

Behringer Ultra-G GI100 active DI box £39

Behringer provides yet another bargain basement solution for real-world guitarists by Chris Vinnicombe



The Ultra-G is a useful tool for live and studio work

FOR ALL THE GIANT STEPS IN amp-modelling over the last few years, many of us still prefer the living, breathing sound of our own guitar amplifier pushing air with a couple of choice microphones capturing the

results. Often though, it's just impractical; perhaps you are in a small studio with live drums and want to avoid any tub-thumping bleeding on to the guitar track. The Behringer Ultra-G GI100 is a robust aluminium unit with stackable rubber corners that looks more than up to the job. Around the back, an XLR output is joined by a pair of switches that engage 4 x 12 cabinet simulation and ground lift. If you use a valve amplifier, you'll still need to connect the direct link output to a speaker cabinet of the right impedance to provide your amp with a load.

IN USE: We sent the XLR out to a mixer and then a Mac running Garageband. The voicing of the speaker simulation is essentially a preset EQ curve that mimics a mic'd 4 x 12 cabinet. It's not the most detailed or three-dimensional virtual cabinet sound we've heard, but it does the business

BEHRINGER ULTRA-G	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
In use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

WE LIKED Myriad uses; great value
WE DISLIKED Cabinet simulation a little underwhelming

with largely noiseless, fuss-free performance.

Verdict

For £39 it's hard to complain about this unit. It isn't going to make engineers across the land bin their SM57s, but it will prove useful for live use or in the studio, whether you need to DI a bass head at a gig or get your amp sound down on tape quickly and quietly.

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★

KEY INFO ULTRA-G GI100 **PRICE:** £39 **TYPE:** ACTIVE DI-BOX WITH CAB SIM **WEB:** WWW.BEHRINGER.COM

Charlie Hall Cutting Edge pedal £43

Instant early Shads tone for sixties throwbacks. Nice! by Roger Newell



Hanking you: the Cutting Edge gives a reproduction of an AC15 tone circuit

SPORTING A DISTINCTIVE Fiesta Red finish this deceptively simple pedal box is destined to cause quite a stir, particularly within the fraternity of Shadows soundalikes. Designed by electronics wiz Charlie Hall, who is responsible for the much-loved Echoes From The Past program, the Cutting Edge is hand-built using the very best

quality components. There's no need for batteries as this is a non-powered switching unit that gives an accurate reproduction of the original Vox AC15 tone circuit. Older amplifiers had this four-section passive filter circuit installed to prevent unwanted thumping sounds when the tremolo effect was on, but as a by-product the overall sound became much tighter.

SOUNDS: On the face of it that may not seem much, but if you're one of the many players constantly looking for that elusive Hank Marvin sound this will bring you one huge step closer. As fans will know, for most of the early big hits by The Shadows, Hank continued to use a Vox AC15 as volume was certainly not an issue in EMI's hallowed studios at Abbey Road. Because of its unique tone circuit this has become an essential ingredient in obtaining that much desired, recorded sound. For full effect it should be the last thing plugged into your amp, so if you're using effects (most likely echo) this goes between

CUTTING EDGE PEDAL	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
In use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

WE LIKED Simple and effective; great colour
WE DISLIKED Not everyone will appreciate its subtle manipulation

them and the amp. When switched off the unit allows true signal bypass, but when activated the sound tightens up to become thinner with less bass response. This tonal range can be replaced by resetting your amplifier circuit so the overall dynamics are not lost, but now you have a tighter and warmer sound that will actively relive a classic era.

Verdict

Quite simply this is a tonal time machine that subtly revisits the days before top boost was invented. Try one.

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★

KEY INFO CUTTING EDGE PEDAL **PRICE:** £43 **TYPE:** TONAL FOOTPRINT PEDAL **WEB:** WWW.EFTP.CO.UK

Tapco Link.USB 24-bit USB audio interface £158

Another compact interface to get guitar in and out of your computer by Trevor Curwen

WITH ALL THE RECORDING AND amp emulation software available these days it's no surprise that more and more guitarists are starting to explore the possibilities opened up by combining guitar with computer. In response, more companies are catering for this by producing audio interfaces with Hi-Z inputs so you can just plug that axe straight in and get on with it. One such new kid on the block is the Tapco Link.USB, a portable unit that plugs into and gets its power directly from your computer's USB socket.

