



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SIMON LEE



Fender Mustang Floor £298

The Big F takes its latest multi-effects and amp-modelling technology and throws it on the floor *by Trevor Curwen*

Large multi-effects floor pedals have been a staple in the product ranges of many manufacturers for many years, but one company that has stayed away from this field has been Fender... until now. The Mustang Floor is the first of its kind from Fender, and a natural evolution from the excellent Mustang amplifiers, which offer modelled sounds.

What you get with the Mustang Floor is the same set of facilities you'd find in a Mustang amp, but without the power amp and speaker. It's a unit that can undertake many tasks: it can be a multi-effects unit between guitar and amp, and a modelling preamp that can be plugged straight into a PA system via speaker-emulated outputs, or it can send a signal via USB to a computer for recording. It's also a comprehensive practice tool, using its aux input for connecting an MP3 player or similar and headphone output for monitoring.

There are no complaints about the Mustang Floor's build quality: its sheet-metal construction looks like it will withstand the rigours of regular use, and the only easily breakable bits – a large data wheel and an array of squishy illuminated buttons – are protected by metal rails.

Sounds in the unit are saved as 100 presets (20 banks of five), all of which can be overwritten, and constructed from a chain of five modules – amp, stomp, mod, delay and reverb.

An upper tier of four footswitches and a lower tier of five control the action. The unit can operate in two modes, which are selected using the first footswitch in the top tier.

In Preset mode, footswitches are used to select presets. The

lower five call up the presets in each bank, while the two upper middle footswitches scroll up and down through the banks. When switched to FX Select mode, you get operation more like an array of individual pedals for the five lower footswitches. Four of them turn the individual effects blocks within a preset on and off, while the fifth accesses an effects loop that lets you add other pedals to the system. The

fourth footswitch on the top tier has a dual use, for tap tempo and accessing the onboard tuner. By default, the pedal treadle works as a volume pedal unless you engage it by pressing on the toe. In this mode it becomes an expression pedal, which can be applied to any parameter in a preset and works really well as a wah. If you need more control, you can add another expression pedal and a four-way footswitch.

Sounds

The range of amp and effect models in the Mustang Floor is not massive, but it covers most eventualities. Of the 12 amps, seven are named after Fender models, while the rest have generic names but offer familiar tones, ensuring all the

It can be a multi-effects unit between guitar and amp, or work as a modelling preamp plugged straight into a PA



Outputs include emulated XLR/jack output, USB, 'phones, MIDI and an effects loop

The Rivals

Zoom's G5 (£259) has up to nine effects in each of its 297 programmable memories and footswitches assigned to four of them, plus a valve-based boost. DigiTech's RP500 (£249) and RP1000 (£359) both offer 200 memories and a Pedalboard mode using five footswitches to turn stompboxes and effects on and off. The Boss GT-100 (£515) has 400 memories (200 user/200 preset) and a Manual mode for switching of individual effects. The Line 6 POD HD500 (£429), HD400 (£360) and HD300 (£275) are the company's latest take on the genre and allow some individual effect switching



The Mustang's editable presets include seven Fender amp models

boxes are ticked when it comes to the most popular brands/models. All the amps play well, and, if you're a Fender fan, you'll welcome the variety available from the array of models, providing an authentic representation of tweed and 60s 'blackface' sounds.

As for the effects, the stomp module features a pair of compressors, overdrive, fuzz, wah, touch-wah and fuzz touch-wah. The modulation category has the most types available, including two choruses, two flangers, two tremolos, phaser, pitch shifter, step filter, ring modulator, a tasty emulation of Fender's Vibratone rotary speaker, plus wah and auto-wah again. The delay section includes mono and stereo tape delays, which feature accurate tones plus lots of control over the darkness of the repeats. Reverbs include plates, a variety of emulated spaces and a couple of emulations of a vintage Fender spring unit, which nicely recreate the twangy shimmer of the real thing thanks to an array of five crucial parameters.

