



HEADRUSH

PEDALBOARD

POWERED BY
FLAVOR
HD EXPANDED

HEADRUSH

D10 CLEAN SHIVERS

METER FX TONES

SAVE

INTENS 57%

STEP 10

INTENS 100%

MIX

METEFX TONES

ADD

SELECT

EDIT

MASTER

PHONES

AUX

PUSH TO ENTER

MCS

- RIG A
- RIG B
- VIBRATO
- DYN DEL
- AIR KEY
- DYN 2
- DRBLR 1
- DRBLR 2
- LOWER
- TEMPO

HOLD FOR VIEW



HEADRUSH PEDALBOARD £899

A new company in the guitar gear world puts some familiar modelling technology in a brand-new setting to take on the established names

Words Trevor Curwen **Photography** Neil Godwin

What You Need To Know

- 1 HeadRush? Never heard of them...**
Well, you may recall the Akai HeadRush delay/looper, and this company is a new brand under the inMusic umbrella, which includes Akai, as well as Alesis and M-Audio.
- 2 Not another all-in-one floor unit. We've just had the Line 6 Helix LT...**
They are popular items and this one seems designed to compete with the Helix LT in the same price bracket.
- 3 So does it bring anything new to the table or, the, erm, floor?**
It's based on the modelling technology from the Eleven Rack, which is revamped, but it does have innovative touchscreen editing that's never been seen in a floor processor (unless you count DigiTech's iPB-10, based around an iPad).

Whether you like the idea of the all-in-one modelling processor or not, they are definitely here to stay and rapidly becoming a common sight on stages everywhere. And now there's a new kid on that block in the shape of the HeadRush Pedalboard – but it hasn't just emerged out of nowhere. HeadRush is part of the inMusic group that includes Akai and other companies, and the Pedalboard has modelling from the team behind Digidesign's Eleven amp and effects simulation software for Pro Tools, as seen in the Eleven Rack, a rackmount unit that we looked at almost 100 issues back and is still favoured by many guitarists.

Now, HeadRush is at pains to point out that Pedalboard is not just an Eleven Rack strapped to a foot controller with some extra features. The company tells us that it has, in fact, completely reconstructed the whole architecture of the DSP system, starting by disassembling the legacy Eleven Rack/plug-in code to create Eleven HD Expanded with more realistic modelling and increased flexibility for creating rigs.

This new DSP platform, making use of a quad-core processor, has also allowed feature-set expansion to include a faster and more guitarist-friendly user interface, reverb/delay tail spill-over between presets, the ability to load custom/third-party impulse responses, a looper with 20 minutes of record time, and more. What's also new to this genre is the inclusion of a seven-inch touchscreen to edit patches and to create new ones.

In form, the Pedalboard most closely resembles Line 6's Helix Floor in that it has a treadle and 12 footswitches with LED 'scribble strips' showing each switch's function and a colour-coded LED for each, although in this instance that LED sits above rather than being a ring surrounding the footswitch. Construction is solid and roadworthy, and features a nice touch with a channel on the base to pass cables through, helping keep stage clutter down.

Knob furniture is neat and kept to a minimum, because a lot of what you need to do can be carried out with a finger on the touchscreen (see the 'How Easy Is Editing?'



The Rivals

In terms of the asking price, Line 6's new Helix LT (£933), reviewed last issue and with a street price at around £850, is the main competitor here, but also new to the scene is the Atomic AmpliFire 12 (£759). Atomic's diminutive AmpliFire, featuring amp modelling technology from Studio Devil, has been seen as a quality lower-cost alternative to Fractal and Kemper and this new top-of-the-line, full-sized 12-footswitch processor expands on its feature set. Above the £1k mark, there is, of course, the LT's big brother, the Line 6 Helix Floor (£1,385), and from Fractal there is the AX8 (€1,599) or its effects-only FX8 Mark II (€1,199)



box on p110). All of the connections are located on the back panel and include a USB socket that not only allows computer backup of the Pedalboard's presets and import of impulse response (IR) files, but its use as an audio interface for recording or reamping, with four channels in and out, including stereo dry and wet signals. There are also MIDI sockets for Program and Control Change functionality and an Aux input so you can connect a music player for practice purposes.

Each of the 270 presets in the unit is known as a Rig and is constructed from a chain of 11 blocks that can be placed in any order in a single linear chain or a choice of two parallel split chains. To fill the blocks, you get 33 amps, 15 cabs (with 10 mic choices) and 42 effects. Cabinet sounds can be expanded by loading third-party IR files, with all common formats supported

1. The innovative touchscreen lets you swipe with your finger to put pedals where you want them
2. Silent practising is aided by separate knobs for headphone volume and music from the aux input
3. Each pedal has its own individual settings screen with preset menu, parameters, and colour assignment
4. There are various options for outputting sound, plus a single send and return loop
5. Not only do you get colour coding, you also get your effect's name next to its footswitch



– an exclusive download from Celestion is included to get you started. You can also dedicate a block to any external pedals that you connect to the rear panel send and return loop.

