



The G-DEC is easy to lug about. Just sling it over your shoulder and away you go

There are 50 preset (50 user) backing tracks on this amp and you can learn to jam along with metal, rock and punk tracks, amongst others. It could help to make you a much better guitarist

The G-DEC has a single 8" speaker that pumps out 15 watts. That's plenty of juice for rocking out in the bedroom

£249

FENDER G-DEC

SO YOU THINK KARAOKE IS FOR LOSERS, EH? THINK AGAIN! WORDS: KIM WILLS

> Karaoke? Sod that, mate, I'd much rather be in a band!

Hey, forming a band can be tricky. Even if you do manage to convince a couple of your friends to try out for the job of potential rock star, there's no guarantee that they will a) have enough musical aptitude to string a few chords together or b) even be able to nail a steady rhythm. And lugging drums, cymbals, a backbreaking guitar amp, and an even heftier bass amp from one side of town to another – in the back of a Ford Fiesta, probably – for the sake of a couple of hours practice is not a prospect relished by many. TG can testify to that, 'cos we've been there and done it.

That's where the new Fender G-DEC comes in. The good people at Fender have come up with a great way to put you in control of your very own portable band.

Portable band? It looks just like a regular amp, to me...

Yeah? Well check out those flashy green lights on the front. G-DEC actually stands for Guitar Digital Entertainment Centre, and those little lights are a clue to the magic that lurks inside this black box. Two years in the making, this baby is designed to allow players of a beginner to intermediate level to experience what it's like to play in a full band type scenario, by providing a killer selection of drumbeats, bass parts, guitar tones and a plethora of effects.

Combining all of the above enables you to create your own backing tracks, but there is a wide range of preprogrammed tracks already in there to get you started. These cover a variety of genres from punk and metal to jazz and country. All you need to do is plug in your axe and fill in the gaps.

So it's a bit like guitar karaoke?

Got it in one, except this is far cooler. How often do you get to pretend you're Jimi Hendrix (Lefty Haze preset), Dave Gilmour (Think Floyd preset) or Kurt Cobain (Seattle preset) in the space of one afternoon? The neat thing about the G-DEC is that the variety and number of sounds available means you'll be able to impress just about everyone you encounter, whether it's your mum wanting to hear something Beatles inspired, your little brother hankering after some Blink 182-esque pop punk, or your mates who are just dying to be wowed with some Audioslave-style squawking. TG was particularly impressed by the Wah Leader setting. It will make you feel like Tom Morello... even if your widdling is still a tad on the unsophisticated side.

That's pretty damn neat, but what else does it do?

There's an auxiliary input socket on the back to allow you to hook up the G-DEC to your CD or MP3 player. This means you can play your favourite tunes through the amp to help you figure out the guitar parts. How cool is that, eh? There's also a phrase sampler that can record up to 14 seconds of a tune and loop it, then slow it down to half-speed – a big help when you're trying to nail that tricky Eric Clapton lick.

You can also use it to record yourself, then play it back to hear how well you're playing. If you peer round to the back of the amp you will spot an extra input socket, which is just the thing to enable you and a mate – or even you and your guitar tutor – to play through the G-DEC at the same time. This is a great way to learn how to develop interesting twin guitar parts for the backing tracks.

WHO'S IT FOR?

Anyone who wants to practise being in a band, only there's no singer or drummer to fall out with

INFORMATION

ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Solid-state combo with backing tracks
OUTPUT: 15-watt
LOUDSPEAKER: 1x8" Fender Special Design speaker
FEATURES: 50 preset (50 user) backing tracks; effects: 10 reverbs (with adjustable levels), 17 guitar amplifiers (each with gain, volume, tone, compressor, timbre and noise gate parameters), 29 effects, 70 drum patterns (each with temp, key, drum level, bass level, and accompaniment levels), additional guitar input socket, aux input socket, MIDI in/out, digital chromatic tuner, 14-second phrase sampler
CONTROLS: Volume, tone, drums, start/stop for backing tracks, phrase sampler, data wheel, aux, FX, amp model select
WEIGHT: 7.25 kg
DIMENSIONS (inches): 13.5 (H) x 15.5 (W) x 7 (D)
CONTACT: Fender GBI 01342 331700
WEB: www.fender.com

ALTERNATIVELY

The G-DEC is great for portability, though you could consider Line 6's Guitar Port RiffTracker software (£169)

In the absence of willing and musically able friends, the G-DEC is a compact, portable substitute for a real band

That's not all. With this amazing amp you have a vast array of cool guitar toys on your hands. There are 29 effects at your fingertips, including a warm fuzz effect and a pretty convincing touch wah, although we sometimes felt that the overdrive lacked enough power for some of our riffs. There are 17 different amp types on this wee gem, too, which means a big helping hand towards finding your own sound. Throw in the built-in chromatic tuner and useful shoulder strap, and the G-DEC adds up to a rather impressive little bundle.

Is it easy to use?

Constructing your own backing tracks is a little difficult to figure out at first. Just make sure you give the manual a good going over beforehand and you'll be fine. In the absence of willing and musically able friends, the G-DEC is a compact, portable substitute for a real band. It will keep you entertained for hours and, if you're just starting out, it will help you build the confidence you need to start playing with other people. Until then, you'll never have to worry about musical differences again!

FOR: Huge range of backing tracks and effects; portable; no more arguments about what to play

AGAINST: Overdrive setting could have been a bit beefier

TG RATING:

