

TC-Helicon VoiceLive 2 | £665

Are stompboxes for guitarists alone? TC-Helicon don't think so and neither does **Jono Buchanan**, who unleashes his inner diva...



WHAT IS IT?

A multi-effect stompbox targeted at, but not limited to, live vocal performance

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 A genuinely inspiring tool
- 2 Intelligent harmony creation a real joy
- 3 Huge sophistication coupled with ease of use



Think of stomp-box multi-effects units and you're bound to conjure up an image of a guitarist,

slamming down on distortion or fuzz pedals to enhance performance throughout a track. For some reason, a vocal-targeted equivalent has taken longer to catch on but with artists including Imogen Heap and Björk now reliant on guitar-like real-time processing, it's perhaps no surprise that at least one company has been paying attention.

It's no surprise that that company is TC-Helicon, if you consider their history in vocal processing. VoiceLive 2 could just revolutionise vocal performances coming soon to a stage near you. Featuring multi-effects, intelligent on-board algorithms and huge flexibility, this is a processor designed to inspire and delight.

Going live

At the heart of VoiceLive 2 is a collection of real-time effects processors which can be 'stomped' on and off, guitar-style. Each preset or user-created program features up to six of these modules simultaneously and there is real sophistication here, with effects including auto-tune style pitch correction, voice doubling and intelligent Harmonization, of which more shortly. Additionally, Delay and Reverb modules provide a range of spatial effects to enhance these more obviously 'vocal' algorithms.

The design of VoiceLive 2 is superb – as well as the stomp switches for each effect, foot-controlled preset navigation is offered, as is a Shortcut foot-switch which activates a user-defined parameter for each preset, to allow you to interact with an additional sound control in real-time. A

bright, back-lit LCD display at the top keeps you in touch with preset parameters and if you want in-depth editing, this is offered via four rotaries below the screen which correspond to the parameters shown.

The rear panel offers remarkable flexibility, with microphone, line level, guitar and 3.5mm input sources, balanced stereo XLR, line and S/PDIF outputs and MIDI I/O too. This means that a range of sound sources can benefit from VoiceLive 2's processors via multiple input types but there's a hidden benefit too. As the processor auto-detects pitch information from incoming audio signals, if you're a lead singer/guitarist or singer/keyboard player, you can use the output signal from your guitar or MIDI out port to feed VoiceLive 2 the note information it will use to generate harmonies. A performer's dream.

Intelligent harmonies

VoiceLive 2 shows its colours as an inspiring tool the moment you switch it on, as it's extremely simple to use. This is best exemplified by its intelligent Harmonizing engine which either allows you to select the root scale of your track or to auto-detect it as you perform, offering up to eight Harmonized notes in support of your performance. Once this information is onboard, VoiceLive 2 neatly side-steps the problems offered by real-time pitch shifters. Normally, these allow you to set up one or more Harmonizations of your input source but with each voice





at a fixed semi-tone offset above or below the performed pitch. VoiceLive 2 is different, as it intelligently detects which note you're singing within a scale and adjusts its harmonies accordingly, so if you're in C major and you sing the root note, you'll be greeted with harmonies appropriate to that chord but if you sing a D, the chord will change to an appropriate minor, as

providing octave-only harmonization. While I'm very happy creating harmonies in the studio in Melodyne, VoiceLive 2 provided the first Harmonization capabilities to have really blown me away in the hardware domain, with the huge thrill of real-time operation too.

Quality-wise, I'd as happily route a recorded lead vocal into VoiceLive 2

parameters alone, as they'd be unlikely to change during a single song.

If you do want variations to these parameters, simply make them and save them to the next program location, so you can switch easily during a performance.

