







**1 QUEEN**  
The Queen knob controls the pedal's harmony level

**2 DRONE**  
The drone control handles the sub harmony level

**3 SPECIES**  
The species knob selects the Swarm's harmony interval

# BEETRONICS SWARM £270

I, for one, welcome our new robotic bee overlords

**B**eetronics are known for their impressive-looking enclosures and cool designs, so it should come as no surprise that their latest and greatest, the Swarm, should be a looker. Besides being visually fantastic, it's also well-built; it feels heavy enough to throw clean through a partition wall, and the PCBs inside are small works of art, with a custom-cut honeycomb shape and an

harmonies available – the 'drone' pot is for the sub-harmony, and the 'queen' pot is for the regular harmony. Finally, to select the harmony interval, there's a large central rotary control labelled 'species'. While we've got to admire Beetronics' commitment to their theme, these aren't the most obvious names, and we found ourselves referring back to the manual card a lot. In terms of sounds,

most was a sub-harmony heavy sound that reminded us of the MXR Blue Box, as used by Jimmy Page on the solo for *Fool in the Rain*. Messing around with the less high-pitched sounds proved to be more profitable, even if there are still only really lead tones on offer.

The thing that's closest to the Swarm, to our mind, would be a Z-Vex Fuzz Factory, although compared to the Swarm the Fuzz Factory is almost conventional. There are other analogue pedals with interesting octave behaviour like the DIY TMK Fuzz, but this again is somewhat more pedestrian and you'll have to build it yourself. As for the Swarm, it looks beautiful and it does its one thing with genuine panache – the only question is whether you can justify dedicating precious pedal real-estate on your board to an effect that's this niche.

**Alex Lynham**

## THE CORE OF THE PEDAL IS A DECENT SINGLE-KNOB FUZZ

elaborate print on the upper face.

At its core, the Swarm is an analogue fuzz with a harmoniser. That said, it isn't a simple pedal – there's six controls on the upper face and a knob on the side as well. The side control is the master volume, while the fuzz knob is marked 'worker'. The 'flight' and 'sting' controls are highly sensitive pots that control the modulation applied to the harmony notes, with the 'sting' focused on the tracking. Meanwhile, there's two different

the core of the pedal is a decent single-knob fuzz, with the additional harmony controls pushing it more towards noisemaker territory. It's exciting when the Swarm glides up to a note behind the one you're playing, for sure, but it's not really usable for rhythm playing. We found a number of the harmony options exciting for unusual, squealing lead lines, though the pitch glide effect is something of a one-trick pony. The sound we returned to the

### AT A GLANCE

**POWER:** 9V DC  
centre-negative  
**BYPASS:** True bypass  
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SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★