

SOUL FOOD

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Magic Mike

ELECTRO-HARMONIX HOT TUBES OVERDRIVE, NANO BIG MUFF π
AND SOUL FOOD PEDALS BY CHRIS GILL

IF SOMEONE WERE to open a mad-scientist hall of fame, Electro-Harmonix founder and president Mike Matthews would certainly be worthy of becoming one of its first inductees. The stomp-box world's equivalent of Thomas Edison, Matthews and his team of prolific inventors over the years have created hundreds upon hundreds of wacky and wonderful devices that make every guitarist's life more exciting and fulfilling.

Today, the Electro-Harmonix catalog offers a staggering number of pedals—more than 100—and the lineup keeps getting bigger and better. For this review, we looked at three of the company's new—and incredibly affordable—

distortion/overdrive pedals that recently made their debut: the Hot Tubes Overdrive, the Nano Big Muff π and the Soul Food. Together, they deliver a rainbow of tones and textures. Individually, each will likely meet your needs no matter what type of dirt you dig.

FEATURES All three of these stomp boxes are housed in standard-size mini die-cast aluminum enclosures that take up minimal space on a pedal board. Each features three large control knobs in the typical Electro-Harmonix triangular configuration and is equipped with mono 1/4-inch input and output jacks, a bright red status LED, and a



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* optimized for iPhone, iPad and Android!



nine-volt adapter jack. (The Soul Food is the only one of the three pedals that comes with an adaptor.) The Hot Tubes and Nano Big Muff π , which are both based on classic Seventies EHX stomp boxes, feature true-bypass switching, while the entirely brand-new Soul Food pedal offers selectable true-bypass or buffered-bypass modes.

In addition to sharing identical control-knob arrangements, each control on the three pedals performs similar functions. A volume control is in the upper-left corner, while the control on the upper right adjusts overdrive, sustain and drive on the Hot Tubes, Nano Big Muff and Soul Food, respectively. The center knob is a treble control on the Soul Food and a tone control on the Hot Tubes and Nano Big Muff π . The Hot Tubes Overdrive also has a mini-toggle switch that completely removes the tone control from the pedal's circuit for pure, unadulterated overdrive.

PERFORMANCE Everyone should know by now that the Big Muff name means glorious mounds of the furriest fuzz, and the Hot Tubes Overdrive makes its intentions known right there on the box. But I love that the mysterious Soul Food name isn't quite as obvious. Like its namesake, you don't really know

what it is until you get deep into it, and fortunately this Soul Food is like a succulent slab of ribs instead of a chewy chunk of chitlins.

The Soul Food pedal is actually a clean-boost overdrive pedal. Like a pushup bra, it takes what's already there and makes it seem bigger, rounder, and more lively and bouncy. The treble control provides subtle shifts in upper-harmonic sparkle without affecting mids or bass. If you already love your tone but wish that it was a little more assertive and attention getting, strap the Soul Food on for size.

The Hot Tubes Overdrive, on the other hand, makes an amplified guitar's tone considerably bigger, raunchier and as impossible to ignore as Kate Upton in a string bikini. The Hot Tubes delivers a full range of textures, from crisp crunch to face-melting distortion, and it can provide a significant volume boost that lets you go to the front of the mix with the stomp of a switch.

The Nano Big Muff π is a superfreak of a fuzz box, producing outrageous sonic sizzle and end-of-the-world tones that sound as if your amp is melting like the Wicked Witch of the West. Amazingly, you can still play chords along with riffs that evoke visions of Godzilla laying ruin to Tokyo.

CHEAT SHEET



- **LIST PRICES** Hot Tubes Overdrive, \$77.38; Nano Big Muff π , \$93.06; Soul Food, \$83.74
MANUFACTURER Electro-Harmonix, ehx.com
- A reissue of a classic Seventies pedal, the Hot Tubes Overdrive covers the gamut from overdrive crunch to full-on raging distortion with a twist of its overdrive control.
- The Nano Big Muff π provides the classic aggressive fuzz sounds of the original in its most compact configuration ever.
- Soul Food serves up clean boost that preserves your guitar's natural tone but widens its dynamic range and makes its overall sound bigger and bolder.
- All three pedals are very affordable, compact and provide pro features, like a nine-volt adapter jack and true-bypass operation.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE** Once again, the Lord of Long Island City has delivered the goods with three outrageously affordable stomp boxes that collectively cover just about every color of overdrive, distortion and fuzz a guitarist needs.