

**BOSS EBAND JS-8** £339  
RECORDING



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP SOWELS



### The Rivals

Currently the nearest rival to the eBand is the **Vox JamVox** (£182), although being an integrated monitor and software system, it does need a computer connection. **Tascam** has a range of portable trainers. The **CD-GT2** (£127) can play back audio from CD, while the **MP-GT1** (£169) features an mp3 player. Several computer-based amp simulation programs, notably **IK Multimedia's AmpliTube 2** (£316) and **Native Instruments' Guitar Rig 4** (software version: €179), have built-in phrase trainers with file playback and recording integral to them. The less expensive, cut-down versions of these flagship programs also retain the phrase training facility.

## BOSS eBand JS-8 £339

BOSS makes it easy for you to jam along with your favourite tracks *by Trevor Curwen*

There are several elements that come together to make a practical practice tool/phrase trainer for guitarists. You need amp simulation, playback and looping of sound files with tempo control, together with some form of recording facility. All of these have been available in the BOSS BR range of multitrackers for some time, but the company has now taken that technology and put it all together in a dedicated unit complete with speakers, describing the resulting eBand JS-8 as, "the ultimate jam-along companion for guitarists."

Basically, the eBand is an audio player with guitar effects built-in. It can play back audio files in mp3 and wav format for you to play along with and has a recording facility, which allows you to record your playing (with or without backing track) onto the unit with the audio stored on an SD card. A 1GB card is supplied with the unit, but you

can use cards up to 32GB in capacity. A USB connection to computer allows transfer of files, but also means that you can use the eBand as an audio interface for recording (with or without amp sims) and also as an external stereo speaker for your computer.

The eBand sits nicely on a table top, with the front face angled so the speakers are pointing directly at your ears. All the controls are clearly laid-out and easily accessible, plus there's a large blue backlit display which lets you see exactly what's going on. Your guitar plugs into the front of the unit next to a pair of knobs that control the guitar volume and the overall level coming out of the speakers (or headphones if you choose to plug those into the front panel, conveniently muting the speakers). All other connections are round the back, including stereo aux input and line outputs, a socket for external expression or control

pedals, the USB connection to computer and a USB socket for a memory stick.

Roland's COSM modelling provides the guitar sounds. These are arranged in 130 ready-to-use factory preset patches with a further 100

memory locations to store your own patches. Derived from the GT-10, each patch is made up from a signal chain of seven modules – amp model, a choice of single effect, EQ, noise suppressor, delay, chorus and reverb. Patches can be quickly chosen by scrolling through the list and you get instant front-panel switching between two of them via the 'solo' button.

There's plenty of adjustment available for editing presets and creating your own sounds, with a practical choice of amp models and loads of parameters that can be tweaked. One



The controls are well laid-out and intuitive

innovation is the EZ Tone Sound Wizard, which provides an intuitive approach to tone creation by moving a cursor up or down, left or right on a graph where the four points of the compass represent a different aspect of the tone – the ‘drive’ graph offers solo to backing and soft to hard, while the ‘EFX’ graph has wet to dry and short to long as its options. These are the first patch-editing pages, but you can scroll past them to get into more conventional parameter editing for each module if you desire.

Music to play along with can be imported into the eBand by various methods, the most straightforward being via the USB connection from a computer, although you can also play songs back from a USB memory stick. An included software utility called Song List Editor makes quick work of the importing and organisation of the files. Without a computer connection you can use the aux input to plug in an mp3 or CD player and record the music onto the eBand’s SD card.

The eBand actually already comes pre-loaded with a bunch of backing tracks and rhythms in a variety of styles. There are 300 of these audio-loop phrases onboard and calling some of these up also loads in companion guitar effects pre-programmed to match the

loops. You can in fact use this ‘patch sync’ function to specify two patches (song and solo) for any song you like.

