



VOX MINI3 £95  
GUITAR AMPS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOE BRANSTON

## Vox MINI3 £95

A battery-powered modelling combo that's at home in the rehearsal space or on the street *by Simon Bradley*

**T**his new mains and battery amp from Vox takes the open-ended, effects-laden portable amp concept of the DA range and extends it to include 11 amp models adapted from the excellent Valvetronix range.

Amp models comprise the usual suspects, such as AC30TB US Hi-Gain and UK Eighties, as well as an additional Line option, which provides a totally clean signal for use with acoustic instruments and even keyboards or drum machines.

The layout of the front panel is simple and uncluttered. An 11-way rotary chicken head pot acts as the model selector and a familiar complement of master, tone and gain controls allow you to make tonal adjustments. If using the Line model, the gain and tone pots switch their function to regulating bass and treble respectively.

There's a choice of four delays and reverbs, plus a further quartet of effects that, unusually, includes a compressor as well as chorus,

flanger and tremolo. The tap button enables you to set the speed of the delay and decay of the reverb and, when held, it doubles as a rudimentary but perfectly serviceable tuner: it only recognises E, but does so anywhere on the neck.

The Line option provides a totally clean signal for use with acoustic instruments and even keyboards and drum machines

### The Rivals

The ultimate acoustic busker's amp has to be the dual-channel **AER Compact 60 Mobile** (£1,149), which comes complete with onboard delay and reverbs. **Line 6's** battery-driven **Micro Spider** (£99) offers four amp models and six Smart FX options, while **Roland's Cube Street** (£245) provides eight COSM amps, six digital effects, and a chromatic tuner.



The mic channel includes an independent 6.4mm standard jack input, plus a trim or volume pot and level control for the delay/reverb. If you've set up a tape echo for your guitar, that's what you'll hear on this channel too, and the remaining effects aren't applicable.

### Sounds

In practical use, the MINI3 is certainly easy to lug about thanks to its removable carry strap and, with the amp in one hand and your guitar in the other hand, you're good to go.

We'd assume that most buskers would use an acoustic guitar to accompany their singing, so we took the Washburn WD55SCE that's reviewed on page 114, dug out our Oasis songbook and got to work. We set up the Line model with a touch of compression and spring reverb for the acoustic and were immediately impressed by how pokey the combo is. The tone controls work well in sculpting the inherent zing of the guitar's piezo pickup and balancing its output with that of our ropey vocals took mere moments.



The built-in amps and effects are a nice, useful addition

Even though the front baffle features a small circular port, this is hardly a full range cabinet, and the actual sound coming from the five-inch speaker is, when compared to more advanced acoustic amps at least, somewhat flat and boxy.

Turning to an electric, we feel that the cleaner tones are better suited for outdoor use, as they project more efficiently than those soaked in drive. Both the BTQ Clean and AC30TB models work well for clear arpeggiated passages, while Black 2 x 12 and AC15 allows you to throw a little additional mid into the mix. Add some slow flanger to the latter and you're in Andy Summers territory, and impressively so.

Vox tells us that battery life can run up to 10 hours, although our example started to struggle after seven or so, but a PSU is included when a mains outlet is nearby.

### Verdict

As a busking amp, the MINI3 has the sounds and functionality to demand attention and is pokey enough to allow both you and your

High Street audience to hear what you're playing. Two local buskers we spoke to weren't too concerned about specific amp models, but we think they're a useful feature and will help attract attention and, ultimately, cash.

If heartily strumming away in public, either with a singing mate or simply along to some backing tracks, is your game the MINI3 is well worth a look. And when you come back to your rehearsal or practice room, it continues to have uses that outstrip its competitive price tag. That prime spot outside Millets awaits...

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Portability; range of amps and effects; easy to use; mic channel

**We disliked:** A little noisy; certain sounds are pretty flat

**Guitarist says:** Busking can be great fun, and this will certainly let you sound good while entertaining the public. It can double as a decent tabletop tone generator too

We feel that the cleaner tones are better suited for outdoor use, as they project more efficiently



### Vox MINI3

**PRICE:** £95.99

**ORIGIN:** Vietnam

**TYPE:** Portable modelling guitar combo

**OUTPUT:** 3 watts RMS

**DIMENSIONS:** 262 (w) x 174 (d) x 223mm (h)

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.8/6.17

**AMP MODELS:** 11

**EFFECTS:** 8

**CHANNELS:** Two (guitar and microphone)

**CONTROLS:** 11-way rotary model selector, gain, tone and master for guitar channel, trim, delay/reverb send level for mic channel, compressor and modulation effects rotary selector, delay/reverb rotary selector

**SPEAKER:** Vox Original, five-inch

**POWER:** Vox AC 12V adaptor (included) or six AA batteries

**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:**

Removable carry strap, auxiliary input, headphone jack, tap button and E-note tuner

**OPTIONS:** Available in black (as reviewed), vintage ivory and British racing green

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**www.voxamps.com**

### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Features** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★