

EBS OctaBass

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Proving that big sounds can come from small packages, Roger Newell drops an octave

I must own up to a fascination for small, heavy, metal objects like this Octabass pedal. Octave pedals, though, are nothing new. Originally designed with the electric guitar in mind, the theory was simple: a second note was reproduced at the same time as the played note, but an octave below. (Actually, some of the earliest versions could produce an octave above or below) This sounded particularly neat on riffs, and who is the band member that uses riffs most frequently? The bass player! Exciting times, and lots of fun too, except that most of these early units were notoriously bad at handling a signal from the lower reaches of a bass. The note would split all right, but with no guarantee whether it would be an octave up or down, or indeed an octave of the harmonic... Frightening. Yet the octave pedal has found more application and enthusiasts in the bass world than it ever did with 6-stringers. In response to this, manufacturers have taken a fresh look at the circuitry. These days, reliability is on the menu and many, like this EBS model, are manufactured with the bass application firmly in mind.

Under-view

Effects pedals don't come much more compact than this, all encased in a robust, standard size electrical box, with minimal controls and extremely good performance. Simple of design and even easier to operate, the unit is activated by a standard footswitch and, when in use, a red LED glows. The two controls are designated Normal and Octave, with Normal regulating the amount of unaffected signal and the Octave the processed signal. This way you can get the precise blend of the two signals and therefore, degree of effect that you require. Couldn't be easier. Connection is made via the usual in and out sockets, and the Octabass is powered by a 9-volt battery, although provision



is made for an adapter. A foam pad, underneath, helps to prevent the pedal from sliding about on-stage.

Taking The Plunge

This is a most pleasing effect to use, as the warmth and fatness that the bass sound receives is truly excellent.

We all know how good it can sound on record (check out Pino Palladino's bass line on 'I'm Gonna Tear Your Playhouse Down' by Paul Young), but with this precise blending ability you are in total control. This unit is really aimed for use with a standard 4-string bass as a low B is a lousy signal source, and the experience is more of a dual tracking effect where it's doubtful that the lower octave is even created. And how would we know...?

Conclusion

Many session bass players wouldn't venture out of the house without an octave pedal, and it probably rates second only to a chorus unit in terms of usefulness. This effective unit from EBS performs perfectly down to low G, but sometimes is prone to reverting to dual tracking below that point, but this is quite normal. A winner.