TAPCO LINK.USB	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
■ WE LIKED Ingenious method of standing vertical or horizontal; quality preamps	
■ WE DISLIKED No input metering but it's not a deal breaker, you can use your ears	

It's a two input unit with phantom powered XLR mic sockets and 6.4mm jacks that are switchable to accept line or guitar levels. There's a stereo output to your monitoring system plus a headphones output, each having separate volume knobs.

IN USE: While all audio interfaces do basically the same job, and many have identical features, it's the quality of the preamps and converters that can make the real difference. The Tapco scores highly here with its Mackie-designed preamps that deliver a clean and detailed sound with both mic and guitar. Latency is not really a problem either as twisting the 'mix' knob clockwise lets you blend in the direct and immediate sound at the input with the sound coming back from your computer.

Verdict

If you are looking for a reasonably



priced (street price is £99), decent sounding audio interface, this Tapco is definitely a contender with rugged portability... and if you've yet to have a go at computer-based recording, the included Tracktion 2 music production software is no bad starting point.

The Tapco Link.USB scores highly on preamp quality

Guitarist RATING



KEY INFO TAPCO LINK.USB **PRICE:** £158 **TYPE:** USB AUDIO INTERFACE WITH BUNDLED SOFTWARE **WEB:** WWW.LOUDTECHINC.COM

Tone Pros Official Kluson 'Upgrade' Tuners System II Series £45



Kluson tuners get the Tone Pros treatment. We get a UK luthier's opinion by Chris George

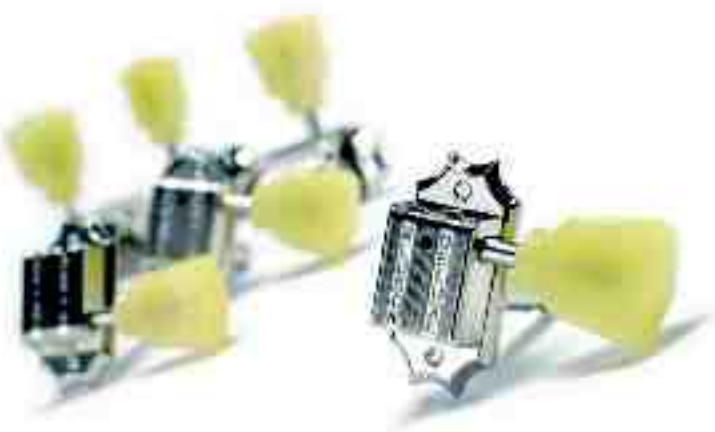
ON A NUMBER OF RECENT custom builds I've been asked for a vintage Gibson-esque vibe and have fitted both Gotoh and Schaller vintage series tuners, which are both very fine. I've always preferred screw-in bushings over the press in ones here, but these new tuners are available with both styles and also with a top-locking mechanism. There's a choice of chrome, gold or nickel plating as well as a satin nickel for more vintage applications.

This push-fit bushing set isn't a direct replacement for a vintage guitar due to

a small collar around the base of each string post, so you'll need to open the back of the headstock hole out to approximately 9mm.

IN USE: These tuners boast a gorgeous creamy button colour, a great complement to ivory/cream bindings. Most machines of this ilk have what are affectionately called 'snot' coloured buttons...

Overall quality and feel is impressive: a beautiful nickel-plate with not a hint of a sharp edge. They are perfectly smooth with just the right amount of resistance throughout the gear cycle. There's no extra stiffness as the worm gear turns the cog and absolutely no backlash as you tune up or down. These machines do not rely on string tension when tuning down. The gearing ratio on the push fit tuners is 16:1; on the screw-fit sets it's 15:1. Both ratios, however, are an improvement on vintage Klusons.



Verdict

Fettling the nut for action and the bridge requires constant retuning and this is where you realise just how good the tuners are. Well done Tone Pros!

Guitarist RATING



Tone Pros' tuners get the luthier thumbs-up

KLUSON TUNERS	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
In use	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
■ WE LIKED Improved vintage spec; finish choice	
■ WE DISLIKED Not quite true vintage replacements	

KEY INFO TONE PROS KLUSON TUNERS **PRICE:** £45 **TYPE:** IMPROVED 'VINTAGE' TUNERS **TEL:** WESTSIDE 0141 248 4812