

# Electro-Harmonix Synth9 £204

Nine classic synths in one guitar pedal.  
**Robbie Stamp** puts a few of the classics under his battered old Reeboks

**CONTACT** WHO: Electro-Harmonix **TEL:** 1 (718) 937-8300 **WEB:** www.ehx.com  
**KEY FEATURES** Buffered Bypass, **IO:** 1/4" TS input, 2x 1/4" TS outputs (Dry Out, Synth/Mix Out), 1M input-Z, 500 output-Z, 100mA current draw, comes with 9.6VDC PSU



**S**ynth9 packs nine analogue-style polyphonic synth emulations into a five-knob stompbox. The emulations include the OB-X, Prophet-5, Minimoog, Taurus, ARP String Synth and PolySix. All this is achieved without the need for extraneous guitar pickups, so it's simply just plug and play.

Synth9 boils down the myriad parameters of the emulated synths to nine 'classic' sounds via a detented preset knob. Two preset specific parameters are set with the Ctrl 1/ Ctrl 2 knobs, controlling tone, filter sweep speed, modulation, portamento and oscillator ranges. The output can be mixed with the Dry and Synth knobs, whilst a separate Dry output jack allows for a split setup.

### Strings for keys

The crucial element here is the input tracking, especially with the bendy polyphonic output of a guitar. The Synth9 does a great job, with smooth bend/vibrato tracking, and chords picked out note for note no matter how close their intervals. The odd note can be missed in amongst more furious playing, but with familiarity these become a rarity. There is a limit in dynamic range, so the quietest notes can be missed, but again it takes little time to get used to the playable range. Your pick dynamics do affect the resulting sound, so there's plenty of scope for expressive playing. The lowest note that can be reliably tracked is the low A of a bass (ie, a fifth below low E in standard guitar tuning). This does limit usage with bass guitars, though the harmonics of the lower notes can trigger the Synth9 to play the right note an octave up.

The nine presets are well chosen and cover a broad range of analogue synth sounds. They aren't faithful recreations, but rather behavioural facsimiles, ticking the aural box marked Oberheim, Moog, ARP, etc. The sounds are full and cut where they need to, but at the same time, there's no getting away from their digitally tracked origins as there's always something of the whammy pedal tucked away in there. On their own, the presets will fill out the space a synth would normally take up in a group, whilst blended with a larger guitar setup they easily add



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that extra sauce to the mix. A splash of reverb and/or delay really lifts the Synth9 output, as they do for any synth. Though all the presets are useful (and fun), the standouts are the Oberheim OB-X, Electro-Harmonix Mini Synth and Korg PolySix emulations, for playability and sonic excitement.

### Loud9

The days of the cumbersome guitar-synth rig are pretty much over, with smaller pedal options doing as good a job, if not better. The Synth9 is a very Electro-Harmonix affair with a focus on simplicity, instant plug 'n' play-ability, and a wide-enough range to keep the pedal useful over time. There isn't a great deal that can deliver this amount of synth for the

guitar player at this price, even if it's at the higher end of what one expects for a stompbox, and on top of that the Synth9 delivers it well. Simple and effective. **FM**

## FM VERDICT

# 8.2

The power of DSP strikes again, providing guitar players with a (relatively) cheap way to pluck out nine classic synths

## THE PROS & CONS



Meaty, solid approximations of some classic synths for amp or DI

Quality polyphonic tracking of pitch and amplitude

Useful range of synth textures with essential parameter tweaks



Not really suitable for bass (a baritone guitar is fine though)

Power supply only – no battery operation

No true bypass