

Universal Audio UAFX pedals £355 each

At first glance this set seems like a guitarist-only zone; but Jono Buchanan finds plenty here for all persuasions

CONTACT WHO: Universal Audio **WEB:** uaudio.com **KEY FEATURES** **Golden Reverberator:** Spring, Plate, and vintage digital reverb emulations, **Starlight Echo Station:** Tape, bucket-brigade and digital delay emulations, **Astra Modulation Machine:** Bucket-brigade, tube-driven Tremolo and Chorus/Vibrato pedal emulations, Storage for one preset, Stereo/dual mono operation, Modulation per effect





THE PROS & CONS



Class-leading sound

Deceptively control-packed front panel

Additional effects downloadable for free on registration



Not easy to read front panel in lower light setting

Only one preset can be stored per unit

Some parameters can only be accessed via the app

Universal Audio's rep as a developer of coveted hardware is matched only by its digital division's status in the world of software effects modelling. Its latest releases are a step away from their predominant Apollo interface and software emulation products however, providing three debut effects pedals. Whilst these have understandably made big waves in the guitar-playing community, the feature set should appeal significantly to those of other musical persuasions too. Accordingly, here are the Golden Reverberator, the Starlight Echo Station and the Astra Modulation Machine.

The Golden Reverberator bases its spatial effects on a variety of mid-1960s spring reverbs, three EMT 140 plate emulations and three algorithms from the digital Lexicon 224. The layout of features is broadly self-explanatory, with Decay, in the top left-hand corner, controlling the reverb tail. Then come fixed-shelf Bass and Treble rotaries for tone control, variable pre-Delay and Mix dials. Switches between the two rows of dials let you select effects type, whilst the Effect Mode switch toggles between variations of the current effect. As with the other units,

registering the pedal provides access to a download of an additional vintage plate algorithm, which bodes well for future updates. The sound quality is sumptuous and there's huge variety in the range of spatial effects you can shape here. Want introspective, yearning, slightly wonky reverb for a to-picture cue? Look no further.

The Starlight Echo station also takes its cues from a variety of modelled Delay units, the first of which, Tape EP-III, is a recreation of the Echoplex EP3. Alongside this are Analog DMM (a faithful emulation of the Electro-Harmonix Deluxe Memory Man) and UAD's own Precision digital Delay, which is the cleanest option, albeit one that combines echo with chorus or flanging. The bonus download option ports UAD's esoteric Cooper Time Cube across to the Starlight hardware. Delay Time is controlled by the Division dial in tandem with the Tap Tempo stomp switch in the bottom right.

Tonally, each Delay line offers users huge character but the tape-based effects are the ones I can't leave alone; they're addictive. Last but not least is the Astra Modulation Machine, which ships with three emulations and two further bonus ones available upon registration. These emulate Boss' CE-1 Chorus Ensemble, the MXR

126 Flanger/Doubler and a Tremolo unit derived from Fender's mid-1960s amps. Sound is consistently sumptuous and, like the other pedals, Astra provides a creative space in which to get lost in sound.

So what are the downsides? While the download options on registration are welcome, some parameters can only be adjusted via an app, a pain if you're in the zone. Another thing is that, while they're beautifully designed, the Golden Reverberator's labels, in particular, are hard to read in low light. There is also provision for only one preset per unit. Minor gripes aside, all is forgiven as soon as you start experimenting. Don't be fooled by the stomp-box exterior; there's masses here for everyone. **FM**

FM VERDICT

8.9

Glorious-sounding processors with a surprisingly broad selection of options hiding below a concise parameter set