

Digitech RP55, RP155, RP255, RP355

£51, £103, £155 & £207

Four brand new RP units join an already generously appointed product range. How will we ever make our minds up now? *by Adrian Clark*

The digital processing elves at Digitech have clearly been working plenty of overtime recently, judging by the number of new products the company has released. The consumer/semi-pro RP range was completely revamped a couple of years back, now built around the AudioDNA DSP chips previously only found in high-end Digitech products. This range has now been extended upwards to include the very impressive RP500 and RP1000 models, and pro players have also been catered for with the rack-mounted DSP1101 effects unit.

But then, just as we're finally settling down for a nice cup of tea and a HobNob, what do they do? They go and release four completely new RP units, based on the RP50/150/250/350, but with a few extra features. However, the earlier models are still available (along with the intermediate RP70/90 and flagship RP500/1000) – is this the most comprehensive multi-FX range ever?

RP55

At the entry level, the RP55 is ideal for players on a tight budget or those who want to avoid programming complex presets. The two footswitches scroll up and down through the 80 patches, and only one parameter per effect can be adjusted. For more flexibility, the RP70 is very similar, but with the addition of the Tone and Effects Libraries.

Despite the simplicity of the interface, though, the RP55 offers decent value for money. The effects are comparable with those on the more expensive RP units, and you can use up to eight at the same time. There are 11 amp models to choose from and the RP55 gains five cabinet models not present on the RP50. For convenient practising, there's also a built-in drum machine with 30 patterns.

Sounds

The output level is very quiet, even with the master volume turned up full. With a bit of extra help from the mixer,

though, we were able to get a better idea of what the RP55 sounds like. The basic quality of sounds (and this is true of all four units here) is very high, with crystal clarity and practically no background noise until you start using high-gain patches.

With only one adjustable parameter available for each effect, you really have to like the basic tones on offer, and the RP55 covers a decent range of musical styles. With the built-in drum machine (which has a powerful, punchy sound) the emphasis is on having a quick, convenient practice rig, and this works very well.

RP155

If the RP55 isn't flexible enough, this is the next step. The Tone and Effects Libraries can also be found on the RP70 and RP90, but the RP155 adds

the familiar Digitech 'matrix' interface, proper knobs for on-the-fly adjustments and a USB connection for digital recording. There's a total of 100 presets (including 50 user memory slots) and 83 amp, cabinet and effects models. There's also an amp/mixer switch to optimise the output for your setup, a dedicated headphone output and independent left/right outputs.

In case you're not familiar with recent Digitech products, the Tone and Effects Libraries each contain 30 preset signal chains. The two Libraries work independently of each other, so you have instant access to a huge range of sounds, without having to resort to fiddly adjustment of individual effects and parameters.

Once again, this is a slightly upgraded version of a previous model (the RP150) and once again there's a few more sounds on offer; in this case, they're all amp and acoustic models. The big difference, though, is the addition of the 20-second looper, which is quite a luxury on such a low-priced effects unit. The RP155 is also the lowest-priced RP unit to feature Lexicon reverb algorithms.

Sounds

Using a single footswitch for record, play and overdub tasks, the looper function doesn't initially seem too promising, but we found it very easy to use.

The basic quality of sounds is very high, with crystal clarity and practically no background noise





The RP355 features balanced XLR outputs with an amp/mixer switch

The sampling quality is excellent and the automatic input sensor means that you only need to hit the footswitch in time at the end of the loop, not at the beginning.

The extra flexibility makes a big difference and although the RP155 is still relatively simple, it's more likely to be of use as a live effects unit or as a home studio tool.

RP255

Need a built-in expression pedal? The RP90 also has one, but lacks the matrix layout, so if you can stretch to the price of the RP255, you'll have a much more impressive unit, including several notable improvements over the RP250.

The 20-second looper is here, but the RP255 also includes Cubase LE4 recording/sequencing software, previously only available on the RP350 and above. There are 120 presets and a grand total of 94 amp, cabinet and effects models. The RP255 introduces the auxiliary mini jack input for jamming along to your CD or MP3 player.

Sounds

The most obvious addition to the sound palette of the RP255 is of course the expression pedal. This can be set to control almost any parameter on the unit and the 'V-Switch' under the toe end is then used to switch between the chosen parameter and the wah effect. As on most of the compact multi-effects units we've tried, the expression pedal is a bit too small and has a short sweep, meaning that you have to exercise a bit more fine control than you would with a full-size stand-alone pedal.

RP355

The three-switch RP355 is still a compact-style unit, so patch switching is still a matter of using the simple up and down switches (rather than the bank arrangement seen on the RP500 and RP1000). Still, the third footswitch here adds a nice bit of extra flexibility, toggling between a preset's two amp channels. The rear panel shows a notable improvement over the cheaper models. There are now two sets of left/right outputs – standard quarter-inch jacks and balanced XLR sockets, both with the amp/mixer switch.

Now, here's something odd. Briefly pressing footswitches two and three simultaneously takes you into Stomp Mode, where the three footswitches operate just like standard stompboxes – Distortion, Chorus/FX and Delay. But there's no mention of this handy feature in the manual! The exact effect depends on the patch selected before you enter Stomp Mode, but you can now turn those modules on and off independently. Seeing as that's a feature (albeit in reduced form) that's borrowed from the two largest RP units, you'd think Digitech would want to shout about it!

By pressing those two footswitches for a little bit longer, you access Learn-A-Lick mode, which enables you to record up to 10 seconds of music (via the Aux input) and slow it down to as little as quarter speed. The RP355 has a total of 140 presets, 126 combined amp, cabinet and effects models, and the 20-second looper is present and correct once again, but can now be run simultaneously with the drum machine.



