

GEAR REVIEW

VOX TONELAB EX

1 VALVETRONIX TECHNOLOGY

MULTI-effects units may make you think of big hair, cheesy noises and shallow tone. The organic edge added by this little 12AX7 is sure to change your mind

2 TUNER

WHILE the tuner displays on many multi-effects pedals double as another function, Vox has given you a massive dedicated stage tuner on the EX

3 SPEAKERS

THE built-in speakers let you hear your sounds without plugging into an amp – we wouldn't throw away the headphones just yet, though

Total Guitar
BEST BUY

VOX TONELAB EX £288

This valve-driven multi-effects unit brings you updated tweaks, stage-worthy tuning and a shed load of tone

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Amp modelling multi-effects unit

EFFECTS: 45 effects, 33 amp models, 11 cab models

PATCHES: 100 presets, 100 user patches

CONTROLS: Amp/distortion pedal select, gain, treble, middle, bass, reverb, volume, pedal 1 effect select, pedal 2 effect select/edit, mod select/edit, delay select

SOCKETS: Input, output/phones, aux in, USB

POWER: PSU (included)

CONTACT: Korg UK 01908 857100

voxamps.com

WE love valves. We lust after amp and effects models. So, when some bright spark combines the two, we're really enamoured. Apart from the glow of a 12AX7, Vox's new ToneLab EX gives you a gluttonous 33 amp models, 11 cabs, 11 distortion pedals, four types of delay, three types of reverb and 14 modulation effects. There are also 15 'pedal' effects spanning different categories, one noise reduction model, a tuner with a large, bright display, a pair of built-in stereo speakers for

"tweaking, editing and rehearsing" and a USB port for recording.

With so much at your disposal, there is a danger of getting overwhelmed, but navigating the sounds is easy thanks to the patch selection footswitches. Editing in more detail, however, does require a few more button-pressing combos. There are plenty of Vox models, ranging from the classic (AC30) to the nouveau (Night Train), plus a number of unnamed models based on the usual icons.

Any patch lets you choose any distortion pedal or amp model

(but not both), and it's in these positions that you most appreciate that valve. It brings out the best of the overdrives, giving you Vox's familiar jangle, some huge, thick, rock-stack sounds and cutting high-gain metal tones.

The effects section is strong, too. All the 'standard' effects are there in spades, and Vox has worked them neatly into the presets. Flicking through yields everything from shimmering tremolos to the psychedelic swirl of the stereo U-Vibe, and Andy Summers style modulation to spacey delays. Our particular favourites include the creamy funk of the Vox V847 wah model and the Techno Fuzz (a must-try for fans of The Prodigy or Pendulum). By and large, it sounds bloomin' great, but the weakest in the effects section is probably the Pitch model, which sounded rather plastic to our ears.

The onboard tuner reminds us of a cross between Korg's Pitch Black pedal and its highly regarded rack tuners. You won't have any trouble seeing it onstage, and it responds perfectly. It's a definite strength over its rivals. Those

stereo speakers below the tuner are certainly a useful idea in principle, but in practice they're just too tinny to use as reference for a 'real' setup. We'd probably stick to headphones for practising.

Vox has clearly thought about what guitarists want and followed through with great sounding, valve-powered amp and effects models. The design bods have also paid attention to the details with additions like the USB port and tuner, the latter of which feels like an integral part of your rig rather than an afterthought of LEDs. A greater number of dedicated switches would make the EX easier to use, but also increase its price more. Ultimately, the EX's selling points are its build quality, rich sounds and thoughtful additions to the multi-effects format.

Stuart Williams



The new Vox ToneLab: It's nothing short of EXcellent!

SUMMARY	FEATURES	SOUND QUALITY	VALUE FOR MONEY	BUILD QUALITY	USEABILITY	OVERALL RATING
						★★★★★