

# IK Multimedia AmpliTube 3 £279



It's third time lucky for IK's most versatile and best-sounding AmpliTube yet *by Trevor Curwen*

**A**nounced at the NAMM show in January, AmpliTube 3 is a major upgrade to the amp and effects software with nearly 100 more gear models than version 2, a new cabinet/room module with freely movable mics and a revised SpeedTrainer phrase trainer/recorder module, which now features four tracks.

Some of the of gear models in the expanded set have been seen before, as IK has incorporated the models previously only available in AmpliTube Metal and AmpliTube Jimi Hendrix into the main program. There are however, still over 30 that are brand spanking new. These include five new 'creative' effects – StepFilter, StepSlicer, TapDelay, Rezo and Swell – that exist in both stomp and rack versions, plus a new rotary speaker simulation based on a vintage Leslie 147, using IK's VRM technology (Volumetric Response Modelling). There are also some new modelled amps and stompboxes, but more on these later...

Other changes include the ability to reconfigure your pedalboard and rack effects chain by dragging and dropping the effect into its new position rather than choosing an effect for a particular slot as previously. The mono and stereo configurations of the rig have also had an update – a full stereo-chain signal path has been implemented, so if you're using AmpliTube 3 as a plug-in on a recording you can now use it as a full stereo multi-effects unit on every instrument. Plus you can now use AmpliTube 3 on two instruments simultaneously, each one with its own rig.

Under the bonnet there are other improvements in terms of more efficient use of computer power. IK says that it has

greatly enhanced the CPU usage efficiency of all the new models and 'remastered' the legacy models in order to be more efficient, releasing computational resources for other tasks. To get the best balance between sound quality and CPU usage you can now choose one of three modes (eco, mid and hi), which respectively give you the minimal possible CPU usage, a good-sounding medium set-up and the best possible quality.

## In use

Using AmpliTube 3 for the first time, the difference from the previous version is immediately apparent in the speed you get things done. Firstly there's a new preset browser with better organisational hierarchy and the ability for presets to be saved and recalled with user-defined keywords and attributes. Secondly, creating your rig's signal chain and moving effects around on the virtual pedalboard is so much more simple and intuitive using the drag-and-drop capability.

Up until this release, you had to use AmpliTube X-Gear as a shell program if you wished to combine models from the various AmpliTube versions. What IK has done is to incorporate that role into this new version of the main program, so that all the models can now be used directly within the AmpliTube 3 structure. The only models currently missing from the package are the 'branded' collections – AmpliTube Fender and Ampeg SVX – which can be added as and when you like, but future releases of individual models may be in the pipeline.

The new models – there are a range of amps not seen here before, notably an Orange, Roland JC-120, Mesa/Boogie Mk III, a copper panel AC30 and bass amps from Gallien-

Kruger, Trace Elliot and Acoustic – all sound nicely authentic, as do the previously seen models (all reworked from the ground up). In a direct comparison with AmpliTube 2, the amps in 3 exhibited a higher level of detail in their sound while the improved dynamic response in 3 feels extremely natural and much closer to playing through a real amp.

The seven different fuzzboxes and 11 overdrive/distortion effects combined with the amps offer plenty of variation in tone before you even start looking at modulation and ambience effects, and there's plenty of subtle nuance available to be dialled into the overall sound courtesy of the new speaker module. This allows you to choose and blend the sound of two close mics for the virtual speaker cab and to set their distance from the speaker and their position across the radius of the cone – the only thing that you can't do that a recording engineer might is to tilt them at an angle.

In addition you get two mics for room ambience that can be positioned to add realistic reverb for five virtual spaces from closet to hall. There are

Using AmpliTube 3 for the first time, the difference from the previous version is immediately apparent in the speed you get things done



Creating your signal chain and moving effects is much easier in AmpliTube 3

## The Rivals

**Native Instruments' Guitar Rig Pro 4** (€179, software only) offers a versatile modular approach to amp and effects modelling.

**Peavey's Revalver 3.5** (£TBA) lets you tinker with the amp's internals. The latest version adds nine new amp and effects models and will be released later this year. Version 2 of **Line 6's POD Amp Farm** software has recently been released. It offers the sounds of the hardware POD series in software. The Platinum version (from \$249) has the largest number of models.

a wide variety of speaker cabs to choose from including the new rotary speaker, which offers an impressive rendition of the complex changing sound of the real thing.

New stompboxes include models of the E-HX Small Stone phaser and Electric Mistress flanger, Marshall Guv'nor overdrive and an Ibanez WH-10 wah, then there are the creative effects...

AmpliTube was always about more conventional and classic guitar tones rather than the esoteric, but these new effects can add another dimension to that. Rezo can add synth-like drones and sustaining resonances to your sound with four resonating voices that can each be tuned to different notes. The StepFilter and StepSlicer can both chop up the sound to create rhythmic effects – the former with filtered effects not unlike the sequencer on an analogue synth, while the latter can create complex tremolos. Swell swells your notes in for a violining effect while the TapDelay provides eight independent repeats, each with its own delay time and other adjustable parameters, making it a great tool for creating really complex echoes or emulating



The Orange model is one of several new amps to feature

the exact head spacing on vintage multi-head tape delays – Shadows fans take note.

So, a bunch of great sounds both as plug-ins for recording in your DAW and for practising when using AmpliTube in standalone mode – the practising aspect has also been greatly improved with the new Speedtrainer, where the extra recording tracks mean that you can create a more complex

arrangement for practice if you like. It's also a quick and easy aid for songwriting.

### Verdict

By their very nature, software amp and effects modelling programs are open-ended works-in-progress that can only get better with each update, and AmpliTube 3 is a case in point.

What was already a great resource has been transformed into a much better one by a well-thought-out revamp. If you haven't yet invested in this type of thing you won't go far wrong with AmpliTube 3 – it's a particular bargain in the StealthPedal version. For current users it's a must-have upgrade, particularly if you haven't yet got the Jimi Hendrix and Metal versions. Roll on version four... **G**



AmpliTube 3 lets you place cabinet mics wherever you please

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** New models greatly expand tonal range, practical recording and phrase training facilities; comprehensive cabinet mic placement facility

**We dislike:** More factory presets for each individual effect (model presets) would be good

**Guitarist says:** A major upgrade to one of the best amp and FX software packages... and it's a corker!



## IK Multimedia AmpliTube 3

**PRICE:** £279

**ORIGIN:** Italy

**FORMATS SUPPORTED:** Audio Units, VST, RTAS (Mac OS X) – VST, RTAS (Windows XP/Vista)

**COMPUTER SYSTEM**

**REQUIREMENTS:** Mac or PC – See IK website for full details

**AMPS:** 31

**CABINETS:** 46

**MICROPHONES:** 15

**STOMPBOXES:** 51

**RACK EFFECTS:** 17

**EXTRAS:** Tuner, four-track recorder/player with independent time stretch/pitch shift, metronome

**UPGRADE PRICING:** AmpliTube 3 crossgrade, for all IK-registered owners – £206. AmpliTube 3 upgrade, for registered AmpliTube owners only – £131

**RANGE OPTIONS:** AmpliTube 3 Pedal, includes StealthPedal (£309)

**IK Multimedia**

**0800 093 4066**

**www.amplitude.com**



### Test results

<b>Build quality</b>	★★★★★
<b>Features</b>	★★★★★
<b>Sound</b>	★★★★★
<b>Value for money</b>	★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★