Mooer Ocean Machine II

Devin Townsend's delay, reverb and looper makes a spectacular return – and it's the pedalboard sequel we've all been waiting for

By Chris Gill

UNLIKE FILMS, SEQUELS in the guitar-gear world are often better than the originals, and that's certainly the case with the new and notably improved Mooer Ocean Machine II.

It's been about eight years since the Ocean Machine developed in collaboration with Devin Townsend made its debut, and while the Ocean Machine II maintains a similar dual-delay unit, reverb and looping effects foundation, it offers improved DSP algorithms, expanded specs, enhanced performance capabilities and better reliability.

One detail that didn't change is the price, making the Ocean Machine II even more incredible value than its predecessor.

Usability & Sounds

Like most sophisticated effects processors, the Ocean Machine II does have a bit of a learning curve, and reading the manual before you roll up your sleeves and get to work is highly recommended.

Having said that, it's easy to find your way around thanks to the control knobs provided for the separate reverb and two delay sections. Each section has a nine-position rotary switch for selecting delay or reverb types plus four parameter control knobs – pre delay, decay, tone and mix for reverb; feedback, time, sweep and mix for the delays.

A large multi-color LCD, a rotary menu knob and front panel switches make it easy to tweak deeper parameters and function settings in fine detail.

Three footswitches provide stompbox-style performance ease and functionality. Depending on the selected mode, the switches can select the reverb and delay effects individually, provide bypass and preset up/down scrolling functions, control various looper functions or provide tap tempo functions for the reverb and delay effects individually.

> ## "A sophisticated ambient soundscape-generating device that's like an instrument unto itself"

Full-size MIDI thru and in jacks and a ¼-inch expression pedal jack further expand the unit's control capabilities via optional external devices. A USB-C jack is a new addition that facilitates firmware updates.

The original Ocean Machine was an ambient music monster capable of generating universes of strange, beautiful, disturbing, hypnotic and intoxicating soundscapes. The new unit does the same, only the overall sound quality is even more lush and three-dimensional.

These are the kinds of sounds that used to require expensive studio gear costing tens of thousands of dollars but now are available in a pedal that costs the same price as a retrograde fuzz box made by an obnoxious hipster using primitive, low-tech components.

At its core, the Ocean Machine II is two standalone delay units and a reverb unit, but the sum is much greater than its individual parts thanks to the way it blends, morphs, distorts and manipulates those effects together. Users can place the effects in any order they please in series or parallel.

It excels at shimmer and resonance effects where long reverb tails swell like accompanying synth parts, but it can also generate hallucinatory delay effects that swell and recede in musically and rhythmically fascinating ways. The textures can range from silky smooth to the gnarliest gritty distortion you've ever heard.

The algorithms for the delays include standard digital, analog, tape and echo effects,

GUITAR WORLD VERDICT

★★★★★

Much more than a dual-delay/reverb/looper effect, the Mooer Ocean Machine II is a sophisticated ambient soundscape-generating device that is like an instrument unto itself, which can inspire hours of sonic exploration and composition creation.

PROS
+ Sophisticated blend of reverb and delay effects with advanced modulation.
+ Maximum looper recording time is increased to 120 seconds.
+ Footswitches make it easier to control various functions in live performance.

CONS
- Due to the complex nature of the effects and the depth of its programming capabilities, the learning curve can be steep.

SPECS
TYPE: Ambient soundscape generator featuring reverb, delay, looper
CONTROLS: Pre-Delay, Decay, Tone, Reverb Mix (reverb); Feedback, Time, Sweep, Delay Mix (delay A); Feedback, Time, Sweep, Delay Mix (delay B); Menu/Mix; Reverb algorithm; Delay A algorithm; Delay B algorithm
CONNECTIVITY: ¼-inch stereo Inputs and Outputs, ¼-inch TRS expression, MIDI thru, MIDI in, center negative DC input, USB-C
BYPASS: True bypass and DSP bypass
POWER: 9V DC (500mA)
DIMENSIONS: 215 x 127 x 56 mm

but the real fun lies in the more colorfully named liquid, rainbow, crystal, low-bit and fuzzy algorithms.

The same goes for the reverb algorithms, which consist of room, hall, plate and spring reverbs plus the more adventurous dist-verb, fl-verb, filter, reverse and mod algorithms. Advanced modulation capabilities allow users to tweak these effects beyond oblivion.

Verdict

With the recording time of the looper section now expanded from a maximum of 44 seconds to 120 seconds, users can create more highly layered loops or sections that can form the foundation of an entire song.

Combined with the unit's outrageous reverb and delay textures, the Ocean Machine II is like Frippertronics to the nth degree.