



IK Multimedia Stealth Pedal £402

PC MAC

We put the pedal to the metal with this crafty AmpliTube controller and audio interface

> IK Multimedia's AmpliTube is one of the best-known guitar amp simulation applications on the market, and IK have previously responded to users' interfacing needs with the budget StealthPlug and high-end StealthIO hardware. Filling in the middle ground is the new USB-powered Stealth Pedal, which ships as standard with AmpliTube Live, Ampeg SVX UNO and AmpliTube X-Gear, while the Deluxe bundle - reviewed here - features AmpliTube 2 (cm101, 9/10), Ampeg SVX (cm103, 10/10) and X-Gear. And for an indefinite period, both bundles come with AmpliTube Metal as a bonus download.

As for the hardware, connections run along both sides and include two inputs (instrument or line level), two line outs, a USB socket, a minijack for headphones, as well as two 1/4" jacks for a further expression pedal and a dual footswitch (not supplied). The four main ins and outs are all capable of balanced operation, and there's also an output level knob and a switch that's activated by pressing down hard on the pedal (like the bypass on a real wah).

Taking control

To use it with AmpliTube, you load up the X-Gear shell, select the Stealth Pedal as your audio interface and enable it as the control source via

the front panel - patches that use a wah, volume or whammy pedal in the Stomps section are mapped automatically by default. For custom control, there's a Setup panel where, for each patch, you can define which parameter maps to which control (and assign value ranges), and whether switches are latched. For use with other software, there's MIDI control (see boxout).

The pedal is very solid in build (although the volume knob is positioned rather dangerously) and offers enough resistance to make for precise manipulation - it feels 'right'. Running X-Gear in standalone mode gave us glitch-free operation with a buffer size of 144 samples at 48kHz operation (6ms latency). The sound quality is good, but annoyingly, there are no MME or WDM drivers for Windows, only ASIO. We also found the X-Gear plug-in RAM-hungry, gobbling up around 150MB per instance.

The price, of course, will be the main issue for most prospective buyers, as it ain't cheap, and while the included AmpliTube products add a lot of value, if you've already got them, or they're not the exact ones you want, you may feel like you're not getting your money's worth. **cm**

Contact IK Multimedia UK, 0800 0934066
Web www.ikmultimedia.com
Info Standard version, £230

System requirements

PC P4/Athlon XP CPU, 1GB RAM, Windows XP/Vista, USB port

Mac 1.5GHz Intel/Dual 1GHz G4, 1GB RAM, Mac OS X 10.4, USB port

Test system

PC Intel Core 2 Duo, 3GB RAM, Windows Vista (32-bit), Cubase 5, Live 8

Alternatively

IK Multimedia StompIO cm127 >> 9/10 >> £920

The ultimate AmpliTube controller and audio interface, at a price

NI Guitar Rig 3 Kontrol Edition cm120 >> 7/10 >> £333

Amp sim software with a controller/interface floor unit

Verdict

For Solid metal casing
Authentic rocker pedal action
Switch and expression pedal inputs
Comes with great AmpliTube software

Against It ain't cheap
No Windows WDM/MME drivers
One parameter per control limit
Software can be resource-intensive
Watch that volume knob!

It has a few curious drawbacks, but the Stealth Pedal has it where it counts: solid build quality and great-sounding software

8/10

Single whammy

To configure the Stealth Pedal as a standard MIDI device, you use the Stealth Pedal MIDI Control application. As with X-Gear, it enables you to map up to three switches and two pedals, but this time to MIDI CCs and Program Changes, not to mention MIDI notes for the switches and pitchbend for the pedals. You can save your mappings as presets and map the volume knob, too.

There's one limitation that's common to both the 'direct' X-Gear control and MIDI

mode, which is that you can only assign one parameter per control - so you can't use the pedal to increase an AmpliTube's amp gain while turning down the reverb level, for example. However, some competing amp sims (eg, Overloud TH1) have more advanced MIDI mapping abilities, and with these, you can indeed manipulate several parameters with one Stealth Pedal control, which makes X-Gear seem lacking in this area (an update is being considered, say IK).