

Quicktest

Welcome to Guitarist's regular round-up of the best of the rest of the gear that's passed through our hands this issue

Guitar Man GM11 clip-on guitar tuner

£13.95

Essential gigbag kit for the acoustic musician

CONTACT: Strings & Things **PHONE:** 01273 440442 **WEB:** www.stringsandthings.co.uk

What the world probably doesn't need is another cheap Chinese-made tuner. But here's one that's not much bigger than a USB memory stick, with a simple no-swivel headstock clamp and bright display. It also costs peanuts and would be ideal for any acoustic musician, or gigging electric music who wants a no-brainer tuner for backstage or back-up.

In Use

There are no bells and whistles, just an on/off button (annoyingly on the wrong, treble-side of the unit). Clip it

on your headstock, hit a note and the orange display names the note and tells you if you're sharp or flat, before changing to green when you're in tune. It chatters a bit before it settles, but does the job on various solidbodies, steel and nylon acoustics and even a ukulele we tried.

Verdict

It's cheap, cheerfully bright and works. Every guitar case should have one. **[DB]**

The Bottom Line

We like: No frills simplicity; accuracy; price

We dislike: On/off switch on wrong side

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



AKG WMS40 Pro Flexx set

£195.50

AKG's latest wireless system

CONTACT: Sound Technology **PHONE:** 01462 480000 **WEB:** www.soundtech.co.uk

Dream of roaming a big stage with guitar in hand, or simply want to cut down on cable clutter at the local pub gig? A wireless system is a potential solution.

AKG's WMS40 Pro Flexx instrument set comprises the SR40 Flexx receiver and the 'GuitarBug' GB40 Flexx, which AKG boasts is the smallest selectable frequency wireless transmitter available.

The GB40's FlexJack design hugs the instrument thanks to a spring-loaded jack that fits various instruments. The 'Bug' features an off/on/mute, 11 hours of battery life and a three-way frequency selection, giving flexibility if your fellow bandmates are using similar bandwidth systems.

The SR40 receiver, with hard-wearing aluminium chassis, features a volume control giving 26dB output to match the amplifier's input behaviour, and two antennas with A and B LEDs that alternate for the best signal. Alongside this, a sliding frequency selector and LEDs indicate current operating status, including a warning LED for input clipping.

In Use

The system is simple to use: plug the GB40 into your guitar,



turn on and match the receiver frequencies. The SR40 plugs into your amp's input from its unbalanced output – balance the volume and you're away.

The WMS40 Pro Flexx delivers impressive clarity, with low-end and mid frequencies aplenty and impressive note articulation. However, we did find the plastic GuitarBug often cartwheeled around in the guitar's output jack and could easily come a cropper during rigorous live use.

Verdict

If you're not flailing around on stage, the WMS 40 Flexx is a well-priced, easy-to-use system that offers a viable alternative to the traditional pack-on-a-strap system. **[DD]**

The Bottom Line

We like: The price; ease of use; size

We dislike: FlexJack seems a little unroadworthy

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Gator TSA ATA hard case £109

A hard case that flies...

CONTACT: Freestyle Music Ltd **PHONE:** 01924 455414 **WEB:** www.freestylmusic.co.uk

For some, the hard case is an essential gigging tool: protecting our instruments from the rigours of the road and adding an air of professionalism to proceedings.

This in mind, Gator's latest TSA ATA hardcase features a strong military-grade polyethylene structure, as well as black powder-coated valance and hardware. Holding things together are three sturdy-feeling latches and a TSA-approved centre latch (making it ideal for airline travel), which incorporates a surface-mounted impact diversion latch housing. In addition, we have an ergo-grip injection-moulded handle, offering extra comfort and portability.

Inside, we have a well-fitted crushed-velvet interior, EPS protective foam and a universal fit for Strat or Tele-style guitar shapes. There's no properly covered compartment for leads, picks and strings, but we do get two pockets either side of the long neck support.

In Use

Using both Strat and Tele-style guitars we found the case to have a snug fit, with just enough room at the top of the headstock and minimal movement around the waist. The extra length neck support adds further protection for it, while also cancelling out negative sideways movement and keeping the guitar's profile



stress free. Alongside this, it's very comfortable to carry thanks to the sturdy ergo-grip handle and the lightweight, advanced materials.

Verdict

The Gator TSA ATA covered all of our needs, whether they be strength, portability or protection. It's airline friendly and the only omission is a

decent covered bits and bobs compartment. **[DD]**

The Bottom Line

We like: Professional look, fit and strength; price
We dislike: No lid-covered compartment section

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Kala uBass FS £429

Contender for the smallest bass in the world!

CONTACT: Sutherland Trading **PHONE:** 0292 088 7333 **WEB:** www.sutherlandtrading.com

Although less ornate than many standard ukes, the Kala uBass still offers loads of appeal. The understated design features a baritone ukulele-sized mahogany body and neck with a 20-inch scale, rosewood fingerboard and bridge and custom Hipshot tuners. But with polyurethane strings, a passive Shadow pickup system

with individual piezo elements and compensated saddles, there's a lot more going on than meets the eye. It's also tuned E-A-D-G, just like a standard bass, so it can be played in the conventional manner.

Sounds

Although necessarily larger, the uBass still feels like a uke and is

great fun to play. Accurate tuning isn't easy, and because the instrument speaks so clearly you need to take your time getting it right. There's also a need to adopt a certain fingering style, particularly when playing acoustically, as the relatively large diameter of the strings make a big difference. Being polyurethane

(rather than the silicone strings on the fabled, fretless-only Ashbory bass) they resist wear, so this uke can be fretted or fretless. Plugging in produces a big thudding sound, similar to an upright bass, and is full and warm with surprisingly good note definition.

Verdict

Having onboard electronics gives the Kala uBass two distinct personalities. Acoustically it's exactly what it appears to be, a bass ukulele with good acoustic properties, but when you plug it in it really comes into its own to become the most transportable bass guitar ever. It's not the cheapest uke on the block but it's pretty unusual and the price does include a hard foam case. **[RN]**

The Bottom Line

We like: The bass uke/mini bass guitar dual personality
We dislike: All-solid wood construction ups price

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

