

IK Multimedia AmpliTube 3 & AmpliTube 3 Free £289 & Free



The latest upgrade of AmpliTube 3 allows you to go shopping for more amps and effects... *by Trevor Curwen*

Around the time of the Frankfurt Musikmesse back in April, IK Multimedia announced major changes to how its AmpliTube 3 amp and effects software would move forward. Changes that come with version 3.5's release include 64-bit plug-in compatibility plus an improved preset browser with full graphical display of the rig. There are also 4,000 new 'patch' slots that store controller information with the presets while IK says that it has improved both integration with its range of controllers (with full programmability directly from AmpliTube) and MIDI control.

The main innovation with the version 3.5 update however, is the launch of the AmpliTube Custom Shop, directly accessible within AmpliTube using an online connection and offering individual gear models for purchase. Existing users of AmpliTube can go to the Custom Shop and add new models to their existing rig but, as an alternative to buying the



The new Custom Shop facility lets you purchase big name gear models for your rig

full version, anyone who has not yet used AmpliTube can download a free version of the software (cunningly named AmpliTube 3 Free). This has 24 basic gear models, which you can then expand with whatever other models you desire from the Custom Shop – over 200 gear models of stompboxes, amplifiers, cabinets, microphones and rack effects are available to be auditioned and purchased à la carte.

The intention with the Custom Shop is to constantly release new models of officially certified branded gear. Fender, Ampeg, Orange, Soldano, Seymour Duncan, Groove Tubes, Gallien-Krueger, Jet City Amplification, THD and T-Rex are onboard, with more brands to be announced and new models in the pipeline. There's an AmpliTube update every time a new set of models is released (3.6 is the current

version at time of writing). The update puts the new models on your hard drive ready for trying or buying.

In Use

Each model can be tested for free (for a period of two days every two months) so you can hear what you are getting before deciding whether to buy. You can buy models using Gear Credits, which are purchased in packs (in dollars or euros) from a minimum of 20 credits (\$19.99/€14.99) to a maximum of 500 credits (\$299.99/€224.99). The larger the pack, the less you pay for individual credits, which at current dollar exchange rates gives an approximate range of 37p to 62p per credit. Models are priced between five (mic models for cabinets and some stompboxes) and 20 credits each, with the branded items having the higher price tickets

– for example a T-Rex Replica delay costs 15 credits, while the Orange Thunderverb 200 amp head costs 20.

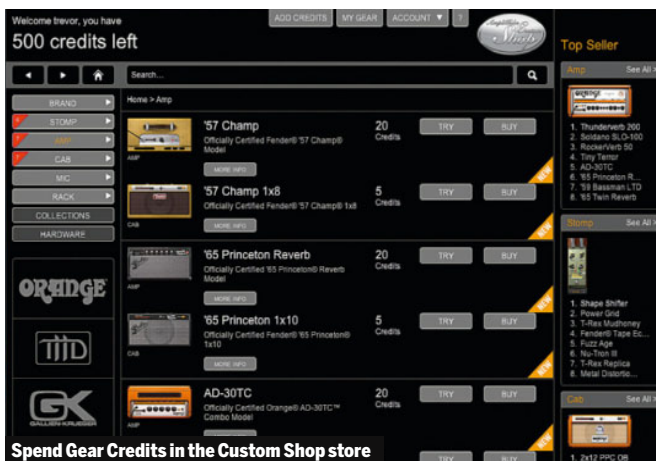
The basic AmpliTube Free includes a couple of clean Fender amps, a Marshall JCM800, a bass preamp and nine common stompboxes. It's plenty to dial in useful tones for recording, but by adding a few choice components you could put together a versatile rig that totally suits your chosen style of music.

Sounds

Looking at the newly available Custom Shop models, there's a range that's sufficiently different to complement what is already there in the full version and all that we tried, including a trio of T-Rex pedals, a Mutron III emulation and amps from Fender, Orange and Soldano, sounded great. As long as IK can keep up a supply of new

The Rivals

NI Guitar Rig Pro 4 (€179) is AmpliTube's longest-standing rival and there's a free version, Guitar Rig 4 Player, which can be expanded through NI's Complete range. **Line 6's POD Farm** (\$49) makes the hardware POD sounds available in software, and has 18 amps and 29 effects. The **Platinum** version (from \$249) expands this to 78 amps and 97 effects. **Peavey's Revalver 3.5** (£191) lets you tinker with the amp's components (changing valves etc) and offers 20 amp models, 21 stompboxes and 13 general effects among other models.



models this looks set to be an excellent resource.

