



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GAVIN ROBERTS



Line 6 POD HD £349

The mighty bean is back... and this time it's all in glorious high definition *by Trevor Curwen*

When Line 6 launched the POD HD range last year, there were no doubt a few of us wondering where the original bean-shaped version was, as all the three models all had a stage-friendly pedal format. But fear not. Here it is, back in black and stuffed full of new HD modelling, plus the same effects that are found in the M5, M9 and M13 units.

The sounds in the POD HD are stored in 512 memory locations, arranged as eight 'set lists', with each holding 64 programs in 16 banks of four. It

comes with factory presets in four of the eight areas, but all of these can be overwritten. The rest of the locations are empty, in readiness for storing your own sets of sounds.

Each program takes the form of a signal chain consisting of an amp (or two in a Dual Tone parallel configuration) and up to eight simultaneous effects that can be placed before or after the amp model. There's a choice of 22 models, including all 16 that were available at the launch of the HD floor pedals plus six more that have since

been added in an update.

The eight blocks can also be populated with more than 100 onboard effects.

Other notable features include an onboard looper with 48 seconds of memory and a USB 2.0 connection that not only allows the POD HD to be used as a two in/two out audio interface, but enables you to make firmware updates over the web and access computer-based editing software.

In Use

With a solid metal casing and four rubber feet, the POD HD will stay anchored in place on your work surface, or on the top of your amp if you choose to use it as a component in a larger signal chain rather than a self-contained processor. Your guitar plugs in to a socket at the front right of the unit, with monitoring being carried out via a headphone jack in the opposite location. For connecting to a larger

The Rivals

If you're looking for a compact unit that can sit on your desktop for practice, the diminutive **Korg Pandora Mini** (£95) will also slip into your pocket and go anywhere. **Behringer** has its own take on the table-top genre with the vaguely guitar-shaped **V-AMP 3** (£79), featuring 32 amp models, 15 cabinets and 16 effects. If you want a similar set of facilities but need something that you can also use on stage, there are the three floor processors in the **Line 6 HD** range, plus rivals from the likes of **BOSS**, **DigiTech**, **Zoom** and **Vox**.

monitoring system, analogue recording input or a guitar amp, there are left and right standard jack line outputs on the back. The POD HD can also take a microphone signal via a rear-panel XLR socket.

To call up the programs, you scroll through the banks with the rotary knob or a pair of arrowed up and down buttons, then select from any of the four options in the active bank with a set of adjacent A, B, C and D buttons. Tweaking any sound is as easy as turning knobs on your amp, as the POD is equipped with a crescent of eight dials for access to the parameters of drive, bass, middle, treble, presence and channel, plus master volume to set the overall output and a tweak knob that is used to adjust specific parameters stored with a program. A tap tempo button quickly adjusts any time-based effect. For further instant editing of the amp or any block in the chain of effects, there are four soft knobs linked to parameters that are laid out clearly in the display above. An edit page can be called up for further tweaking.

While the display and knobs will get you where you want to be, the process becomes even easier and quicker if you hook it up to a computer via the USB



Connect the POD to a computer and things get even more easy

With a solid metal casing and four rubber feet, the POD HD will stay anchored on your work surface



The POD HD Edit software is free to download



The POD HD's sounds are accessed via eight 'set lists'



Line 6 POD HD

PRICE: £349

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Tabletop amp and FX modeller
AMP MODELS: (22) Bogner Uberschall, Divided by 13 JRT 9/15, Dr Z Route 66, Engl Fireball 100, Fender Bassman, Fender Blackface Deluxe Reverb, Fender Twin Reverb, Gibson EH-185, HiWatt Custom 100 (DR103), Marshall JCM-800 (2204), Marshall JTM-45 MkII, Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier, Park 75, Supro S6616, Vox AC15, Vox AC30 (Top Boost), 'Blackface' Lux VIB, 'Blackface' Double VIB, Tweed B-Man BRT, Brit J-45 NRM, Brit P-75 NRM, Line 6 Elektrik

EFFECTS MODELS: Over 100 (see Line 6 website for full list)

PRESETS: 512 preset locations
OTHER FEATURES: Tuner, looper, software editor/librarian

CONNECTIONS: Standard jack guitar input, XLR mic input, standard jack balanced outputs L & R, standard jack stereo headphone output, FBV jack, USB 2.0, s/pdif digital output
POWER: AC adaptor (supplied)
DIMENSIONS: 89 (h) 279 (w) x 191mm (d)

WEIGHT: (kg/lb) 1.36/3

OPTION: FBV Express MK II four-way foot controller (£85); FBV SBMK II short foot controller (£169)

RANGE OPTIONS: Floor unit POD-powered units include the POD HD300 (£259), POD HD400 (£339) and POD HD500 (£409)

Line 6

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www.line6.com

interface and download the free POD HD Edit editor/librarian software, which delineates everything with colourful, intuitive graphics.

Sounds

So, what of the sounds? Well, when the first Line 6 HD processors appeared we thought the HD modelling was extremely authentic and playable – the best we'd heard from the company. That still holds true here. While traditional favourites get an airing, the inclusion of Divided By 13 and Doctor Z models adds modern boutique spice to your sound palette. The coverage is comprehensive and flexible in the way that you can set the order in the signal chain, even having multiple instances of the same effect.

The Dual Tone arrangement lets you have two separate signal paths, each with adjustable levels and panning, for creating some original sonic blends, or completely different sounds for each side of the stereo output. Apart from the Elektrik, a high-gain Line 6 original with interactive presence and mid-range controls, the six 'new' amp models are not totally fresh, but variations on existing modelled amps – vibrato and bright channels for some Fenders and normal for a Marshall and a

Park. While not exactly breaking new ground, these widen the tonal palette and, with some fresh adjustable amp parameters (sag, hum, bias, bias excursion and master volume), there's more scope for zoning in on a preferred tone.

Functions in looper mode are controlled by the buttons that would normally call up presets – you get record, play/stop and undo plus half speed and reverse playback. Foot control is generally the most practical way to use a looper, though, and that is possible by attaching one of Line 6's FBV controllers to the POD HD, something that also brings great benefits in other areas of operation, such as turning effects on and off and controlling them with a treadle – perhaps facilitating stage use for the bean.

Verdict

The original bean-shaped PODs found their way into a lot of guitarist's homes, and rightly so, as they put a huge resource of instant amp and effects tones at your fingertips long before computer-based equivalents became as accessible and inexpensive as they are now. But, in the light of the available software, is a table-top POD still as relevant as it once was?

Well, there are certainly more options now but there is something reassuring about a

solid piece of hardware compared with something that exists purely on your hard-drive, and the fact that the POD HD is hardware with its own powerful DSP means that you're putting less of a strain on your computer when recording via USB than you would using plug-ins, plus you can get direct low-latency monitoring of the full guitar sound as you play. There's an extremely wide range of high-quality sounds too, with the possibility of more to be added in upgrades.

What you are buying into is a great recording and practice resource that you can fire up any time, and, with the addition of an FBV, could make the transition to a stage. If your need for an amp and FX process is predominantly for stage use you might be better off with one of the stage-ready HD floor processors, however. But for home use the bean is the practical choice, taking up much less space and being easily accessible on your work surface. Welcome back.

The Bottom Line

We like: Detailed and playable HD amp models; huge range of effects; flexible routing options

We dislike: No analogue external input for practice; no phantom power on the mic socket

Guitarist says: The best-sounding bean yet – a superb source of effects for recording and practice

While traditional favourites get an airing, the inclusion of Divided By 13 and Doctor Z models adds modern boutique spice to your sound palette

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★