



{ CLASSIC GEAR }

BY DAVE HUNTER



Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Man



ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

- > Big five-knob control interface
- > BBD analog delay sound
- > Bonus Chorus-Vibrato effect
- > Hard-wired AC power cord
- > Wet and dry outputs

IF ONE OF THE GREATEST boons of the solid-state revolution of the mid to late '60s was the way it compacted down cumbersome guitar effects into neat portable boxes, you could argue that the greatest benefit to guitarists didn't come until a full decade later when the luscious but unwieldy tape echo was replaced by the analog delay pedal. And for many players, the greatest rendition of that was the Electro-Harmonix Memory Man. Released around 1976, the Memory Man was one of the first solid-state pedal-based echo devices, if not verifiably the first, as EHX's Mike Matthews claims accurate dates for this era are extremely difficult to come by. It was certainly the most successful. It also remains

the most beloved of the early analog delays still in use today.

The pedal's design evolved considerably through the late '70s and into the early '80s, and while the debutante models are certainly collectible, the most desirable to players is the rendition featured here, the Deluxe Memory Man that came out around the turn of the decade. It included some of the line's best features and delivered the warm, thick, tape-like echo sounds that made the unit famous.

All original Memory Man pedals were made using components called "bucket-brigade delay chips" (BBD), which are partly credited with the rich, somewhat grainy sound of their analog echoes. The moniker comes from the

way these IC chips pass along a signal from one stage to another—across as few as 68 stages to as many as 4,096 between input and output—which can be done at different speeds to achieve different lengths of delay time. Real techies will drool over the beloved Reticon SAD1024 BBDs and Panasonic MN3005s used in the classic early pedals, but the rest of us just need to know that they sounded great.

The cool thing about the Deluxe Memory Man was that it packed all this succulent echo into a unit with superbly flexible and versatile features. In addition to the single input, there were both an Echo out and Direct (dry) out, controls for Level, Blend, Feedback and Delay (time), plus a switch to select between the bonus Chorus and Vibrato effects that could be added to the delay signal in proportions governed by the Chorus-Vibrato knob. Power was hard-wired for domestic AC, with an on/off switch, an LED to indicate when the effect was on, and another LED to show you when your signal was overloading the circuit.

While the dual wet/dry outputs afforded great spatial effects with the Deluxe Memory Man into two amps, some guitarists will attest to the unrivaled aural beauty of the preceding Stereo Memory Man Echo/Chorus pedal. Connect this beauty to two semi-spaced amps and, well, you'll quickly be semi-spaced yourself. While its built-in chorus effect was only available independently, not on top of the delay effect, it remains one of the lushest and most appealing analog choruses this writer has ever experienced, especially in stereo.

U2's The Edge is one of the most cited early Deluxe Memory Man users, and purportedly employed the pedal on the band's early hits "I Will Follow" and "Sunday, Bloody Sunday," to name but two. There are many other notable users, and if you've heard a non-tape-delay echo effect on guitar tracks of the late '70s and early '80s, there's good chance it came from a Memory Man. Artists who tapped that delectable BBD bounce in later years have included Radiohead's Ed O'Brien and Arctic Monkey's Alex Turner. ■