

THE WAH PROBE by Z. Vex Effects

This effect is a natural continuation of the probe series... the fuzz factory probe, the volume control/manual tremolo probe, and now a wah. It's probably exactly what you think it is: a theremin-style antenna controlling a wah, getting brighter as your foot approaches. It has one extra feature, however. There's a Super Hard-On boost circuit in front of the wah, with a knob to set the exact level of boost for driving your wah sound. It can be turned up high enough to make the wah crack up a little for that "something's gonna blow" sound. It gets pretty darn loud!

How it works:

The probe circuit generates a small (one or two inches high) "bubble" of RF energy at about a million cycles per second above the copper plate. The intensity of this energy is thousands of times SMALLER than that coming from a cell phone. As your foot or hand (or any wet or metallic object, for that matter) approaches the copper plate, the RF field is disturbed and the circuit reacts by increasing the brightness of an LED, which drives a photoresistive cell and controls the Z. Vex wah circuit. The wah circuit is actually the Seek-Wah sound circuit without the sequencer control. It's also the same wah circuit as the one in The Drip guitar that I make. The only difference is the boost circuit in this Wah Probe model.

Adjustments:

The simplest one of these is the volume level of the "drive" knob... just set it so that when you kick on the wah it's doing its stuff at the right intensity. It goes from slightly lower than the normal guitar volume to completely bonkers when turned up all the way. I personally don't think it's necessary to turn it up all the way, in fact, it seems to pretty much obliterate the wah sound, but, to each his own. Abuse those transistors, please!

The next adjustment is the RF field screwdriver adjustment on the bottom of the pedal. If you turn it in the direction of the arrow (usually to the left for that one) it will make the probe circuit more sensitive and set the "bottom" setting of the wah higher and higher. It's best to hold the pedal completely upside down so that the cords are dangling away from the antenna, with your hand and arm completely away from the antenna, and strum your guitar's open strings (you probably have to have it on a stand or strapped on) thru the Wah Probe. Gently adjust the RF pot with a tiny screwdriver in the direction of the arrow until you hear the wah get to the level you'd like it to be when you are not putting your foot near it. There's a region where the sound of the guitar is kind of "muffled" and the wah kicks in after your foot gets near the pedal, which is how I ship the unit. If you like the wah to be partway cocked into the lower wah region just park the adjustment right where you like it. As you get closer to the unit, it will wah higher.

The other adjustment isn't too intense... it's the LED current control. You can usually leave this one at exactly halfway. That's how I usually ship the unit. If you think the wah is too bright when your foot is all the way on it, just turn this control to the left to make it a little duller at the top end. I ship it so that with a pair of heavy Doc Martins (the rock and roll shoe of choice for many musicians) my foot will make it go from muffled to very bright.

Battery:

The unit works well with any kind of nine-volt battery. Naturally, a nice alkaline cell will last quite a bit longer than a carbon-zinc one, but some people are completely sold on the sound of the higher voltage output from a carbon-zinc unit when it is brand new. To change the battery, unscrew the four screws on the underside of the painted box. Iiiieeee! Look at that wacky circuit! Carefully lift out the old battery and replace it with a new one exactly as it was installed, with the clip toward the right as you look at the bottom when the plastic and copper footpedal part is aiming toward you and the painted box is further away. Does that make sense? ENJOY! If you have any problems be sure to contact me.

-Zack

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