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Canadian manufacturer Electrix, a division of IVL Technologies, expands its line of performance-oriented analog effects with the half-rackspace Filter Queen and EQ Killer Modular Performance FX units or MODS. These join the three flagship Performance FX units Electrix introduced last year: the Mo-Fx multi-effects, the Filter Factory stereo filter and the Warp Factory vocoder. The MODS are half the size of the others and just as packed with special effect possibilities for the musician, DJ, remixer or engineer who wants to add an individual performance dynamic to special effect treatments. The Filter Queen and EQ Killer forego the MIDI implementation and the multi-effect capabilities of the Performance units in favor of a more stripped-down and straight-ahead approach: These units diverge from a lot of studio processors by providing quick and extremely striking results for any user at any experience level. High on the instant gratification index, they use large, momentary "engage" buttons to allow you to "play" the effect you have dialed up. You also get smaller latching engage buttons, and both buttons are surrounded by red LEDs for fun.

Filter Queen

The Filter Queen is an analog, stereo high-order filter with digital control. Electrix uses the word "vintage" to describe the filter's traditional synthesizer VCF sound. The Filter Queen uses two 2-pole filters in stereo mode--or you can chain them together for a single 4-pole filter with a push of a back-panel button. I wish the button was on the front panel, but I do like the fact that the unit automatically combines the stereo signals to mono. I also appreciated the

way that the Filter Queen and the EQ Killer are powered by external 16 VAC power supplies that are on the end of AC cords instead of "wall wart" modules that can eat up three available plugs on your plug strip.

There are both RCA and 1/4-inch jacks for line-level left and right inputs and outputs on the back panel, and you can switch to phono inputs for direct connection to a turntable. The unit will handle up to +18 dBu at line level and up to -20 dBV at the phono inputs. Maximum output level is +18 dBu. There are also jacks for foot switch operation of the engage buttons and a jack for an expression pedal such as the Roland EV-5. The external pedal will control the filter frequency for wah-wahing or notch filter sweeps.

There are four filter types on the Filter Queen: lowpass, highpass, bandpass and notch. All filters are 12 dB per octave, or a more pronounced 24 dB per octave in 4-pole mono mode. The filter covers a 12-octave range from 10 to 20k Hz with just a single knob (one of the advantages of digital control). There is a Resonance control with negative values that smooth out the filter just as positive values make frequency changes much more pronounced, right up to feedback whistles. I liked the bandpass for wah-wah or Mutron effects: The notch is deep (in 4-pole) and ends up sounding like a whooshing phaser or flanger effect. The lowpass is great for rolling off superbright sounds, and the highpass is great for "lo-fi" two-way-radiolike effects in which all the low frequencies are taken away. A single, large momentary push button or a latching smaller button switches the effect on and off, and an effects mix control blends the amount of effect with the original signal.

The filter can be manually modulated with the knob or pedal, envelope follower, or LFO. All three modulation methods are possible at the same time for the wackiest effects. The knob is great for just grabbing and twisting at a given moment, as is the pedal for hand-free guitar or keyboard playing. This can be the ultimate wah-wah pedal that you can use for any instrument or prerecorded track.

The envelope filter has just three very effective controls: Depth or threshold, Release time (or the time it takes the filter to return to an unmodulated state) and a Band Select button for choosing any combination of three frequency bands the envelope follower will trigger on. For the most part, I always use All Bands since I want the filter to follow all frequencies. A nice addition would be an external input for the envelope follower, but then the unit would start to compete with much more expensive units like the Sherman FilterBank or the Mustronics Mutator.

The LFO frequency range is from 0.05 to 30 Hz, with five waveforms available. I think the LFO waves chosen make the Filter Queen sound different from other filters I have used. There is no sine wave, and at first I thought this strange, but I soon found the sawtooth wave works the same--just more linear and a little less subtle. The sawtooth and inverse sawtooth waves give you either sudden or slow trailing, edged sweep envelopes, and the square wave is good for an on/off, gating effect. The triangle has a pronounce peak in the middle of the sweep evolution, while the random mode just mixes and matches all the waves together for a chaotic or random modulating effect.

EQ Killer

EQ Killer, the second of the two MODS I reviewed, is a 3-band equalizer with a twist. You can boost the low, mid or high bands up to +6 dB and cut to infinity. Each of the three bands has the large momentary and smaller latching push buttons to "band kill" each band separately. There is another pair of buttons to toggle the entire unit in and out of circuit. Instead of separate frequency controls for each band, the EQ Killer uses two crossover controls called Low X-Over and High X-Over. Low X-Over adjusts from 40 to 2k Hz to set the crossover point between the low- and the mid-band sections. High X-Over adjusts from 200 to 20k Hz for setting the crossover between the mid- and high-band sections. Called me old-fashioned, but I would prefer to just have three separate frequency controls, one for each band--then you could have three distinctly separate EQ sounds ready to go without overlap. I also would have put the momentary engage buttons at the bottom of the front-panel unit instead of in the center, for better access. The EQ Killer also uses RCA jacks only, another problem for me in the studio having to adapt to 1/4-inch or XLRs.

I found the EQ Killer to be really the tool for setting steady-state filter shapes for vocal, synths and percussion sounds. The unit has an effects send loop where the killed bands can be sent to another effect, channel or speaker in the case of club mixer. Like the Filter Queen, the Killer has both input and output bi-colored LED level indicators and power-on LED. The Killer has two sets of inputs you can toggle between or use has a master bypass when only one input is used.

With loads of setup examples in the multilanguage instruction manuals and at Electrix's Web site, both the Filter Queen and EQ Killer offer a lot at \$299 each. With their powerful and unique all-analog processing, these little units should be mainstays in any DJ's or remixer's rack.

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