

Line 6 Pocket Pod | £81

A guitar amp stack and FX unit that fits in your pocket. *Karl Foster* plugs in and Rocks out

WHAT IS IT?

Portable guitar-amp sim and FX

CONTACT

Who: Line 6
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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Pocket-sized, battery or mains
- 2 More than 300 presets ready for selection
- 3 Good overdrive capability

SPECS

Supplied presets: more than 300
Amp models: 32
Cab models: 16
Speaker sim: AIR modelling technology
Effects models: 16
Guitar in: quarter-inch jack
CD/MP3 in: stereo mini-jack
Phones out: stereo mini-jack
Amp out: quarter-inch jack
Data connection: USB
Battery power: 4x AAA cells
Mains power: 9V DC (via optional DC-1 adaptor, £14)
Dimensions: 127 x 89 x 51mm
Weight: 170g

There's a trend of late for wanting big sounds from small equipment. You can more or less shove a whole recording studio into a laptop these days – the multitrack deck alone is now the size of a hard drive. And now Line 6 would have us pack 32 guitar amps, 16 speaker cabinets and a bunch of effects into our pocket. The Pocket Pod is indeed diddy, looking rather like a shrunken version of a Pod 2.0, and it's light at a mere 170g. It runs off AAA cells and even sports a belt-clip at the rear for attaching it to your trousers.

Perfectly formed

The promise is of titanic tone from some 300-plus bundled configurations organised by name of Rock star, song-title and the like, plus the means to create and store 124 of your own configurations. This diminutive device does boast an impressive number of amp models, including classics from Vox, Mesa Boogie, Marshall, Fender and

even the Roland JC-120 Jazz Chorus. Cab models to match are similarly numerous – for Marshall alone, you can dial in digital equivalents of cabs with Vintage 30s, Stock 70s and Basketweave-type with Greenbacks. Line 6 has proprietary AIR modelling technology, which is claimed to accurately capture the tone and feel of cabs, mics and studio room characteristics, by which you should be able to dispense with real gear.

In amongst that lot you've such processing as compression, chorus, tremolo, flanging, reverb and delay. In fact it's what you'd expect from a Pod 2.0 but in a smaller box and without MIDI I/O, balanced outs or the means to attach a floorboard.

But you wouldn't want to attach a floorboard because this Pod doesn't belong on stage. In fact, you wouldn't want to drop it on the floor. Construction is reasonable but lightweight – and not suited for the rigours of performance. Actually using it is a faff. Its back-lit

LCD single-line display is more informative than the two-digit LEDs of other Pod-type offerings, but dialling through the presets means much prodding of a D-pad to navigate categories and presets.

It is organised, though. Patches for numerous modern Rock tones are labelled by song title, so you can leap in and dial up the right settings for the guitar part of a favourite track and jam. It's difficult to assess their realism without getting hold of the original instruments, but they sound passable played with a humbucker-equipped electric guitar.

Sounds are also organised by type and if you're halfway into Rock, you'll spend a lot of time with the overdrive settings. Some are harsh and rattly, but many are big and bad, emulating valve amps on the verge of destruction. There's a noise gate – which you'll need – and bass, middle and treble can be tweaked, although this means pressing the Hold button in order to reassign the knobs, which is irritating.

The Tremolo effect is noisy – you can hear it oscillating away in the background during quieter moments – but the chorus is tasty and the distortion possibilities are immense. True tweak-heads have the means to define open or closed-back cab designs from the front panel, while nerds can perform deep editing by attaching the Pocket Pod to computer via USB and using Line 6's freely downloadable Vyzex editing software (or download more than 5,000 ready-authored, compatible presets). But perhaps that goes too far. The Pocket Pod could be seen as a bit of a toy, but it has some graunchy sounds straight out of the box and might find favour in space-starved project studios.

It's fiddly in operation and a bit noisy, but is priced at what you'd expect to pay for a decent tuner. Oh and it's got one of those built-in, too... **FM**



FutureMusic VERDICT



Diminutive, but big-sounding, the Pocket Pod performs well with overdrive-type sounds.