

Quicktest



Crushsound Farmer's Mill £300

A sound engineer's nightmare?

CONTACT: Crushsound PHONE: +48 422 155014 WEB: www.crushsound.com

It's reassuring to know that in a boutique effects world obsessed with cloning vintage guitar tones, there are still a few mavericks hoping to bring something different to our ears. Billed as the world's first guitar pedal to let you "take control over the infinite musical potential of the broken sound idea," the Farmer's Mill is certainly not for purists.

Housed in a large enclosure that may seem excessive for a stompbox that's more of a special effect than a whole-set staple, the design has the advantage of spacing out the unit's trio of pots so that they can be easily manipulated with a mid-song toe nudge. Inside, the pedal's innards are wired and cable-tied very neatly, with the main board encased in resin to deter cloning.

Sounds

With the onboard mix and rate pots and the true bypass switch at the back all self-explanatory, the four-position mill control offers incrementally more chaotic degrees of crackle and stutter akin to a malfunctioning guitar cable or spluttering amplifier in its death throes. This is engaged only when the footswitch is depressed, so your signal returns to a normal, healthy state when you lift your

foot off. Some readers may be wondering how on earth an effect like this can be used musically, but if you're familiar with the way that Jack White uses heavily gated, distressed-sounding fuzztones with The Raconteurs then you'll get the general idea.

From grainy old vinyl textures on clean tones with the mix set low, right through to implementing randomised, stuttering chaos with additional pedal or amp distortion, there are plenty of ways in which the Farmer's Mill can add interest to your sound. And it's not just limited to guitar either.

Verdict

Niche? Certainly, but for a certain type of guitarist the Farmer's Mill is a beautifully chaotic experience. [CV]

The Bottom Line

We like: Utterly polarising, but a welcome slice of sonic destruction for more leftfield noiseniks

We dislike: Currently expensive, but we're told it's set to become more affordable soon

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Sturdy Stand D42MS £44.99

Want your iPad on a mic stand?

CONTACT: JHS PHONE: 0113 286 5381 WEB: www.jhs.co.uk

This reviewer has needed this product twice in the last month: first when using the DigiTech iPB-10 (and wanting the iPad control surface closer to hand) and secondly after trying and failing to read lyrics off the iPad screen three feet away on a table.

In Use

The D42MS (made by Jim Dunlop) fits an iPad 2 (there are also variants for the other iPads) and thanks to the clever multi-position clamp and multiple mount options for it, it will go anywhere on your mic stand. Other iPad holders we've seen are quite bulky (Kinsman, for example) where this is more sleek and lightweight. On the downside, it won't self-support on a desktop (like the Kinsman does), so must be clamped to a stand of some description. There's enough range of adjustment to clamp the D42MS to the thicker or thinner part of a regular mic stand, but not enough to use it with a thicker speaker stand.

Its separate principal parts (back support, clamp, ball unit and thumbscrew) mean that it's easy to lose one, so we just left it assembled... which is then too bulky – with measurements of 250 (h) x 200 (w) x 75mm (d) – to fit into a gigbag front pocket.

Verdict

iPads are becoming a part of everyday life for more and

more musicians. While it's hard to get very excited about a stand, if you need to have control surfaces, backing tracks or lyrics right there in front of you (and yes, there are now teleprompting apps for the iPad), you'll wonder how you ever lived without it despite, we have to mention, the eye-watering price. [MT]



The Bottom Line

We like: Easy to put together; extremely lightweight; compact design

We dislike: Looking like a geek at gigs; expensive for a bit of plastic

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★ >

Koch Dummybox DB60-HM & DB60-ST £166 & £239

Need your tone at neighbour-friendly volume?

CONTACT: Step Up Audio PHONE: 0208 123 5259 WEB: www.koch-amps.com



This pair of load boxes from Koch are capable of handling 60 watts continuous and come in compact, tough perforated steel housings, with all the relevant controls and interfaces on one end. There's a single input for your amp speaker lead, a through jack and a monitor speaker output linked to a three-position level switch. The other common feature is a pair of filter switches that approximate on- or off-axis microphone placement and 1 x 12 or 4 x 12 enclosures. These feed the recording or PA

outputs – the HM (home) version offers an unbalanced standard jack, 3.5mm jack or phono socket, while the ST (studio/PA) boasts a balanced DI output on a three-pin XLR, with a ground-lift switch.

In Use

On both boxes the filter switches provided a quick and effective speaker emulation that needed very little extra EQ to sound great in a mix. The PA version's DI is padded down to microphone level (-20dBV); ideal for most stage and studio

desks. In all situations, both Dummyboxes perform superbly, transmitting our valve head's complex highs and wide dynamic range with very little alteration and efficient heat dissipation.

