



UNIVERSAL AUDIO UAFX ASTRA MODULATION MACHINE

A special kind of ensemble **£355**

Universal Audio's first foray into pedal hardware comes from years of building a formidable reputation for industry standard recording plugins. Like Neural DSP, it's an interesting angle to approach the effects market, but you're already frowning at the price here, aren't you? Yes, we're now above the snow line of pedal price mountain when it comes to a modulation pedal. But, you're getting a lot of modulation pedal here.

We've chosen to focus on the Astra Modulation Machine here rather than the reverb and delay pedals in the UAFX launch trio because we think it offers the most distinct proposition in the market; a comprehensive modelling of classic top drawer modulation pedals in a rugged and very attractive compact chassis.

We love the aesthetic here – and yes, that logo is a bit SEGA isn't it. The Astra balances sleek brushed metal with a graphical approach that comes on like a UA plugin printed in 3D. The tonal palette draws its influence from the 70s and 80s here; if you're looking for leftfield, progressive approaches there are other modulation units that will serve you better. The lack of MIDI functionality is also puzzling – seemingly justified by UA to focus players on the hands-on old school pedal approach to the controls. For £355 we're not so convinced, but the collection of classics is really the source of the appeal here – so do the tones deliver?

Very much so. If you're on the fence about modulation this could knock you over into a sea of shimmer and oscillation. The menu serves Bucket Brigade

chorus (inspired by the coveted Boss Chorus Ensemble), flanger/doubler that recreates MXR's 80s rack unit); there's vibrato, tube tremolo and more. A bonus phase X90 based on the classic MXR Phase 90 alongside a Fender Brownface-inspired Dharma Trem '61 harmonic tremolo can be downloaded via UA's Control app. And we'd advise you do – they're great.

With so many gorgeous musical sounds we'd have liked to see more than one preset to store a favourite, but this is still a benchmark modelling pedal.

Rob Laing

AT A GLANCE

CONTROLS Speed, Depth, Intensity, Shape, Shade; toggle switches for effect type, preset store and sound A/B selection, rotary mode switch; manual/bypass and preset/bypass footswitches

FEATURES Mono/stereo inputs and outputs, USB-C for app control and updates, Bluetooth for app control; switchable true or buffered bypass (via app)

POWER SUPPLY 9-volt mains supply only (minimum 400mA) (not included)

DIMENSIONS 141 x 92 x 65mm

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★