## Roger Linn Design AdrenaLinn III | £220

Amp sims abound, there's a multitude of guitar multi-FX and no dearth of drum sequencers. But all in one stomp-box? *Karl Foster* licks Linn's latest



#### WHAT IS IT?

MIDI-controllable amp sims and stereo multieffects with beat-synced modulation and filtering, and programmable drum machine, aimed at the adventurous axe-meister

#### CONTACT

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#### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Extensive range of highly usable amp simulations
- 2 Both trad and weird, editable multi-FX, many with tempo-sync
- 3 Great-sounding, programmable beat-box

ack in 2004, FM bestowed a Platinum Award on Roger Linn's AdrenaLinn II. Lauded for its excellent sound. instant-gratification potential and value for money, the predecessor to the AdrenaLinn III presented a number of niggles, some of which have not been addressed in this latest incarnation, but let's save carping for later. First, it's history time. Mr Linn is most famously associated with the LinnDrum. Launched in 1982, this drum machine can be heard on numerous pop records of the decade. It's hardly surprising. then, that Roger has included drummachine capability in his guitar-effect/ amp-sim AdrenaLinns. But before we

get too excited about the percussion

section, it's more of a beat-box than a percussion sequencer. While there are 200 slots, the rhythms are two-bar patterns that are tricky to manipulate from the front panel, so no fancy fills and exotic variations are on tap. That said, the drum sequences sound juicy and sure beat using a metronome when practising licks. Styles range from straight-ahead rock to swinging and syncopated patterns, encouraging you to try different genres as you play along.

#### Amped up

Of course, the important thing is the guitar processing. Amp-wise, simulations range from prehistoric Fenders, Vox and Marshall models, though crunchier vintage Marshalls and

Boogies, right up to the JCM2000 monster, Van Halen's signature Peavey 5150 MkII, Boogie Dual Rectifier, Hiwatt and even the boutique Soldano, with offerings from ENGL, Matchless and more. Bassists, too, can jack into Ampeg SVT, Fender Bassman and Gallien-Krueger rigs. While you've no option to mix and match virtual cabs, or even mess with mic placement, the sims are sweet enough as they are. Just plug straight into an audio interface or mixing desk and enjoy truly realisticsounding backline. Even the high-gain models perform controllably, probably thanks to an unobtrusive noise gate that's new to the Linn III.

The effects section is where it's at. however. Guitarists will sniff at multi-FX that don't include such staples as delay, reverb, chorus, flange and such, but there are no sniffles here - more of a big, man-size. Kleenex-bound parp. Y'see, while the distortion sounds are good and analogue in tone, helped in large part by a responsive compressor for Tufnel-esque, day-long sustain, the modulation effects are something else. How many studio hours have been wasted trying to get a tremolo effect to match the tempo of a song? The Linn III's trem locks to the beat-box's tempo, so it can warble or ping-pong in stereo, in perfect sync. The same goes for chorus, flanger, pan and filter-sweep rates. There's even the means to have the chorus follow the envelope of the







#### **Making connections**

Conspicuous by its absence is a USB port for direct link to a computer. It's rare to find a desktop audio processor without a direct data connection for both on-screen patch editing and streaming audio and MIDI. On which topic, the 1/4-inch jack outs are unbalanced, so watch those

audio cable runs – electromagnetic fields could induce hum. The headphone-out is, thankfully, a proper 1/4-inch stereo job rather than weeny mini-jack, and MIDI is most welcome for hooking up switches and expression pedals: up to 10 of the former and two of the latter.

All is not lost when manipulating the AdrenaLinn III on computer, however. Third-party developer SoundTower (soundtower.com) has developed a patch editor for Mac and PC, with which you can edit effects, drum patterns and sequences onscreen, save your set-ups to

disk and then load them onto the Linn via MIDI. At a mere £20, the SoundTower SoundEditor is a must-buy for those who like to delve into the guts of a device.

Incidentally, owners of the AdrenaLinn I or II can upgrade to version III for a mere £59.99. Not bad.



note being played, rather than just cycling away at a set rate.

#### **Immodulation**

Auto-wah is, for a change, well implemented – many guitarists don't like automatic wah, preferring to balance on one foot and waggle a rocker pedal. But the Linn III's wah is a good

But it's not all enchantment. On lifting the Linn out of the box, it's knob came off. The preset knob, that is. While the metal housing is reasonably sturdy, if not as tank-like as, say, a Boss stomp-box, the four endless rotaries along the top are tacky, along with the miniscule input-level knob and four mode-change buttons. The non-latching

the 'Making connections' panel for an inspired work-around.

#### And in the end...

The AdrenaLinn III is an unusual beast. It has some great amp tones, excellent effects control and some truly wild treatments to cater for the clinically insane. It'd sit well in the studio, be a

boon for struggling songwriters and be utterly fab when inviting friends back for a postpub jam. At the price, it's a steal, so if you need instant guitar-

gargling gratification, this new Linn delivers affordably. Just be prepared to sweat when attempting to master its finer programming points. FM

### Even though it has performancetype footswitches, you wouldn't want the Linn III sitting stage-front

'un, the effect intensifying the harder you pick. The same goes for Talk Box, which sounds similar, but incorporates vaguely vowel-like sounds.

The biggest jollies to be had, meanwhile, are with the randomise and arpeggio functions. The former can randomise certain settings of select modulation effects, so you can have a flanger jump about all over the shop, in tempo, rather than just cycling. And the arpeggiator sequences are as you'd imagine – play simple chords and the Linn will bung in extra notes, just like the arpeggiator on a synth. If your creativity glands are as desiccated as the Kalahari, then kick in the arpeggiator and have it auto-create new tunes from tired old riffs. Magic stuff!

metal footswitches appear sturdy, enabling you to stop and start the drums, engage the main effect for the selected preset and more, but two big issues raise their heads at this juncture.

First, even though it has performance-type footswitches, you wouldn't want the Linn III sitting stage-front. It's not heavy-duty enough for live work, although you could invest in rugged MIDI foot controllers and tuck the unit away in the wings.

Second, it suffers an affliction similar to that of many hardware synthesizers: there are too few buttons for far too many functions, so programming it from the frontpanel, even with the clearly laid-out settings matrix, is a bit of a bind. You can see

# FutureMusic VERDICT BUILD VALUE EASE OF USE VERSATILITY RESULTS

Not a live tool, but a great studio amp sim and effecter that'll inspire oodles of new song ideas

#### SPECS

Audio input: Single 1/4inch unbalanced jack

Audio output: Two 1/4-inch unbalanced jacks - left , left & right — plus stereo 1/4-inch headphone jack

MIDI: In and Out - supports up to 10 MIDI footswitches and two expression pedals

Effects: Distortion (with scoop), fuzz, tremolo, pan, filter with resonance control, tremolo (inc random), filter (inc random), filter (inc random), chorus, rotary, vibrato, auto-wah, talk box, volume swell, stereo reverb, delay, EQ, sci-fi.

Signal processing: Noise gate, compressor, variable-frequency lowpass filter, tuner

Effects control: Certain effects feature arpeggiator sequences - 20 presets, user-editable option. Randomise function. Adjustable stereo width of mod and delay effects

Amp models: 40 - tube and tranny sims, inc 4 bass amps, plus post-distortion treble control

Drums: 200 userprogrammable beats featuring 40 sampled sounds, plus two degrees of swing control. Can be triggered via MIDI and routed through guitar FX section

User FX presets: 200 User drumbeat presets:

Dimensions:

185 x 115 x 50mm Weight: 0.68kg

#### **ALTERNATIVES**



M-Audio Black Box

£110

Guitarists on a budget, but with still a yen for beat-boxequipped amp sims, might plump for the Black Box.

#### maudio.co.uk



Digitech RP350

It's loaded with 27 amp models, 18 cab models, 73 effects and 60 drum machine patterns, there are balanced stereo XLR outs and even a USB port.

digitech.com

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