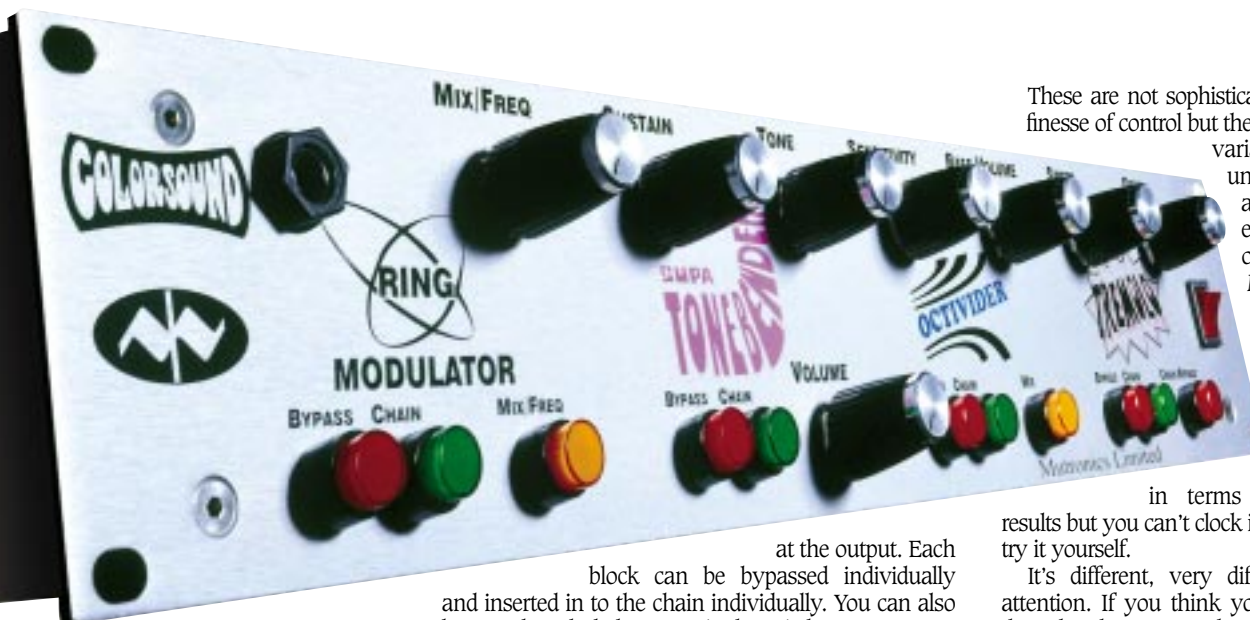


The Coloursound

Tired of your EQs, dynamics and multi-effects? Feel you need a little extra to lift that creativity? Need a little inspiration in your outboard rack? Look no further because it's not just about the guitar.

ZENON SCHOEPE



These are not sophisticated processors. They lack a finesse of control but they are nevertheless incredibly variable – verging on the unpredictable. The Octivider is a case in point and requires extremely careful balancing of its Sensitivity pot. The Ring Modulator sounds absolutely awful on some things and eerily beautiful on others. The Tonebender is just too filthy for most and will consequently be loved. The Tremolo is possibly the most approachable

in terms of control and useable results but you can't clock it for tempo. Don't be put off, try it yourself.

It's different, very different. Dance mixers pay attention. If you think you're going to like this box then the chances are that you probably will. You will not find this in a plug in. ■

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN I aspired to many things. A height of 6ft, a Revox, a small high-quality mixer and 'proper' mic to plug in to it, a car. Further down the list, but up from a new set of expensive 'light' strings that wouldn't make my fingers bleed and a guitar with a neck that wasn't banana shaped (it took me time to work out that the two were linked), was a Coloursound effects pedal.

It didn't matter which one, of course, just so long as it was in some funky 1970s colour. Eventually I got one, or rather inherited it from a friend, and apart from the tragic consequence of having to double my lead inventory I worked that pathetic Swell Pedal to death. And I can tell you that you never heard such creative use of a volume control.

The years have mellowed me to the point where I can almost laugh about it, yet when I see a Coloursound foot pedal now it brings it back in to sharp focus for me; beserker style. I hated that bloody swell pedal for all the poverty and haplessness of youth that it represented.

Moving on swiftly then, what is this I see before me?

What you have in The Coloursound single channel unit is four popular guitar foot pedals sped up to balanced I-Os with a number of ways of connecting them together. The fact that they're of guitar pedal origin should only put you off at this stage if you were seriously considering plugging your best Brauner mic in to this thing.

Each of the processing blocks has rear panel I-O sockets, so you can access each effect individually. Even a drummer will have worked out that you could also use the I-Os to cross patch between the blocks and change their running order. Best of all, however, is the inclusion of rear panel 'chain' I-Os. Plug in to this and you have the whole left-to-right of the effects available

at the output. Each block can be bypassed individually and inserted in to the chain individually. You can also bypass the whole lot on a single switch.

The build is OK if not a little rudimentary but that is part of the authenticity. It's far quieter than I expected it to be. Some of the pedals represented here will be more familiar to some of you than others. For example, most people (guitarists) will know what a Tonebender is – as a lad I had only heard reports that someone in the next village had seen a Ring Modulator pedal.

What you get is a Ring Modulator with one knob and one switch, with the latter deciding whether the knob controls the amplitude or frequency of the carrier signal. The Tonebender has a volume knob, a bandpass tone pot, and a distortion control. The Octivider has a sensitivity control for triggering the effect and a volume control for the effect signal. A switch lets you flip between the effect only or a wet and dry mix. Finally we hit the Tremolo with rate and depth pots. Strange, no swell pedal.

There's also a front panel instrument input. Plugging in here reminded me immediately of the guitar shops of my youth. All that was missing was the encouraging cry of 'Are you going to buy that thing, sonny, or are you just trying to annoy us?'

I'm not going to try to describe the sound. What I will say categorically is that limiting The Coloursound to use on guitar is missing the point. Once you have the I-Os up to pro levels it's surprising how these effects open up sonically and how free you can be at bolting it in just about anywhere in your sound chain. It's no mix processor, neither is it a polisher of gems. It's dirty and wacky. You would use it for processing things that you want to contaminate. It's fab on keyboard pads, bass lines of the stringed and keyboard variety, organs, electric pianos, kick drums, and hihats.

When in chain mode the gain structure goes all over the place because each stage is dependent on the one before. The answer is to use the individual block I-Os and there are four blocks in a box.

PROS Balanced I-Os; people gravitate towards it; guitarists will nod sagely at you; sounds blinking mad.

CONS Not everyone's cup of tea; you won't use it all the time; it's hard to imagine what it sounds like until you've tried it.

EXTRAS The Coloursound comes from the same laboratory as the now famous Mutator,



which is a stereo analogue effects unit based on technology developed for synthesis in the late 1960s. With analogue filter and envelope follower it contains two independent voltage controlled filters that can be used to treat external

sources. Each filter can be controlled from its own associated low frequency oscillator and/or its own envelope follower section, which extracts the envelope contour of an input signal and applies it to control the cut-off frequency of the filter.

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