

MORPHEUS

Digital Capo



Morpheus follow on the heels of its digital DropTune stomp box with an incredible digital capo...

Words: Tim Slater

It's a much under-rated gadget, the dear old capo. Inexpensive and small enough to slip unobtrusively into a guitar case or even your pocket, a capo lets you change key instantly on your guitar without having to shift to an awkward position on the fingerboard. However, a conventional capo can be tricky to rapidly adjust and their clamping effect on the strings also means that your tuning can be compromised.

But what if you wanted a capo that could not only let you change key instantly without fear of going out of tune but it could also simulate a 12-string guitar with uncanny accuracy? Step forward Morpheus, whose new digital capo claims to transform your standard six-string into a 12-string whilst also rendering onstage key changes with pinpoint accuracy.

Lock down

The Morpheus capo is an unassuming stomp box whose low profile and on-slip rubber feet means that it is equally at home either as a standalone pedal or incorporated into a pedal board. Mains powered, the unit comes with a wall wart mains PSU and a rather scant multi-lingual manual whose brief explanations regarding the capo's various functions I assumed, wrongly as it turned out, reflected a rather limited range of features. However, one area where the manual is absolutely essential is the set up guide: there isn't really much that can go wrong but we'd still recommend that you at least cast an eye over the manual's useful tips regarding setting the correct balance between your amplifier level and the pedal's outgoing line level signal. The large digital display depicts a guitar fretboard ranging from the first to the seventh frets, with illuminated dot position markers to indicate which virtual fret the digital capo is positioned over. Three heavy-duty steel footswitches switch the pedal on or off and toggle up and down in half-step increments starting from F, progressing in three-and-a-half steps all the way to B above an open E chord. The display also indicates when the pedal's 12-string and octave modes are active.

In Use

We mentioned earlier that it's useful to read the manual first and here's why: when the pedal was first switched on there was

a distinctly uncomfortable sound caused by leakage of the guitar's dry (unaffected) signal clashing with the processed faux-capo effect, which sounded like a badly adjusted pitch shifter pedal. Don't panic! This is easily corrected by balancing your amplifier's volume control with the Capo's line level output control – hey presto – everything is now functioning just fine. In fact, once sorted the Capo's tracking and general performance is very impressive indeed, with no trace of digital artifacts nor the slightest hint of Auto-Tune style glitches. The capo'd sounds feel a little disconcerting if you are in an environment quiet enough where you can hear your guitar's strings resonating in their standard tuning but if your amp is loud enough or in isolation the effects are very good, responding equally well to strumming and picked notes. A quick observation regarding tuning: the Capo will work regardless of how you tune your guitar; whether you play in standard tuning, DADGAD, open E or any non standard tuning, the Capo seems to track your playing with no discernable problems.

The 12-string mode demonstrates the Capo's sophisticated algorithms particularly well, the pitch-shifted notes accurately simulate a 12-string guitar tuning: the strings from low E to G are split between the original note and an octave above, whilst the B and high E are doubled up. It sounds pretty good, the only slightly odd thing that you notice is the lack

of natural resonance that you expect from a real 12-string guitar but insofar as the aural impression goes, it sounds pretty convincing. Whilst 12-string mode may negate the need to lug a 12-string guitar to gigs, some might argue that this takes away some of the fun. Personally, I'd rather trade an unwieldy 12-string for one of these compact stomp boxes unless the event demanded some kind of visual element where a pukka 12-string guitar was essential. Otherwise, one of these will do a great job of stepping into the breach. The Capo will also track an octave above the guitar's original pitch, which adds an extra pinch of frisson to a spiraling arpeggio; jump onto the pedal halfway through a lick and the octave leaps sound very dramatic and highly effective. **PM**

SHOULD I BUY ONE?

At this price you'd need to be fairly committed to the idea of buying an expensive pedal that you are most likely only going to use once or twice during a live set. Still, weighing up this pedal's great performance, plus the practicalities of tucking one of these in your live rig as opposed to lugging a 12-string guitar to a gig does seem to go some way towards justifying the initial outlay.

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SRP £162.99

All prices include VAT

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