

## Bass Machine for the Guitar

Electro-Harmonix simply doesn't stop bringing cult and innovative pedals to the market. Accordingly, I am always happy to get my hands on something new from this company. And then there's the promising name Bass Machine! But wait... It (gulp) make it possible to replace bass with guitar? Nooooo!

At first, as the bass player that I am, I wanted to refuse the test, but then I got determined to face the monster. It's not gonna work anyway, is it??

### TOO BEAUTIFUL TO BE TRUE?

Basically, that's how it's supposed to work: plug the guitar, for which no special (MIDI or similar) pickup is necessary, into the pedal, which with unimagined dynamics and legendary tracking, outputs the signal up to two octaves lower. Normal octavers can do this too, but the BASS9 still goes even further. At the same time, the signal is transformed into one of nine sounds provided (hence the name, yes?). Effect-Level and direct signal are adjustable in volume, and two more controllers provide different functions, depending on the preset dialed in by means of the 9-position rotary knob. These presets fall roughly into 2 categories: 1. more synth-oriented and 2. imitating the bass as an instrument, with Preset 1 being named "Precision. Ctrl 1 controls whether the signal is sent one or two octaves down. Ctrl 2 is supposed to work like the tone pot on the actual instrument.

### GO LOW, WITH GUITAR

I use a normal Strat to play the pedal, connected to a bass amp. EH recommends this, especially if it needs to be loud, then this is how it's done. My goodness, what a fat tone! Better turn down the bass control on the amp a little bit, and it's still enough. The tracking is flawless, the sound is tight even when the original signal is completely off. And it really sounds like an electric bass! Cheeky bastards. The generated signal is not simply triggered, but sounds different depending on the pickups selected, as when the cycling through the five-way or when using to a Schecter 7-string. Even the B-string tracks cleanly, which is also works perfectly with chords. With this sound, that takes away the bass... illusion (phew...), with others, fascinating soundscapes can result. A slight addition of the direct guitar signal gives even more definition, without perceiving the tone as a high octave. In this case too it is worthwhile to try out every preset, because each will react differently. Preset number 4, which is a Moog Taurus, becomes just incredibly massive, while the guitar-like, wiry Danelectro Longhorn tone on Preset 2 benefits little. If you use the tune-down function in semitones down to one octave, the unharmonized guitar signal is just in the way anyway.

### Electro Harmonix BASS9 Bass Machine



Part of the concrete Bass emulations is also a Fretless bass, including adjustable growl and chorus, which again works very well. It sounds the fattest with thumb picking, with Palm Mute switching into the double bass realm. In general, the pedal reacts sensitively to the touch of fingers, thumb or pick, and depending on the preset sometimes gets you one thing, sometimes another. The Preset "Bowed" can be used with anything and can be played polyphonically, as the bowed bass tone's attack speed can be adjusted. With dry turned all the way down, I can actually create the illusion of a double bass. When the direct signal is left in, a wonderfully swelling soundscape is laid under any struck chord. In this case, the bass Machine thus goes above and beyond its remit.

The Preset Virtual also offers more than a normal bass. I couldn't figure it out at first, one control sets the thickness of the body, the other the scale length? The latter turns out to be a sort of treble pot, the more I turn it up, the more wiry it becomes, until you reach the perfect piano tone, while the former makes the tone bolder and fatter! So you'd better be careful when turning this up... One thing, on the other hand, has proven to be almost impossible: I couldn't stop myself from plugging in a bass. Maybe the pedal would add an interesting color? With some Presets it can be done using a lot of dry and little effect, especially when you treat it like an octaver and accordingly play high up, but it's not really fun. Ergo: back to the thin strings. And as a bass player, I'm sorry to say that everything actually works really well. Unfortunately, Guitarists might actually get some dumb ideas.

The English manual contains sample settings and blank templates to record your own settings. Last but not least let me mention the Dry Out, which always outputs the unaltered guitar signal, independent of the dry knob that only sets the amount of dry in the effect mix. With a distorted Guitar amp in parallel you can have some fun here!