Fender has combined amps and effects to fill the unit with a set of presets, and there is some very playable stuff here that

covers many musical genres. However, while there may be some that you wish to save, ultimately, each of the presets is a potential blank canvas for your own composite sounds and effects-pedal rigs. There are more than enough presets onboard to have a few with amp simulations for home practice use and recording, and then a bunch more with no active amp sim, but each with a different set of 'pedals' to call up for use with your proper amp.

Editing the presets from the Mustang Floor's front panel is dead simple, courtesy of the squidgy buttons and the data wheel, the latter of which is pressed to scroll through parameters and turned to edit them. Mind you, it's not a system that lends itself to quick tweaks under stage conditions, like a set of multiple dedicated knobs would. A smart user who sets up a series of patches for a gig in advance, however, may not even need to lay a hand on the unit.

If you prefer, the whole editing process can be carried out on a computer loaded with Fender's free FUSE software. This gives you the opportunity to access extra hidden parameters and also offers

unlimited preset storage, any available firmware upgrades and additional free content from Fender.

So, how does the Mustang Floor fit into the whole scheme of things? Well, in some ways it could be seen to be quite spartan compared to some rivals that sport loopers, more presets, more effects in the signal chain and a wider overall variety of effects. What it does have, though, is a refreshing simplicity to it. We particularly like the way, with a single footswitch press, you can instantly change modes from preset call-up to switching individual effects in and out. That same function on some floor processors can be a little more clunky, involving holding a footswitch down or hitting two at once. What's more, that five-pedal signal chain, with its set order, offers ease of use alongside familiarity and a real everyday meat-and-potatoes range of musical effects. A setup with just an overdrive pedal, wah, tremolo, delay and reverb can go an awfully long way.

Verdict

The Mustang Floor has plenty going for it. It's reasonably priced and has a set of features that would suit the needs of both bedroom and gigging guitarists. It offers a wide range of amp tones for recording, but also a different 'pedalboard' for each song in your live set. The multi-effects floor processor marketplace is crowded, but the Mustang Floor's uncomplicated nature could just swing it as your preferred choice. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Rugged build quality; easy switching between patches and individual effects

We dislike: Onstage parameter tweaking could be difficult; USB interface facility is output only – no audio return from computer

Guitarist says: Fender's first foray into multi-effects brings ease of use to the forefront for a convincing performance



Fender Mustang Floor

PRICE: £298

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Floor-based amp and effects processor

PRESETS: 100

AMP MODELS: '57 Deluxe, '59 Bassman, '57 Champ, '65 Deluxe Reverb, '65 Princeton, '65 Twin Reverb, Super-Sonic, British 60s, British 70s, British 80s, American 90s, Metal 2000, Studio Preamp
EFFECTS: Overdrive, Wah, Touch Wah, Fuzz, Fuzz Touch Wah, Simple Compressor, Compressor, Sine Chorus, Triangle Chorus, Sine Flanger, Triangle Flanger, Vibratone, Vintage Tremolo, Sine Tremolo, Phaser, Pitch Shifter, Mono Delay, Mono Echo Filter, Stereo Echo Filter, Multitap Delay, Ping Pong Delay, Ducking Delay, Reverse Delay, Tape Delay, Stereo Tape Delay, Small Hall, Large Hall, Small Room, Large Room, Small Plate, Large Plate, Ambient, Arena, Fender '63 Spring, Fender '63 Spring

CONNECTIONS: Std jack input and unbalanced outputs (L/R), XLR outputs (L/R), std jack insert loop (send and return), mini-jack aux input, mini-jack stereo headphone output, MIDI in, MIDI out, USB, EXP pedal/footswitch socket

CONTROLS: Output level, data knob, buttons for Amp, Stomp, Mod, Delay, Reverb, Util, Save, Exit, Pedal

DIMENSIONS: 520 (w) x 80 (h) x 220mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 4.08/9

POWER REQUIREMENTS: 12V DC adaptor (supplied)

OPTIONS: EXP-1 expression pedal (£60), MS4 4-button footswitch (£59)

Fender GBI

01342 331700

www.fender.co.uk

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★