



**MERIS**

# Ottobit Jr

Inspired by vintage arcade games, this bitcrushing stutter and sequencing pedal takes us back to the 80s

**Words** Trevor Curwen **Photography** Neil Godwin

In the world of stompboxes, we've never had it so good in terms of sheer variety. Companies are going beyond the traditional to create pedals that produce sounds many would never consider to be part of the guitar's sonic landscape: who'd have thought the sound of 80s gaming consoles could be a valid tonal component? Well, Meris does – the US company has taken the essence of its Ottobit module for studio engineers/producers and put it into a dual-footswitch pedal. At the heart of the Ottobit Jr is bitcrushing to degrade your signal, but it has many other facets including stutter and sequencing effects.

Any guitar player plugging into the Jr for the first time could easily be confounded by the outright cacophony that can emanate from this little box, but read the manual and a methodical approach to parameter setting comes up with the goods. The top three knobs basically alter the timbre – there's adjustable bit rate, sample rate and a low-pass ladder filter. Fully clockwise, you get a normal guitar sound, but reducing the bit depth offers some fuzz sounds that you can tonally alter with the filter. By itself, reducing the sample rate adds a metallic flavour, from ring-mod-type sounds to

rumbly noise. Careful combinations of all three knobs yield a wide range of altered tonalities, both relatively conventional and boundary-pushing.

Taking things further, a six-step sequencer can be assigned to sequence either pitch, filter frequency or sample rate at a range of speeds set by the tap tempo. A value for each of the sequencer steps is assigned to the six knobs (accessed by holding down Alt). The myriad possible sounds are too numerous to describe, but if you're familiar with bleepy arcade games or a synth's onboard sequencer, arpeggiator or sample and hold functions, you'll get the picture. On top of that, you have 22 on/off stutter effects that can be frozen as long as you hold down the tap tempo switch.

For more live tweaking, an expression pedal can be set to morph between two complete sets of knob values. Such a range of possibilities cries out for presets; while there are none directly onboard, you can send and receive them using MIDI.

## VERDICT

Niche it may be, but this classy and creative pedal exerts a strange allure to those yearning for something different. **G**

## Tech Spec

**ORIGIN:** USA

**TYPE:** Bitcrusher/sequencer/stutter pedal

**FEATURES:** Selectable true bypass (relay) or analogue buffered bypass, stereo or mono operation, Freeze function

**CONTROLS:** Sample Rate, Filter, Bits, Stutter, Sequencer, Sequencer Mult, Alt (Hold) switch, Pitch Seq/Filter Seq switch, Tap footswitch, Bypass footswitch

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard input, standard outputs (L, R), Exp/MIDI

**POWER:** Supplied 9V adaptor

**DIMENSIONS:** 108 (w) x 114 (d) x 51mm (h)

**8/10**

MANUFACTURER  
MERIS

PRICE  
£319

MODEL  
MERCURY7

SOUND NETWORK  
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MERIS

# Mercury 7

This digital reverb takes its lead from the sounds of *Blade Runner* to join the fray alongside Strymon and co

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Neil Godwin

The high-end digital reverb pedal such as a Strymon Big Sky or Eventide Space has become a much-coveted item for those wishing to add ambience with a classy sheen to their 'board – and the Mercury7 is the contribution from Meris, whose team includes a founder of Strymon. Derived from the 500-series module of the same name, and apparently inspired by the *Blade Runner* film and its Vangelis soundtrack, it is designed to deliver extra-long decays and lush modulated reflections. The pedal offers a choice of two algorithmic reverbs, Ultraplate and Cathedral, with a host of sound adjustment features including pitch and modulation parameters.

Capable of mono and stereo operation, the pedal has two sets of parameters for each of its six knobs, the second set accessed by pressing Alt. Mix sets the reverb against the dry signal, going up to fully wet so the pedal can be used in effects loops, with overall reverb time set by the Space Decay knob. Within the reverb tail, you can set separate decay values for high- and low-frequency sounds – useful for adjusting the size of the perceived space. Modulation with adjustable depth and speed can be added to the mix to put a sense of movement

into the reverb tail, while the Alt function of the Hi Frequency knob adds in a cool vibrato effect, not unlike a rotary speaker, before the reverb.

The most dramatic alteration of sound is via the Pitch Vector knob, which offers a shift of five different pitch intervals within the reverb: octave down, slight pitch up (which can sound like a peal of bells in the background), slight pitch down, 5th up, or octave up, which delivers the classic shimmer effect. You can dial up awesome reverb with many dimensions.

There are 16 internal presets, but you can only access them with external gear – a four-button footswitch for the first four or MIDI control for all of them. However, two cool facilities aid onstage performance: the second footswitch offers an automatic swell effect that works like a volume pedal, fading the sound up at an adjustable speed and great for pad sounds, while an expression pedal adds scope for such things as fading the pitch intervals into your reverb.

## VERDICT

If altered ambiances are your thing, this pedal does a wide range of them incredibly well. **G**

## Tech Spec

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Reverb pedal

FEATURES: Selectable true bypass (relay) or analogue buffered bypass, mono and stereo operation, Swell function, 16 internal presets

CONTROLS:

Space Decay, Modulate, Mix, Lo Frequency, Pitch Vector, Hi Frequency, Alt (Hold) switch, Ultraplate/Cathedral switch, Swell footswitch, Bypass footswitch

CONNECTIONS:

Standard input, standard outputs (L, R), Exp/MIDI

POWER: Supplied 9V adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 108 (w) x 114 (d) x 51 mm (h)

**Guitarist CHOICE**

9/10