good fist of getting close to the sublime Mistress flanger. This effect is of the traditional variety - warm and cossetting. At lower levels, through a fairly clean amp, you cannot resist giving it some Hendrix. The warm washes of flange add a subtle hint of psychedelia in a way that'll be completely alien if you're used to modern-day digital flangers, with a discernible grain and organic quality that make it feel like a part of your tone rather than a simple adornment.

Increasing the depth puts you into early Van Halen territory but without a little of the bite provided by MXR flangers. The Neo Mistress is a little more laid back than an MXR; even at the extremes, it's still a relaxed giddiness, never getting too far away from you.

Stereo Talking Machine

From the simplicity of the Neo Mistress we move to the knob-festooned Talking Machine, a 'Vocal Formant Filter' which gives you many options to shape the sound of your lunacy. Designed primarily to add vowel-like sounds to your notes, the Talking Machine is - at its most basic - an envelope filter giving you wah and pseudo synth tones along with an utterly bonkers ability to make every note sound like you're saying

The Talking Machine has the bonkers ability to make every note sound like you're saying 'DIE' through a fuzzbox

the word 'DIE' through a fuzzbox. What more could you need?

The knobs are dual-function. The first functions control the amount of effect in your signal, give you a choice of voices ranging from Wah and BaseBalls through to seven vowel tones, and on to the envelope filter settings. You also get nine programmable presets via the Preset knob. Cleverly, the Sensitivity knob has a centre detent which, if you move counter-clockwise, reverses the vowel tone. To access the secondary function of the knobs, hold the Preset switch down; this allows you to access the volume, the level and gain of the built-in fuzz, and alter the LFO settings.

On the practical side are stereo outputs and a side chain FX loop, and should the preset craziness not be enough, you can attach an expression pedal to gain full control over the sweep of any given voicing. The pedal comes supplied with its own 9v power unit; batteries are not an option.

**Sounds**

If the Neo Mistress sounds beautiful, the Talking Machine is absolutely barking. The presets give you varying amounts of oddness which add

carefully-pronounced vowels to your notes although, as mentioned before, one really does seem to proclaim 'DIEDIEDIEDIE', which never ceases to amuse. Digging a little deeper, the unit proves to be a highly accomplished envelope filter. The wah setting may not match certain dedicated auto wahs in terms of tone but the scope for manipulation of the tone via the secondary controls gives the Talking Machine a distinct advantage.

Switching to the BaseBalls setting and altering the LFO filter and Fuzz

controls will have you in command of some groovy analogue synth sounds. Yes, many of the tones might be novelty items to some degree, but you'd really want to shoehorn them into your tunes somewhere - even more so if you bring an expression pedal to the party.

Verdict

We have two very different pedals here. On the one hand we have the Neo Mistress, which would assuredly be welcome on almost any pedalboard as either your only flanger or perhaps just another flavour. The small enclosure means it doesn't take up much real estate, and the tones are huge, warm and very pleasing. The Stereo Talking Machine is a more acquired taste. If you enjoy envelope filters, and you like the idea of having a choice of various voicings along with a great degree of control in terms of manipulation, then you'll be in seventh heaven here; it's a pedal no sonic astronaut should find themselves without. ⚡

FINAL SCORE	
NEO MISTRESS	
Build Quality	18/20
Playability	17/20
Sound	16/20
Value for money	19/20
Looks	17/20
TOTAL	87%

FINAL SCORE	
STEREO TALKING MACHINE	
Build Quality	18/20
Playability	17/20
Sound	18/20
Value for money	16/20
Looks	19/20
TOTAL	88%

FACTFILE**Electro-Harmonix Stereo Talking Machine**

DESCRIPTION Envelope filter on steroids allowing for nine different voicing's and the ability to store 9 presets of your own creation. Includes a 9v power supply.

CONTROLS Blend, nine-position Voice knob, Attack, Decay, Sensitivity, Presets/Sweep Level, Preset and Bypass switches

PRICE £160

CONTACT www.ehx.com

Like this? Try this...**Dunlop**

HT1 Heil Talkbox
If you'd rather go old school and want to control your vowel sounds by having a plastic pipe sat in your mouth, this is the way to go. What better way to get your... er... Frampton on?
RRP £149 approx