Verdict

Well-made and easy to use, the prices are reasonable for such high-end products. The PA version costs more; if it had an unbalanced line-level jack sat next to the XLR we'd have no hesitation in purchasing, but without this, it's a harder

choice. The home version will cover any indoor recording situation with ease. Either way, a Dummybox could prove to be indispensable. [NG]

The Bottom Line

We like: Compact; well made; built to last; usable features

We dislike: No line-level emulated jack output on the Studio model

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

MXR M84 Bass Fuzz Deluxe £157.56

Add some more scuzz to your thumping

CONTACT: Westside Distribution PHONE: 0141 248 4842 WEB: www.jimdunlop.com



Getting quality distortion on bass has never been an easy thing to achieve unless you're happy with cranking up your amp's front end and trusting your speakers to handle it. But if you want something that's more sophisticated and adjustable then a bass fuzz unit is the answer. Sadly, many still have problems in

working on certain notes, tending to oscillate between the actual note and the harmonic it generates. If only we could have something that didn't do that... enter the Bass Fuzz Deluxe.

Compact and efficient, the Deluxe's bypass switch is backed by four rotary controls. These offer adjustment to the level of both the clean (dry) signal and the effected (wet) signal so that you can match or boost one against the other.

Sounds

The tone control works on the fuzz sound alone to smooth things out a bit or to rough them up just as you wish. The fuzz control regulates the amount of effect you deliver so overall there's plenty of adjustment to

hand and all the sounds produced across the pedal's range are solid, usable and without silly extremes. As for note stability, this is stunningly good – it can even handle harmonics and full chords without 'wandering'.

Verdict

For low-end dirt, this is simply the perfect choice. [RN]

The Bottom Line

We like: Fantastic distorted sounds; usability; excellent note stability

We dislike: Quite light, so needs to be on a pedalboard

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★ >





Fender Newporter Mini £238

Travel guitar or toy?

CONTACT: Fender GBI PHONE: 01342 331700 WEB: www.fender.com

Like every niche in the guitar world, the so-called 'travel guitar' market is well catered for: virtually every acoustic manufacturer offers small-size/small-scale 'mini' guitars. Along with its existing Baby and Big Baby guitars, Taylor re-drew the concept with its GS Mini – a small 597mm (23.5-inch) scale, 14-fret guitar with a big voice and price, that doesn't leave too much change from £500. Takamine's EG Mini is another cheaper contender

with 578mm (22.75-inch) scale plus there are longer-standing choices such as Martin's LX series, not to mention the more radical Backpackers.

So what does Fender bring to the table? A Chinese-made mini that reuses the Newporter name from the sixties: a 576mm (22.6-inch) scale 14-fret guitar with, of course, a Fender Strat-style headstock.

The all-laminate-bodied guitar (spruce top, mahogany back and sides) is certainly

diminutive, yet it's tidily made with a clean natural-satin finish and deep-brown mahogany neck. Measured nut width is electric-like at 41.78mm (the GS Mini is slightly wider at 43mm). Yes, it's a little cramped but plays nicely, and is pretty in-tune thanks to the compensated saddle.

Sounds

The small soundbox kicks out limited, bass-light volume but it's quite roomy and resonant

and the electric-like neck feel might well suit lighter gauge strings. Perfectly adequate for strum-a-longs and even songwriting; less so for more serious practising.

Verdict

Yup, it works! Quite well actually, although there's little to make it stand out from the crowd. And a travel guitar without a gigbag? Tut, tut. [DB]

The Bottom Line

We like: Competent build; price; acceptable sound; the Fender headstock

We dislike: No gigbag; just a little bit ordinary...

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Music Nomad Guitar One £13.99

Another 'super' guitar polish, apparently

CONTACT: High Tech Distribution PHONE: 01722 410 002 WEB: www.musicnomadcare.com

"The first Biodegradable Environmentally Friendly one-step answer to effortlessly achieving a show-perfect shine," says Music Nomad of Guitar One. "An ultra-slick, streak-free, high-shine gloss magnifier, organically formulated to clean, polish, wax and protect. Guitar One is infused with white Brazilian carnauba wax that delivers an acoustically transparent durable shield with a high-gloss shine that protects your instrument's finish." We're told too that the preparation is "completely safe on any finish or woods and keeps instruments looking 'as new'."

In Use

Cleaning polyurethane or polyester finishes is straightforward – often a very slightly damp soft cloth followed by a soft dry cloth is all you need. The accepted dangers are those cleaner/polishes with silicone and to a lesser extent wax: both of which can form a residue build-up, and make future finish repairs tricky. Guitar One does contain wax but not silicone. Its spritzing action applies barely any cleaner/polish at all, yet with a good dollop of elbow grease, the results are impressive on a variety of new gloss, satin and nitro finishes we tried.

Verdict

Less is more when it comes to cleaning and polishing but this all-in-one preparation is a very good light solution that'll keep your guitars in prime condition and help support Music Nomad's online musical community, providing help and tips to musicians. [DB]

The Bottom Line

We like: All-in-one clean, polish and wax solution

We dislike: Often just a damp then dry cloth does the job

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

