



Electro-Harmonix

Ravish Sitar Pedal

Want to apply the sounds of the East to your bass? Joel McIver adopts the lotus position and plugs in...

Warning: this product will make you feel hungry. Activate Electro-Harmonix's ravishing (ho ho) new sitar emulator and you may well find yourself salivating at the thought of a nice chicken tikka masala, like Pavlov's dog but with a bass instead of a collar marked 'Rover'. So convincing are the tones emitted by the Ravish that you may imagine yourself as some kind of Indian sitar guru, although bona fide experts on the instrument would no doubt laugh at the idea.

A little sitar info first. As you'll know if you've ever seen, let alone played, one of these fearsome-looking instruments, the sitar has two sets of strings: five lead strings and a large number (it varies) of 'sympathetic strings,' so called because you don't actually play them, they just resonate in harmonic sympathy with

whatever you're playing on the lead strings. The overall effect is a lush soundscape of vibrations which resonate behind your lead melody, or at least that's what happens if the instrument is in tune (no small feat: tuning a sitar is like pushing treacle up a hill with a spoon). Therefore, any effects pedal which seeks to turn your bass into a sitar has to be equipped to emulate both sets of strings.

Now, this is where the Ravish pedal is clever. Take a look at the three 'Levels' controls: these allow you to mix the relative volume of your dry signal, your lead sound and the artificial sympathetic strings, the last of which appear from nowhere when you play a note. Next to the levels you have the two timbre knobs, 'timbre' being a cute name for what we would usually label 'tone.' These basically roll treble and bass on or off, again for lead and sympathetic strings.

Have a tweak of these five controls and you'll be in sitar heaven – or should that be sitar *swarga loka* (thanks Wikipedia)? Assuming you have a vague idea of the correct scales, you can run around the fretboard all day, doing your best Ravi Shankar impression while the neighbours wonder what the hell is going on. Note that you'll need plenty of top end from the timbre controls, your bass controls, your amp or ideally all three, plus a set of new strings if possible: sitars are known for their bright, crisp tone, and without that sound the sympathetic strings can get lost.

The Ravish doesn't stop there, offering a sophisticated mode control (the white knob) which you can rotate through a sequence of preset tones or press once to move through key, decay and modulation modes. Of these, the last is the most relevant for bassists,

offering you parameters for tone bending which enables a more realistic sound. You can also hold down the control to set a preset sound of your choice. It's a solid, well-engineered unit, as it should be at £175.

The question is, what is the application for bass players? The Ravish does make a splendidly sitar-esque sound, but fiddle with the mix and tone controls and you'll find a warm, almost overdriven tone which you may find useful. Higher-register melodies benefit most from the sitar emulation for obvious reasons: is there such a thing as a bass sitar? Alternatively, you can roll off the dry and lead signals completely and allow the sympathetic strings to ring out alone: this produces an effect rather like a swell, ringing fully a second or so after you hit the string, and this, believe us, is a beautiful thing. There's even a separate out socket for you to send this portion of the sound to a dedicated amp or channel.

Now, what was that quote about music being the food of love...?

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

RAVISH SITAR PEDAL

PRICE: £175

Made in: USA

Dimensions: 20.3x8.9x17.8cm

Features: Lead and sympathetic level and timbre controls, key and modulation speed of drone, decay length and Q of lead

WHAT WE THINK

It's the best sitar emulator on the market, and offers a surprising amount of versatility.

Plus: The sitar tone is fantastic, looks amazing, rewards setting experimentation.

Minus: Your bandmates might not appreciate you turning all their songs in Ravi Shankar b-sides

Overall: Some may question its necessity, but it's a fun unit that has hidden depth of sound and versatility.

CONTACT DETAILS

Electro-Harmonix

+1 (718) 937 8300

www.ehx.com

BGM RATING OUT OF FIVE

BUILD QUALITY	☆☆☆☆
SOUND QUALITY	☆☆☆☆
VALUE FOR MONEY	☆☆☆☆
OVERALL	☆☆☆☆