



Pedaltrain Pro, Pedaltrain 2 & Pedaltrain Junior

£249, £169, £79

When you're serious about your pedals you've got to get a serious pedal board. Pedaltrain has the answer by Benji Bartlett

When Pedaltrain first hit these shores back in the winter of 2002, its arrival brought about a bit of a revolution in the ol' stompbox community. Many players had made the return to single-effect pedals after ditching the bulky tone-sucking rack gear and all-singing multi-FX of the preceding decade. Trouble was, to fully appreciate and enjoy the sonic purity of all these bespoke FX 'separates', a bit of old marine ply and some black

carpet was definitely starting to look a little passé. And let's face it, unless you're particularly handy with a drill and screwdriver, homemade pedalboards can look hit and miss. What was needed was a neat solution to the posh pedal portability problem: and preferably, something practical and stylish.

Thankfully, Tennessee's J Chandler Co came to the rescue with a simple yet effective remedy to the stompbox



PEDALTRAIN JR	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
WE LIKED Compact and portable WE DISLIKED Flimsy case and skinny shoulder strap	

blues: the Pedaltrain. The concept was simple enough: to offer pedal junkies a solid framework board with plenty of gaps for wire to hide in, and a sturdy case to cart it all about in. As we said at the time, the Pedaltrain was no cheap fix, nor was it an all-encompassing pedal station with a power supply and cables included. What it did deliver, however, was a stylish, sturdy and functional blank canvas upon which to create your own pedal board.

The sheer numbers of Pedaltrains we've encountered at gigs and when interviewing players is testament to just how quickly the product's potential has been embraced by the guitar community. So what's changed three years down the line?

Well, the chaps at Pedaltrain have expanded the range to include a miniature gig-bag version called the Pedaltrain Junior which, they say, "is ideal for the quick weekend jam". At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Pedaltrain Pro seems massive and the ATA (Air Transport Association) -approved flight case caters for the pro user. This mammoth pedalboard should be spacious enough even for pro pedal pushers such as Vai and Satriani, and with an extra compartment for tools, strings and what have you, it's imposing bulk is squarely aimed at being the complete gigging companion.

Pedaltrain Junior

Kicking off with the baby of the trio, the Pedaltrain Junior features the same indestructible powder-coated aluminium alloy framework as its older siblings. Its smaller dimensions still allow space for approximately eight compact pedals, but with the current trend for larger units like Line 6's modelling pedals or Electro-Harmonix's crazy tube-powered creations, you're probably looking at around four or five pedals plus a power supply and cabling. Improvements to the frame itself include a quartet of heavy-duty rubber feet riveted to the underside to help



prevent onstage slippage, and there's a none-more-black paintjob.

The nylon gig-bag features a lockable zip (you'll need to invest in a padlock separately) and an internal pocket to keep your lyrics and your copy of Guitarist in. A bundle of re-usable cable ties and a basic instruction sheet are supplied so you can work from a visual guide of, for example, the neatest way to keep your leads tidy once you've connected up all your pedals. Also included in the case are the necessary rolls of industrial strength hook-and-loop fastening tape to fix your stompers to the board. It makes little difference whether you decide to have the hooks or the loops of the Velcro on the board, unless of course you already have a Pedaltrain and prepared pedals. Make sure you check before you peel off the backing tape to avoid frustration.

Compared to the super-strength construction of the new Pedaltrain 2,

the junior's modest nylon satchel seems somewhat flimsy. It lacks the security and sense of proper protection you get from the flight-cased versions, and without a little extra foam padding in the lid we'd be worried about the safety of our electronic noise-making chums, however brief the journey to the jam. The Junior also features a skinny shoulder strap that fails to inspire confidence. It's a matter of priorities, of course, but if we were just taking our own small selection of pedals off for a weekend jam we'd opt for the bigger, safer Pedaltrain 2.

Pedaltrain 2

A revised Pedaltrain sees our favourite pedalboard gaining a few millimetres to accommodate even more pedals than its predecessor. It's wearing the same rubber shoes and black paint found throughout the range.