Heard and not seen

Whereas 10 years ago the idea of taking cutting-edge technology onstage seemed brave and risky, now we're positively embracing tools which are as much for use in

VoiceLive 2 works intelligently through tracking and mixing to provide a rich, unique flavour

it will when you sing an A. Similarly, the Harmonies produced will jump from thirds to fourths as appropriate to the scale. This is wonderful – I'm no singer but even I found myself jamming away with a huge smile on my face. Harmonies are supported by the 'Double' module, which provides 'voice thickening' effects by reinforcing your input signal at its original pitch, or

and fly it back in my DAW in studio sessions as I would use this box onstage. What I like so much is that the unit is geared to let you play with the parameters you'd want but covers so many other bases in the background. So, via the Tone button, for instance, you can set up EQ, compression, de-essing and gating for a preset but then leave these

the heat of live performance as they are in the studio. VoiceLive 2 fits this description perfectly, allowing you to achieve the kinds of looping effects currently associated with Jamie Lidell, Beardyman and Shlomo plus a whole lot more besides.

While the unit is targeted at real-time performance and therefore suggests itself for live use alone, I'd struggle to think of a more inspiring studio tool, as it will get ideas flowing but also work quickly and intelligently through the tracking and mixing stages to provide a rich, unique flavour. I'm adding one to my own shopping list and whether you're performing live or looking for a studio processor with a difference, I'd highly recommend checking VoiceLive 2 out. **FM**

MP-75 Microphone



As well as VoiceLive 2, TC-Helicon sent its new MP-75 microphone, which is designed for live performance and for seamless compatibility with VoiceLive 2, VoiceLive Touch and the rest of TC-Helicon's VoiceTone range. MP-75 is a dynamic microphone with a super-cardioid pattern and a frequency

response of 50Hz to 18kHz. Its response features a deliberately generous push between 5kHz and 10kHz, while its rejection of off-axis signals limits feedback possibilities and its construction features effective pop-reduction techniques underneath the grille. Most excitingly, however, it features 'Mic

Control' which is a button on the mic's handle, allowing control across the range of processors. With VoiceLive 2, it can be used to switch your Shortcut parameter on and off and as this is user-definable, you could enable/bypass harmonies, switch on the looper, or carry out a huge range of other tricks. Great stuff.

SPECS

Analogue Inputs
Connectors, balanced: Mic: XLR, Line: 1/4" phone jack, Guitar: 1/4" phone jack, Aux: 3.5mm stereo jack
Mic Input Level @ 0 dBFS: -49dBu to +10dBu
Line Input Level @ -37 dBu to +22 dBu
A to D Conversion: 24-bit

Analogue Outputs:
D to A Conversion: 24-bit
Connectors, balanced: XLR and 1/4" phone jack
Frequency Response: +0/-0.3dB, 20Hz to 20kHz
Headphone Out: 3.5mm mini stereo jack, 320hm, +16dBu max (180mW max)

Digital Audio Connectors
RCA Phono (S/PDIF) & USB audio
Formats: S/PDIF (24-bit), EIAJ CP-340, IEC 958, USB
Audio
Sample Rates: 44.1kHz, 48kHz, 88.2kHz, 96kHz
Control
MIDI: In/Out/Thru: 5-pin DIN
Pedal: 1/4" TRS phone jack

Dimensions:
76 x 350 x 261mm
Weight:
2.3kg

ALTERNATIVES



VoiceLive Touch, VoiceTone Harmony and VoiceTone Singles

From £85

Via individual effect pedals or lighter spec'd multi-FX units, you can find what you need for less wedge.

tc-helicon.com



Korg Kaoss Pad Quad Dynamic Effects Processor

£229

Kaoss Pad Quad also features multiple inputs, including a dedicated mic input for vocal interaction.

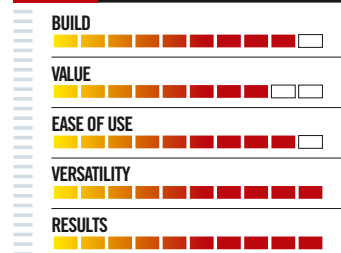
korg.co.uk



Guitar Multi-FX units
£30+

Line 6, Boss, TC and more offer units but be aware that plenty of their power is given to amp modelling.

FutureMusic VERDICT



An inspiring collection of effects designed for, but not limited to, live vocal performance.