



# PEDALBOARD

MANUFACTURER

STRYMON

MODEL

NIGHTSKY

PRICE

£439

CONTACT

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## NightSky

Venture to the outer reaches of reverb with this soundscape workstation

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Phil Barker

For many players, Strymon has been the go-to company for reverb pedals with its largely conventional Blue Sky and the later Big Sky, which offered more esoteric 'altered' reverbs alongside the standard options. The next pedal in that Sky series ventures far deeper into that rabbit hole of altered reverbs and otherworldly ambiances. Defined by Strymon as a "Time-Warped Reverberator", the NightSky offers real-time continuous control over a whole host of parameters affecting the reverb.

At first glance, the NightSky may seem to have a formidable amount of knobs and switches, but it's not as daunting as it looks. Having everything on the clear and logically sectioned front panel means that there are no menus to dive into (there are some secondary parameters

such as pre-delay, but these are easily manageable), and you get onboard presets so all that creative knob-tweaking can be safely stored away and not lost. 16 presets can be saved and accessed directly from the buttons on the front of the pedal, and there's access to 300 via MIDI.

### SOUNDS

The starting point here is the choice of three basic reverb textures: Sparse, a set of delay taps; Dense, which is like a plate reverb; and Diffuse, a large ambient reverb. While a knob setting decay length is pretty straightforward, the Size/Pitch knob not only adjusts the perceived size of the reverberant space but also simultaneously changes the pitch – either completely smoothly or quantized to a variety of musical scales. There are low-cut and

high-cut filters to shape the boundaries of reverb EQ and comprehensive modulation that can be applied to one of three targets – reverb, pitch or filter.

Strymon is known for its Shimmer reverb and has extended the idea in the pedal's Voice section where the Shimmer can be tuned to a specific musical interval and either applied to the input of the reverb core or within the core itself for more of a lingering effect. You also get a switchable Glimmer that enhances the harmonic content of the reverb tail, adding texture at either top- or bottom-end frequencies, plus a Drive switch that adds a touch of distortion at a choice of two points in the signal path.

The consequence of all that available processing power is a range of sounds that go way beyond what we've heard from

## 01. MOD SECTION

Set what you want to modulate (verb, pitch or filter), choose a waveshape or the envelope follower, Adjust Speed and Depth

## 02. INTERVAL KNOB

Use this to 'tune' the shimmer effect; a range of musically useful intervals are available

## 03. INFINITE FOOTSWITCH

Press once to hold the input to the reverb for a sustained sound that you can play over. Alternatively, a press-and-hold enters sequence mode

## 04. DECAY SECTION

Your starting point is to choose Sparse, Dense or Diffuse reverb with the Texture switch. The other controls determine size and length

## 05. BUTTONS 1 TO 8

You can select the 16 onboard presets with these (1 to 8 green/9 to 16 amber). They can also represent steps in the sequence

## 06. FAVORITE KNOB

You can use this footswitch to toggle between an active preset and the WYSIWYG current state of the knobs and switches



## Tech Spec

**ORIGIN:** USA

**TYPE:** Reverb pedal

**FEATURES:** Selectable true or buffered bypass, 16 onboard presets (300 via MIDI)

**CONTROLS:** Mod Speed, Mod Depth, Decay Length, Decay Size/Pitch, Reverb Mix, Dry Mix, Low Cut, High Cut, Interval, Shimmer, Target switch, Shape switch, Texture switch, Quantize switch, Filter switch, Shimmer switch, Glimmer switch, Drive switch, 8x Sequence/Preset switch, Inst/Line switch, On footswitch, Favorite footswitch, Infinite footswitch

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard inputs (L, R), standard outputs (L, R), EXP, MIDI In, MIDI Out, USB

**POWER:** Supplied 9V DC adaptor (300mA minimum)

**DIMENSIONS:** 178 (w) x 114 (d) x 60mm (h)

**Guitarist CHOICE**

**9/10**

any other reverb pedal. If you want the conventional, you can have it: the Dense algorithm will give you straight reverb that sounds very natural with guitar, and the Sparse setting can offer tape echo effects. But the NightSky's USP is to explore uncharted reverberant territory – and it certainly does that.

This thing can sound pretty damn epic as it adds a cinematic backdrop to your playing; one played note or chord can summon an extended shimmering cloud of spacey sound. While there are myriad ways to alter the basic size, texture and pitch aspects of the reverb for fairly static sounds, you can bring in more movement and colour via the Mod section: long reverb trails that morph over time, pulsing reverbs, analogue synth-like sounds including filter sweeps, and much more.

Also, taking a cue from synths is a step sequencer with up to eight steps based around the preset buttons, each representing independent settings of the Size/Pitch knob, so pitches can be played back rhythmically using the Favorite footswitch for tap tempo, or stepped through using the main bypass footswitch, like different settings within a preset. Another useful performance feature is triggered with a hold on that footswitch, allowing you to morph between the current sound and a set of alternate knob settings – pretty useful if you don't have an expression pedal to hand for the continual control over knobs that's also on offer.

Finally, the Infinite footswitch is one of the pedal's coolest features. One press freezes a section of the reverb following something you just played, and lets you

play over it with the reverbed sound (or dry if you prefer), which is perfect for jamming with yourself.

## VERDICT

It's probably a bit too specialised for many players, but if the words ambient, experimental and soundscape really excite you then the NightSky is a must-have. This pedal is a toolkit for reverberant synthesis, ripe for exploration and exactly what you need if you want to get deeply creative with reverb. **G**

**PROS** Complete reverb workstation; stunning sounds; plenty of presets; multi-task footswitches; infinite freeze feature  
**CONS** Very little to complain about, but you'd have to be really into esoteric reverbs for the required outlay