The most noticeable difference is the case itself, which is an altogether sturdier affair. It's fair to say that the Pedaltrain 2 case has been given a shot →

PEDALTRAIN 2	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
WE LIKED Great results fast; easy to set-up; ultra practical WE DISLIKED That carry handle needs bulking up; bashing it on your calves	



PEDALTRAIN PRO

PRICE: £249
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Powder-coated aluminium pedalboard in flight case trolley
PEDALBOARD: Lightweight, powder coated aluminium alloy frame
FIXINGS: Industrial grade Velcro (supplied), re-usable cable ties
DIMENSIONS: Pedal Board: 76 (h) x 813 (w) x 406mm (d); Flight Case: 228 (h) x 990 (w) x 483mm (d)
WEIGHT (KG/LB): Pedalboard 3.2/7; Case 15/33
FLIGHTCASE: ATA-rated case with heavy-duty butterfly catches
ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Interior storage compartment. Flip out end-handle. Low-profile wheels
Sounds Great Music
0161 436 4799
www.soundsgreatmusic.com
www.pedaltrain.com

PEDALTRAIN 2

PRICE: £169
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Powder-coated aluminium pedalboard in flight case
PEDALBOARD: Lightweight, powder-coated aluminium alloy frame
FIXINGS: Industrial grade Velcro (supplied)
DIMENSIONS: Pedal Board: 51 (h) x 610 (w) x 305mm (d); Flight Case: 203 (h) x 648 (w) x 457mm (d)
WEIGHT (KG/LB): Pedalboard 1.81/4; Case 7.25/16
FLIGHTCASE: ATA-rated case with heavy-duty butterfly catches

PEDALTRAIN JUNIOR

PRICE: £79
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Powder-coated aluminium pedalboard in gigbag
PEDALBOARD: Lightweight, powder-coated aluminium alloy frame
FIXINGS: Industrial grade Velcro (supplied)
DIMENSIONS: Pedal Board: 51 (h) x 432 (w) x 318mm (d); Gigbag: 127 (h) x 483 (w) x 381mm (d)
WEIGHT (KG/LB): Pedalboard 1.36/3; Gigbag 0.45/1
CASE: Lightweight nylon gigbag with shoulder strap and inner pocket

EFFECTS

The rivals

Tour Master Cases
PB-01 £200
Warwick Gigboard
£129.99
BOSS BCB-60 £99
The TM's 10mm ply and black ABS laminate construction is seriously strong, and with interior dimensions of 140 (h) x 749 (w) x 495mm (d), there's bags of room for all your stompers. There's even storage space below the pedal board for cables, strings etc, and foam padding in the lid to prevent pedal movement when in transit. Warwick's Gigboard comes with everything you need to gig right away. The internal power supply has enough juice for five 9V and one 12V effect unit, plus the case comes complete with a set of DC cords with plugs for coaxial, mini-jack and a 9V battery clip for the maximum pedal compatibility. For smaller set-ups, the powered BOSS BCB-60 is both compact and convenient. It easily houses six pedals and a guitar tuner, and has enough room inside to store small accessories

PEDALTRAIN PRO	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
■ WE LIKED Spacious, strong, practical and suitably excessive	
■ WE DISLIKED Having to fork out extra for a Pedaltrain roadie	

→ in the arm in terms of its structural integrity. The new case is deeper and bulkier than its predecessor, which is good news for accommodating unwieldy bespoke pedals, but as far as carrying them about is concerned, it's a less pleasurable experience than the first-generation Pedaltrain case. The handle could definitely do with a wider girth and more cushioning. Even when empty, the case is uncomfortable to move around and the handle feels like it's giving you blisters before you start walking. We can only guess at how uncomfortable the situation will become with a fully loaded case. It seems peculiar that the one component you're likely to have a lot of contact with is a little on the lean side.

