

SPECS

Power: 9V adaptor

Vocoder: 256 bands

Controls: blend, reverb (dry/harmony) gender, voice mix, mode

Mic pre gain: 15dBs in Lo Mode, 25dBs in Hi Mode.

Inputs: bal XLR mic input with phantom power, jack instrument input

Outputs: bal XLR mic output and jack instrument output (to amp)

Harmony modes: 6

Octave modes: 2

A/D and D/A Conversion
Sample Rate: 36kHz

A/D and D/A Conversion Bit Resolution: 24-bit

User Presets: Nine (one per mode)

Switches: Mic bypass/
preset

Dimensions:
203 x 177 x 88mm

Weight:

0.9kg



Electro Harmonix Voice Box | £160

Veteran guitar effects company Electro Harmonix add a vocoder/harmony stompbox to their ever-expanding product line. ***Dan 'JD73' Goldman*** does the robot!



ON THE DVD

WHAT IS IT?

A 256-band vocoder and harmony generation machine in compact stompbox format.

CONTACT

Who: Electro Harmonix
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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 One of the best vocoders I've ever used
- 2 Plenty of control
- 3 Natural sounding harmonies

Founded by Mike Matthews in 1968, Electro Harmonix have been at the forefront of stompbox effects for over 40 years. Now, for 2009 they've turned their expertise to making a vocoder and harmony generator in stompbox format.

At its heart, the Voice Box has a 256-band vocoder (the more bands, the clearer the diction), which is impressive. In comparison, the microKorg has an eight-band vocoder. The Voice Box also has six harmony/two octave modes for accompanying solo singers.

The box itself is sturdy, looks great and is very much in keeping with the retro/psychedelic look of the Electro Harmonix range. Input-wise there's a balanced XLR mic input with phantom power and a low and high gain selector

for using with different output mics. There's also a jack instrument input for plugging in guitars, keyboards and other sources. Output-wise, there's a balanced XLR for the effect-only output and a jack instrument output for plugging into an amp.

Under control

Control-wise, first up is the blend dial that controls the balance between your dry/effected voice. Next up are two reverb dials (dry/harmony). The reverb, while fairly dark sounding, is very useful. You could have a dry vocal with reverberated harmony effect for example, or vice versa.

Following on are the deeper controls. First is the 'gender bender' formant shifter that changes the generated

harmonies to sound more male or female. This works great in practice. The voice mix dial flips between different harmonies in harmony modes (3rds/5ths and Octaves) while in octave/unison and whistle modes, it flips between high and low octaves, or a blend of the two. Finally, it acts as a harmonic enhancer/treble EQ when in vocoder mode.

So how does it work in practice? The vocoder is amazing. There's lots of scope for shaping the final sound with the gender, reverb and voice mix controls and you can hear every word clearly and precisely.

I found the harmony generation a little unstable and inconsistent at times, though useable results are possible after plenty of practice! While I can't complain at all about the generated tones, the box would often have difficulty picking up any of the quick major to minor changes and some of the more Jazzy inflections.

If you don't sing perfectly in tune and at a consistent level, the box sometimes has trouble following – I advise using a compressor and getting some singing lessons before using the harmony modes! Also, in order for the voice box to track at its best, you really need to run an instrument through that has plenty of bite/attack. Guitar and Rhodes are a good bet, though the vocoder works great on all inputs.

All in all, it's a fantastic vocoder and a very capable but sometimes frustrating harmony generation box. The harmony processor is very much reliant on very in-tune singing and decent vocal/instrument levels going in (ideally use a compressor between the mic and the voice box). While the harmony generation is not quite as foolproof as I would have hoped it's the best sounding vocoder I've used and is worth the price for this alone. **FM**

FutureMusic **VERDICT**

A great vocoder and a clever
harmony generator as long give it a
clean, consistent and in-tune input