There are several modes available for calling up sounds, easily changed by a couple of footswitch presses. In Stomp mode, the two footswitches to the left scroll through and select Rigs, while the central eight footswitches call up stompboxes within a selected Rig. Then in Rig mode, the left switches scroll through the Rig banks, while the eight select rigs. The HeadRush also offers a Hybrid mode where you can have Rigs on the top row of the eight and stomps on the bottom. Besides these, you can access setlists – ordered collections of Rigs for your gigs.

Performance is aided by the onboard treadle expression pedal that can operate

either as pedal A or B: a press on the toe switches between these, or you can plug in an external pedal to take over the B functions. There's a Classic mode for adjusting a single parameter or Advanced mode with up to four parameters.

Sounds

While there are usable Rigs onboard, most users will probably want to create their own and the available models offer plenty of scope for a wide range of tones, especially if you choose to upload IRs for any rigs that include amp and cab.

Playing through the Pedalboard feels fine and puts some quality sounds at your disposal: Fender, Marshall, Vox, Soldano and Mesa/Boogie amps feature heavily, while the effects cover all the conventional choices and will combine nicely to create Rigs that are pure effects pedalboards in

How Easy Is Editing?

The touchscreen offers the quickest and most intuitive onboard editing functionality that we've seen in a unit of this type, making it dead easy to edit a rig or create one from scratch. You can simply swipe an object (pedal, amp or cab) to change its position in the signal chain. A tap on one of them will bring up three major parameters to edit with the three

adjacent soft knobs – touch anywhere in the parameter box to bring up the next set of three parameters – while a double-tap opens a dedicated screen for that object, including the option of changing its LED colour coding. When you load or change a particular pedal, you also get a useful choice of instant preset options for its actual sound/settings. There's also an encoder to move through selectable items onscreen or to adjust parameters.

Of course, during a gig situation you may not want to be on your knees messing with the touchscreen, encoder or knobs, so there's also a Hands-Free Mode whereby you hold the footswitch assigned to the model that you want to adjust, which brings up a set of parameters on the top footswitches that can be selected and adjusted using the expression pedal. And while you can save presets to a computer, there's no dedicated software editor.



HEADRUSH PEDALBOARD

PRICE: £899

ORIGIN: Taiwan

TYPE: Amp modeller/multi-effects pedalboard processor

FEATURES: Tap tempo, tuner, looper, 4-in/4-out USB audio interface, expression treadle, LED backlit display with touch interface

PRESETS: 270

MODELS: 33 amps, 15 cabs, 10 mics, 42 effects (6 distortion, 5 dynamic/EQ, 11 modulation, 7 reverb/delay, 8 rotary, 5 expression)

CONTROLS: Master Volume, Phones, Aux, Push To Enter, 3x 'soft' knobs, 12x footswitches, ground lift switch, rack/stomp switch, amp/line switch, pedal treadle

CONNECTIONS: Standard guitar input, minijack stereo aux input, standard main outputs (L/Mono, R), XLR main outputs (L/Mono, R), standard stereo phones output, standard Send (L/Mono, R), standard Return (L/Mono, R), MIDI IN, MIDI OUT/THRU, USB, expression pedal

POWER: Mains power (IEC lead)

DIMENSIONS: 599 (w) x 284 (d) x 74mm (h)

HeadRush

01252 896040

www.headrushelectronics.com



The treadle delivers two different selectable functions, but if you don't want to be switching between them you can plug in an external expression pedal

front of your amp. While the current models are pretty much the same that you get with the most updated version of Eleven Rack, HeadRush tells us that it's working on new models that are slated for announcement at Summer NAMM.

Finally, the Looper function is separate rather than being a block in a Rig and features up to 20 minutes with 100 loop layers. It's particularly straightforward to use with many useful functions spread across the footswitches, including an 'Insert' function that offers punch-in/out for a specific part of your loop and will overwrite all previous layers.

Verdict

The Pedalboard offers a feature set that can adequately take care of onstage, recording and practice needs. Longterm Eleven Rack fans familiar with the sound set might see it as a welcome alternative to taking the rack on stage and will be pleased they have more options for siting effects in the chain. For others, while the interface may confer an advantage that will attract potential users to the unit, it faces tough competition sonically, particularly from Line 6's Helix LT. As always, if the price is right, try one out and see whether it has the sounds you need to get the job done. **G**

8/10

PROS Touchscreen, colour-coding, scribble strips; onboard sounds cover the essentials; audio interface; IR import; looper

CONS Limited number of models/routing options; no software editor