Verdict

As the 3.5 upgrade is free for registered users and adds significant advantages, there's no reason not to dive in. And AmpliTube Free offers anyone the chance to try it out with nothing to lose, unless you get hooked and buy everything in the Custom Shop!

That Custom Shop is the big deal here. Existing AmpliTube users already have a massive sound palette that may be enough to fulfil all their needs, but if perhaps a particular amp or stompbox comes along that will give them a must-have tone, they can get it for a few quid. For users of the free version, you can just download the amp(s) and stompboxes you need to build your own custom rig without breaking the bank. Overall, the change in AmpliTube has to be a good thing. New models for free with each upgrade may be a thing of the past but the choice of rig building is now firmly in the user's hands. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Practical improvements; mix and match approach; free version; new models to be released regularly
We dislike: Limited range of Custom Shop models as yet
Guitarist says: An upgrade to one of the best amp and FX software packages that puts more power at your fingertips (while emptying your wallet)

IK Multimedia AmpliTube 3 & AmpliTube 3 Free

ORIGIN: Italy
PRICE: £289 & free
FORMATS SUPPORTED: Audio Units, VST, RTAS (Mac OS X) – VST, RTAS (Windows XP – Vista)
COMPUTER SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Intel Macintosh: 1.5 GHz Intel processor, 1 GB of RAM, Mac OS X 10.5 or later
 Windows: Intel Pentium 4 2.4 GHz, Intel Core Duo or AMD Athlon 64, 1 GB of RAM, Windows XP, Windows Vista or Windows 7
MODELS: AmpliTube 3: 51 stompboxes, 31 amplifiers, 46 cabinets, 15 microphones, 17 rack effects;
 AmpliTube 3 Free: 9 stompboxes, 4 amplifiers, 5 cabinets, 3 microphones, 2 rack effects
EXTRAS: Tuner, four-track recorder/player with independent time stretch/pitch shift, Metronome
RANGE OPTIONS: AmpliTube 3 Pedal (includes Stealthpedal) £315
OPTIONS: Custom Shop models
IK Multimedia
0800 093 4066
www.ikmultimedia.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

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- Epiphone Les Paul Pro FX w/ Floyd Rose - Vintageburst £498
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- Epiphone Thunderbird £199
- Epiphone Explorer Korina £359
- Epiphone Firebird Studio Worn Cherry £279
- Fender American Deluxe Telecaster Olympic Pearl R/W board £1148
- Fender American Standard Strat Black £975 Sienna/3CSunburst £1029
- Fender American Vintage 1962 Reissue Strat Olympic White £1440
- Fender American Deluxe Strat Sunset Metallic/Aged Cherry £1140
- Fender American Vintage 57 Strat Surf Green £1430
- Fender American Special Tele 2 tone sunburst £765
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- Fender Highway One Teles S/H Blonde Red £495
- Fender Classic Player Baja Tele Blonde £545
- Fender Deluxe Nashville Telecaster Honey Blonde £555
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- Gibson Les Paul Standard 2008 Pro Gold Top £1799
- Gibson Les Paul Standard Traditional Iced Tea £1749
- Gibson Les Paul Studio Cherry £1099
- Gibson Les Paul Classic Premium Plus 5A Top, EMGs, S/H £1550
- Gibson Les Paul Custom Oxblood 1999, Mint, S/H £1850
- Gibson Les Paul Standard 1980 Natural S/H £1450
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- Gibson SG Standard Left-handed Ebony £1089
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- Gibson Melody Maker SG Ebony /Les Paul Ebony £449
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- Gibson ES-335 Reissue Fat Neck Antique Natural £2485
- Gibson ES-330 Antique Vintage Sunburst £1599
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- PRS SE Custom 24 Amber £589
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- Blackstar HT40 Club £549
- Blackstar HT Stage 60 £699
- Blackstar Artisan 15 £899
- Blackstar HT5 Combo £295, Mini Stack £395
- Blackstar HT1 head w/ reverb £169 Combo £199
- Marshall Class 5 £295
- Marshall TSL 60 Head £550
- Marshall JMD 50 Combo £595
- Marshall Vintage Modern 2266 Combo £840
- Vox AC30 CC2X with Alnico Blue speakers £1199
- Fender Supersonic 22 £910

Fender Amps
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 G Dec 30 £289
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 Mustang II £149
 S/ChampXD £273
 HotRodDeluxe £681
 '65Twin Rev £999
 (ex demo)