For playback there’s tempo control (from 50 per cent to 150 per cent), so you can slow down or speed up a song’s tempo without changing the pitch, and a ‘centre cancel’ function is available for removing or subduing any guitar solos or vocals that are sitting in the centre of the stereo mix. Looping a particular section of a song is easily done by hitting a button to select the (easily editable) start and end points on the fly as the song is playing.

### In Use

Getting started with the eBand is pretty easy – just plug in, tune up using the onboard tuner, select a sound and start playing. If you want to play along with something, there’s the onboard metronome and the range of provided loops that are easily called up. These are either straight drum loops or nicely constructed band-style backing tracks in a variety of musical styles and keys that actually do entice you into playing along, especially if a matching guitar tone has been loaded. If you want a different tone, it can be easily changed and the level quickly tweaked to sit in with the backing track. The COSM sounds work great in any

number of styles and playing feels really natural, with the sound emanating from the small speakers being clear, surprisingly full and delivered at sensible volumes.

On its own, without a computer, the eBand is a fine practice aid for playing along to pre-recorded tracks or recording your own chord sequence to solo over, but the USB connection greatly increases versatility. To import sounds from a computer or use the unit as an audio interface, you have to install the Song List Editor utility software and audio drivers, but these are loaded onto the included SD card, are easily transferred to the computer via USB cable and install in seconds.

With a large enough memory card, you can store thousands of your favourite songs, call them up and play along at will, making the eBand a fully loaded guitar karaoke jukebox. As an audio interface, the eBand offers several routing options, so you can record a guitar (or a microphone) either dry or with the full amp and effects sound, while choosing what you hear from the speakers. It also allows re-amping, so you can use the onboard sounds to treat any previously recorded signals.

### Verdict

Knowing BOSS, it’s no surprise that this innovative company has delivered something that’s both an excellent practice aid and a fine recording tool, as well as being a whole lot of fun. Too bad Christmas has come and gone – few guitarists would be unhappy with this as a present. **G**

You can store thousands of your favourite songs, call them up and play along at will



There’s a variety of digital and analogue outputs



### BOSS eBand JS-8

**PRICE:** £339

**TYPE:** Jam and practice tool for guitar

**ORIGIN:** Taiwan

**EXTRA FEATURES:** Tuner, metronome

**SAMPLING RATE:** 44.1 kHz

**AD/DA CONVERSION:** 24-bit

**RECORDING MEDIA:** SD/SDHC Card (128MB-32GB) 1GB card supplied

**RECORDING TIME:** JS-8 Songs: 250 min (1GB), 8,060 min (32GB). wav/16-bit/stereo: 90 min (1GB), 3,020 min (32GB). Mp3/128 kbps/stereo: 1,040 min (1GB), 33,330 min (32GB)

**EFFECTS:** Amp Modelling, FX (overdrive/distortion, wah, compressor, limiter, octave, acoustic processor, phaser, flanger, tremolo, rotary, uni-v, pan), EQ, noise suppressor, delay, chorus, reverb

**EFFECT PATCH MEMORIES:** 130 preset/100 user

**CONNECTIONS:** 6.4mm guitar/mic input, mini jack aux input, mini jack headphone output, RCA phono line outputs (L, R), 6.4mm expression pedal jack, 6.4mm control jack, USB Memory (USB A), USB (USB B)

**DIMENSIONS:** 264 (w) x 166 (d) x 201mm (h)

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 1.7/3.74

**POWER SUPPLY:** AC adaptor (supplied)

**OPTIONS:** Footswitch (FS-5U), Dual Footswitch (FS-6), Expression Pedal (FV-500L, FV-500H, Roland EV-5), Footswitch Cable (Roland PCS-31L)

**Roland UK**

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[www.roland.co.uk](http://www.roland.co.uk)

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Compact and easy to use; works without a computer; useful backing tracks; practical guitar tones; different routings for computer recording

**We dislike:** Some menus are quite deep

**Guitarist says:** An immensely practical unit for jamming along with your favourite tracks and recording to computer



### Test results

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

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★