

Fender Mustang Floor | £298

A carpet-hugging addition to the popular Mustang amp series. *Martin Delaney* takes to the Floor

INCLUDES AUDIO

WHAT IS IT?

Amp/effect modelling pedalboard, with USB connection to FUSE software

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 No nonsense design
- 2 Tried and tested Mustang features
- 3 USB audio out, software integration

Fender pitch the Mustang Floor as their first multi-effects unit but it's more accurate to describe it as the 'brain' of

Fender's popular Mustang amp in pedalboard form: good news if you already have studio monitors and don't need an amp cluttering up the place, while retaining pedals – still an essential part of the guitar experience, in or out of the studio.

The Floor's housed in a low-profile metal case with an expression pedal, nine footswitches, a data wheel and a backlit LCD screen; steel bars protect the wheel and screen from workboot-clad missteps. Minimal or not, it's well connected, with balanced and unbalanced stereo outputs, aux input, external effect loop, MIDI and USB.

Turn the data wheel to audition the presets, which range from classic Fender clean sounds, through typical 'Marshall' tones and modern high-gain sounds. Predictably, the Fender amps sound great: Beauty Clean is a prime example, but the others deliver as well.

Whitechapel Heavy is a persuasive old-school British metal sound and USA Death Metal does a nasty (in a good way) modern high gain sound. Most of the factory content is pretty down to earth, but What The #^<[!?, based on a step filter, shows that the Floor can get somewhat far out too.

The effect chain includes four categorised blocks: Stomp, Mod, Delay

and Reverb, and one effect from each section can be used at a time. Amps and effects are loaded and edited using the buttons around the LCD and the large data wheel. Presets can be named and saved into any of the 100 slots.

Find your way

There are two ways to navigate: in Preset Mode, the up/down switches step through banks of five presets, and footswitches 1-4 select presets within that bank. In FX Select Mode, the up/down footswitches step through presets, while footswitches 1-4 toggle individual effects, pedal-style, within the preset. Use the Tap/Tuner button to sync time-based effects or let your foot linger to bring up a chromatic tuner.

The expression pedal controls volume, but can also be assigned via a toe switch to activate and control an effect in each preset, delay level for example. Expression pedal status is always displayed on the Floor's LCD.

Old Meets New

Fender seem intent on balancing their '50s-tinged heritage with an ambition to keep moving forward with 21st century developments. This policy shows more in their amps than their guitars, especially with the solid-state Mustang range. There's a Mustang for every occasion, starting with the Mini, then models I-V, as combos in

various sizes, and peaking with a 4x12 cabinet and separate 150W stereo head (and, of course, the Floor). What I like is that they all have more or less

the same features: they all use USB and FUSE software, and even the old-school looking head has an auxiliary input and headphone jack, while the classic silverface styling means you can keep your tech-savvy indulgences to yourself when you're playing with a band... if that sort of thing embarrasses you. Which it shouldn't.





At various times I used the Floor through two different combo amps and a Mac into KRK monitors, for solo practice sessions and band rehearsals. I loved the '57 Champ sound immediately but a few tweaks were required with my ultra-clean amps. I used the Utility menu to change the

Mustang Amplifier. It doesn't, however, work as an audio output – you can't use it like a regular soundcard to go to your monitors, you'll need a separate output device and this could be confusing for newbies, which is my only real beef with the Floor. On a more positive note, I didn't experience any

settings. MIDI channels and the pedal CC can be selected in the Utility menu.

Fender FUSE is a standalone controller and librarian application and this is where the 'limitation' of 100 onboard presets disappears, because you can archive and reload the Floor's entire contents or individual presets.

FUSE has direct control over the Floor: as well as providing a graphically expanded view of what's going on, it accesses extra features that aren't

available on the hardware, including reordering the effects chain, USB gain, and noise gate customisation. You can also load and play backing tracks within FUSE – associating them with specific presets for future use. They're not saved to the Floor in any way, but will be remembered when you open FUSE later. There's a healthy FUSE community (www.fuse.fender.com), where you can download presets created by other users.

If you're a tech-wary guitarist, or a producer who needs a selection of quality guitar amps on tap, try this

Floor's output to Mono, and selected PA System as the output voicing, instead of using Combo or Stack. I also edited the sag and bias settings, important features for replicating the behaviour of tube amps. I added a looper pedal on the external effects loop, and played backing tracks through the aux input.

Ultimately, I believe you get the best guitar sound by miking a speaker, but that's not always possible. The Floor provides three options: through an amp and miked; through a soundcard; or – the easiest – straight to the computer via USB. The Floor is USB class-compliant – it doesn't need any software drivers and appears in your software's audio preferences as

noticeable latency in Logic or Live, and the recorded results were noise-free with no nasty surprises.

The Floor sends and receives MIDI, although strangely it doesn't transmit alongside audio through USB, only through the 5-pin MIDI jacks, so you'll need a USB to MIDI interface if you want to go that way. The expression pedal sends a MIDI CC, incoming program changes will select presets 0-99, and CCs will alter amp and effect

Looks are deceiving

Ruthlessly practical, versatile and well-built, the Floor also includes a very decent software package. In the studio it buddies up with your computer, and on stage it goes through a PA or amp. If you're a tech-wary guitarist, or a producer who needs a selection of quality guitar amps on tap, try this. Its conservative design style could easily see it dismissed by thrill-seeking guitarists, but judge with your ears and not your eyes. **FM**



SPECS

System Requirements:
PC: XP SP3/Windows Vista/Windows 7, Pentium III 1.4GHz, 512MB RAM, 1GB free hard drive space, minimum video resolution 1024 x 768, IE 7.0

Mac: Intel-based Mac, OS X 10.5.8, Safari 4.0

Features:
 Metal housing
 Nine footswitches
 13 amp models
 37 effect models
 100 preset slots
 Archive and edit through USB using Fender FUSE
 Balanced XLR outputs, unbalanced outputs on 1/4-inch Stereo aux in 1/8-inch headphones out Mono effect loop on 1/4-inch in and out jacks
 Multifunction expression pedal with toe switch
 Bank select switches
 Effect switches
 FX loop switch
 Chromatic tuner
 Tap tempo for time-based effects
 Backlit LCD screen with scroll wheel
 Optional EXP-1 expression pedal and MS-4 four-button footswitch

Dimensions:
 521 x 220 x 82.5mm
Weight:
 4.08kg

ALTERNATIVES



Amplitube 3
 160 euros

Software based solution, runs as standalone app or as a plug-in within other music software.

www.ikmultimedia.com



Line6 Pod HD300
 £275

Features amp simulations (including a bass amp), multi-effects, mic models, an onboard looper and digital outputs.

www.line6.com



Digitech iPB-10
 £499

Unique hardware modeller that uses an iPad app to edit patches.

www.digitech.com

FutureMusic VERDICT



The Mustang Floor has great-sounding amps and effects, and is as simple to use as it gets.