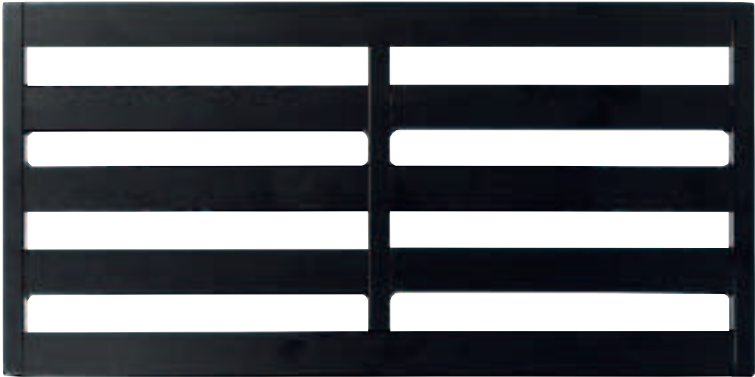
On a brighter note, what this case lacks in the finesse and clean lines of its predecessor, it more than makes up for in sheer ruggedness. It weighs in at 2.3kg heavier (unladen) than the old model as a result of the length increase, so be aware if you already suffer from roadie's back...

The system for attachment is exactly the same as before, with the aid of Velcro and a bunch of re-usable cable ties. We can't fault the case for roadworthiness – it's so solid – but it would've been good to have seen some foam padding in the lid, which could be shaped and modified by the user. After all, you don't want your precious sonic playthings rattling round in transit.

Pedaltrain Pro

The coffin-shaped dimensions of Pedaltrain Pro are almost enough to give you a hernia on sight. Make no mistake, here is a pedalboard of monolithic proportions that could strike fear into all but the most passionate of pedal fiends. If, for example, you've got a pedal collection to rival the likes of our resident effects guru, Ace, then this could be the board you've been waiting for.

Witness the fully loaded, first-generation Pedaltrain pedal board in full effect



The Pedaltrain 2 case offers greatly improved structural integrity, and is deeper and bulkier than its predecessor; good news for accommodating unwieldy bespoke pedals

There's enough room on this baby to house everything you need... and quite a lot more besides. Okay, for the average Joe, this board is complete overkill, and many pro players could easily get by with a more manageably proportioned plank, but if you're a serious sonic experimenter like John Frusciante or Omar from The Mars Volta, this is the only way you're going to be able to have all your favourite toys in front of you at every gig.

The Pedaltrain Pro's case is the epitome of heavy duty, and is hewn from the same stuff that greets us backstage every time we interview an artist at a venue. The industry-standard butterfly latches that keep it securely fastened are smooth, robust and very positive in operation, while the extruded aluminium and ball corner protectors will probably outlast us all.

Verdict

As someone who uses the original Pedaltrain on an almost daily basis, this reviewer was a little disappointed with the Pedaltrain 2. For this kind of money you'd expect a more comfortable carry handle for starters, and this new incarnation has lost some of the magic and style of the original product. Sure, it's practical and well built, but if

that were the only thing guitar players cared about, we'd probably all only ever play Telecasters.

The Junior model is the most disappointing of the trio. With so many great hard/soft cases and gigbags available for instruments, we'd have hoped that Pedaltrain would have used an expanded polypropylene (EPP) like Godin's Fort guitar cases, or at least some sort of thicker foam padding.

The Pedaltrain Pro on the other hand is a much more attractive prospect. It delivers exactly what you want in a do-it-yourself stage pedalboard: ample space, visual impact, rugged protection and practicality. While there's certainly nothing wrong with the Pedaltrain 2 in terms of its functionality, or the Junior's easy portability (and, of course, its affordability), it's the Pedaltrain Pro that really stands out here. If you're looking to move vast quantities of outboard gear about in a convenient and practical package, the Pedaltrain Pro is your final destination. **B**

Pedaltrain Pro	
Guitarist RATING	★★★★★
Pedaltrain 2	
Guitarist RATING	★★★★★
Pedaltrain Jr	
Guitarist RATING	★★★★★