

Tech reviews: DL4 MkII Delay and Looper Pedal

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When Line 6 originally released the DL4 Delay Modeller in 1999, it combined a wide array of delay types including vintage tape echo, analogue tube echo and reverse delay with a built-in looper. Its appeal was immediate: it offered sonic variety in a single stompbox, at a price and in a size that made it accessible for students and performers alike. It helped many to understand the timbral differences among echo units, saturated analogue delays, slapback echoes, and more experimental textures, all with physical knobs and footswitches to manipulate in real time.

The DL4's looper function, though limited by today's standards, was especially celebrated. With around 14 seconds of loop time,

halfspeed, and reverse overdubs, it became a creative instrument rather than just an effect. It was used not only by guitarists in rock, indie, ambient and experimental settings, but by performers such as Reggie Watts, who incorporated it into stand-up, spoken word, and music hybrid performances.

Teachers can point to the original DL4 as a pedagogical example: understanding timing, subdivision, phrase looping, foot coordination, listening and layering are all crucial musical skills. It also proved that effects can be more than add-ons; they can become part of performance practice.

MkII: Legacy models and HX algorithms

Line 6's DL4 MkII honours the original's heritage, while adding modern advances. Key enhancements include:

- **Legacy Delays:** the MkII includes all the original DL4 delay models, now presented as Legacy Delays, so those sounds are preserved. The layout of knobs and footswitches stays largely the same for familiarity.
- **New HX delays:** 15 new delay models drawn from Line 6's HX family join the originals. These include Glitch Delay, Euclidian Delay, Harmony Delay, Pitch Echo and ADT Tape Delay. These algorithms bring greater versatility with sonic textures that are more complex, experimental, and up to date.
- **Expanded looping capabilities:** both a 4-Switch classic looper and a simpler 1-Switch looper are included. The maximum loop recording time is up to 240 seconds in mono or its stereo equivalent, with extended times available when using a microSD card. Loops can also be stored between power cycles.
- **Bypass options, presets and MIDI:** the MkII adds true, buffered or DSP bypass modes, MIDI In and Out/Thru, preset banks with

up to 128 slots via MIDI, expression and footswitch inputs, and updated footswitches with LED rings. These features help integrate the pedal into more complex rigs.

The XLR mic input and other features

One of the more significant new physical features is the XLR dynamic microphone input. In the original DL4, performers wishing to loop or process vocals had to use external preamps, mixers or converters. With the MkII, a dynamic microphone can be connected directly. For teaching, live performance or solo acts, this matters. Vocal looping, beatboxing and spoken word become more straightforward.

Other refinements include a smaller and lighter design, more rugged footswitches with LED status indicators, and added inputs for expression pedals or external footswitches, offering greater performance control.

Educational and practical implications

For music teachers, the DL4 MkII offers several pedagogical opportunities:

- Sound comparison: comparing legacy and HX models helps students studying Music Technology at A Level to understand how delay effects evolved, with reference to historical units such as tape echoes, analogue bucket-brigade devices and early digital delays. This gives insight into effect design, timbre, and how modern modelling emulates and extends what was possible before.
- Looping as composition: the expanded looping time and flexibility make it possible to explore layering, counterpoint and

texture in performance or composition classes.

- Performance practice: the XLR input, MIDI control and preset features mean students can integrate this pedal into different setups across solo, ensemble, stage, and studio contexts.
- Creativity and improvisation: following in the footsteps of Reggie Watts, Bill Frisell, and Radiohead, one can use the DL4 as a sonic sketchpad.

Conclusion

The DL4 MkII is more than a revision; it is a re-imagining that respects the original's legacy while expanding its creative potential. It preserves what made the DL4 beloved, including its variety of delays, looper and physical immediacy, while introducing HX algorithms, better vocal integration, modern control options, and far greater memory. For teachers, performers, and students it is both a tool to teach the fundamentals of delay, looping and live effect manipulation, and a device capable of inspiring new techniques. Crucially, in the UK the DL4 MkII is currently available at around £185 to £195, compared with the Boss DD500 at closer to £300 and the Strymon Timeline at around £400. This makes the DL4 MkII a particularly strong value choice for educational use and professional performance alike.

- [Line 6 DL4 MkII Delay and Looper Pedal, Price: £185–£195](#)