

DigiTech JamMan Solo £229

DigiTech shoehorns its JamMan looper technology into a compact pedal *by Trevor Curwen*

DigiTech's latest addition to its JamMan family could be right up your street if you fancy adding a looper to your rig but are a bit tight on pedalboard space. The JamMan Solo Looper/Phrase Sampler puts a whole range of classic JamMan features into a standard compact pedal, providing the ability to store 35 minutes of mono CD-quality loops in 99 internal memories. If you need more capacity there's an SD memory card expansion slot under the footpedal giving you the ability to store over 16 hours of material in an additional 99 slots using an 8GB or higher SDHC memory card.

Powered from a supplied 9V adaptor (or your own power distribution box), the JamMan Solo offers standard jack mono input and outputs and also a mini stereo jack auxiliary input so you can import music from CD and mp3 players. A USB socket allows transfer of audio to and from computer aided by the JamManager Loop Librarian software, which is

designed to organise and archive your loops.

In Use

Before you start recording a loop you have to first choose a memory location for it from the 99 onboard – the number of the current location is shown on the pedal's display and you can scroll through the memories with a pair of up/down buttons. Recording an actual loop and playing it back is pretty straightforward and can all be done with the pedal's footswitch – one push initiates the recording, a second ends recording/sets the loop end point and starts playback, while two quick pushes stops the loop playing. A large LED lights up red, yellow or green to show which part of the cycle you are in, and there's a knob to set the loop level. You can make as many overdubs to the loop as you like with more pedal presses, and if you make a mess of one it can easily be undone by pressing the pedal switch for two seconds.

There are both visual and sonic aids available onboard to give you a count-in and help with the timing of your loop recordings. You can set a tempo for your loop (with LEDs flashing in time) either by tapping the tempo button or hands-free with a couple of presses on the pedal switch if you have the JamMan Solo set up in its 'pedal tempo' mode. Accompanying the visual clues, you also get a rhythm track, if desired. This has its own volume knob and a choice of nine rhythm patterns, from a simple metronome click through to various sampled drum sounds, all available in various time signatures.

Once you're familiar with the JamMan Solo it's really easy to build up complex guitar loops on the fly in live performance or to quickly record rhythm guitar parts to practise soloing over. As a practice aid, the pedal has another trick up its sleeve in that loops can be sped up or slowed down without changing the pitch, making it a really useful phrase-training asset into which you can load tracks that you need to learn.

It's also possible to load it with backing loops (the JamMan Solo will convert stereo to mono), that can be triggered in live performance. But if you need to change loops hands-free during a song, perhaps change from a verse to chorus – something that the JamMan Solo will do seamlessly at the end of the currently playing loop – you'd have to plug DigiTech's FS3X triple footswitch into the JamMan Solo's footswitch socket. That would somewhat defeat the object of a compact looper by taking up more stage space and you may be better off paying a bit extra for the fuller-featured JamMan Stereo.

Verdict

If you want to build loops on the fly in live performance, or have a pedal that is great for practising parts and phrase training, then the Solo will give you all you need in a very practically sized package, and at a keen price too. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Compact size; large memory (also expandable); clear visual timing indication
We dislike: Extra footswitch needed if you want to scroll through loops hands-free
Guitarist says: Foot-controllable looping in a handy sized stompbox

The Rivals

The **RC-2 Loop Station** (£172) is **BOSS's** compact looper pedal featuring up to 16 minutes of record time plus store and recall for 11 phrases. Both **BOSS** and **DigiTech** also have larger looping pedals, and there are several available from others. **Line 6's JM4** (£316) features up to 24 minutes of recording time, with extra capacity via an SD card slot, and dedicated footswitches for record/overdub and more. **Electro-Harmonix's 2880 Super Multitrack Looper** (£249) includes a 1GB card providing up to 31 minutes per track.

DigiTech JamMan Solo

PRICE: £229

TYPE: Looper/phrase sampler pedal

ORIGIN: USA

EXTRA FEATURES: Guide rhythm tracks

SAMPLING RATE: 44.1 kHz

AD/DA CONVERSION: 24-bit

CONNECTIONS: 6.4mm jack guitar input, 3.2mm mini stereo jack aux input, 6.4mm jack output (stereo headphone compatible), USB, footswitch socket

MEMORIES: 99 onboard (99 more with optional SDHC card)

DIMENSIONS: 69.7 (l) x 127 (w) x 54.1mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 0.35/0.78

POWER SUPPLY: Power adaptor PS200R (included)

EXTRAS: JamManager Librarian Software

OPTIONS: SDHC card, FS3X footswitch (£52)

RANGE OPTIONS: The JamMan Stereo (£340) and JamMan Delay (£387)

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Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