Rotary knobs select effects patches

Sounds

Sound-wise, there isn't a lot to separate this from the RP500; the main difference is the larger, more flexible interface on the RP500. The 70 factory presets give a great demonstration of the capabilities of the AudioDNA2 processor, not to mention the quality of the latest Digitech amp and effect models.

Although the RP355 represents impressive value for money, there's one other little feature we'd like to see. The Amp A/B switch really needs some sort of permanent indicator to show which amp channel is active. There's a momentary indication on the LED display, but it would be nice to have a clear red/green light near the footswitch, as seen on the GNX units.

Verdict

In their original RPX50 guises, these units already offered good value for money and a sensible set of features, gradually increasing through the range. Creating a new set of products with distinct names (rather than RP50 Mk2, for

The rivals

Maybe it's the continued popularity of old-school stompboxes, we don't know, but the compact multi-FX market seems rather thin at the moment. **Zoom** offers the widest selection, with the **G1** (£60), **G2** (£89) and **G2.1u** (£139) covering similar ground to the RP55, 155 and 255. They also have the **G1x** (£69), which has the same simple layout as the RP55, but with an expression pedal. Direct rivals for the RP355 are more elusive; the **Line 6 Floor Pod** (£107) has the same basic layout, but lacks the sophistication of the RP355's effects. The **Vox Tonelab ST** (£205) only has two footswitches, but would be of particular interest to fans of vintage amp tones

example) to introduce a handful of new features may seem like an odd move for Digitech, but it could prove beneficial to we customers – we're already seeing some pretty impressive shop discounts on the four original RP units.

If you go for the newer models, though, you're still getting great value for money. There's less of an obvious reason to get the RP55 over the RP50, but the looper facility on other three products is a huge bonus. The RP255 probably represents the greatest improvement over the earlier model, but we'd pick the RP355 as the best here, simply for the way Digitech has squeezed so much into a compact unit... and forgotten to tell us about all the features! **E**



The Bottom Line

RP55

We like: Simplicity of use; sound quality; price
We dislike: The lack of parameter editing
Guitarist says: A quick and very convenient practice rig – for peanuts!

RP155

We like: The inclusion of the Tone and Effects libraries; additional amp and acoustic models; looper
We dislike: For this sort of money, very little
Guitarist says: The ideal option for a budget onstage effects unit or for use as an entry level home studio tool

RP255

We like: As RP155; expression pedal; aux in mini jack
We dislike: The expression pedal is rather small
Guitarist says: The most obvious improvement over the existing model (the RP250) and again packs an awful lot into a small space

RP355

We like: As RP155 and 255 Added footswitch; improved outputs; stomp mode; Learn-A-Lick mode
We dislike: Lack of Amp A/B mode indicator
Guitarist says: The RP355 is feature-laden but again in a compact and affordable box. Digitech even missed some features in the manual!



Digitech RP55

PRICE: £51
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Modelling multi-effects unit
FEATURES: Built-in drum machine and tuner
EFFECTS: Pickup sim, wah, compressor, amp/cabinet modeller, noise gate and auto-swell, EQ, chorus/modulation, delay, reverb
PATCHES: 40 factory presets plus 40 user slots
MIDI: No
CONNECTIONS: Input, stereo output (doubles as headphone output), expression pedal input
POWER: DC adaptor or six AA batteries (not supplied)
OPTIONS: For a little more tonal flexibility, the RP70 (£59) and RP90 (£79) have the Tone and Effects Libraries. The RP90 also has a built-in expression pedal
Sound Technology
01462 480000
www.digitech.com

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Digitech RP155

PRICE: £103
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Modelling multi-effects unit
FEATURES: 20-second looper, USB direct recording, built-in drum machine, Lexicon reverbs
EFFECTS: Pickup sim, wah, compressor, distortion, amp/cabinet modeller, noise gate, EQ, chorus/fx, delay, reverb. You can also select preset signal chains from the 30 Effect libraries and 30 Tone libraries
PATCHES: 50 factory presets plus 50 user slots
MIDI: No
CONNECTIONS: Input, left/right outputs (with amp/mixer switch), headphone output, expression pedal input, USB connection
POWER: DC adaptor (supplied)
OPTIONS: None

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Digitech RP255

PRICE: £155
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Modelling multi-effects unit
FEATURES: 20-second looper, USB direct recording, built-in drum machine, Lexicon reverbs, Cubase LE recording software included
EFFECTS: Pickup sim, wah, compressor, distortion, amp/cabinet modeller, noise gate, EQ, chorus/fx, delay, reverb, expression. You can also select preset signal chains from the 30 Effect libraries and 30 Tone libraries.
PATCHES: 60 factory presets plus 60 user slots
MIDI: No
CONNECTIONS: Input, left/right outputs (with amp/mixer switch), headphone output, auxiliary input, USB connection
POWER: DC adaptor (supplied)
OPTIONS: None

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Digitech RP355

PRICE: £207
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Modelling multi-effects unit
FEATURES: Same as RP255, with the addition of dual amp channels, Learn-A-Lick sampler, optional Stomp Mode
EFFECTS: Pickup sim, wah, compressor, distortion, amp/cabinet modeller, noise gate, EQ, chorus/fx, delay, reverb, expression. You can also select preset signal chains from the 30 Effect libraries and 30 Tone libraries.
PATCHES: 70 factory presets plus 70 user slots
MIDI: No
CONNECTIONS: Input, left/right outputs (with amp/mixer switch), left/right XLR outputs (with independent amp/mixer switch), headphone output, auxiliary input, USB connection
POWER: DC adaptor (supplied)
OPTIONS: None

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

