

# Quicktest

**Welcome to** Guitarist's regular round-up of the best of the rest of the gear that's passed through our hands this issue

## Hughes & Kettner Basskick 200 £469

Need some extra low-end? H&K can provide...

**CONTACT:** Headline Music **PHONE:** 01223 874301 **WEB:** www.hughes-and-kettner.com



Hughes & Kettner's guitar amps get all the attention, so much so that we weren't even sure if it made bass amps. But yes, the Basskick series is one any gigging bassist looking for a great sounding mid-sized combo should investigate.

With 200 watts of power from its solid-state TubeTouch preamp and DynaClip power amp, you won't have any trouble being heard; there's also an extra speaker out, or a balanced XLR if you need to hook up to a bigger rig or PA. The single 15-inch speaker ensures a powerful low-end, while there's additional clarity if you need it from the switchable HF-horn. Operation is simple: dual active/passive inputs, gain, four-band EQ and master are joined by a simple, single knob

compressor and 'punch' push-switch. Round the back, we also get an FX loop.

### Sounds

Despite its simplistic controls, this is one versatile combo. Old-school thud to ultra pristine slap – it's all here. The compressor is excellent and really unobtrusive, punch adds a subtle mid-filter while the parallel EQ section is well centred and broad in its cut and boost. With a StingRay's two-band

EQ, getting a sound takes minutes.

### Verdict

Weighty (32kg) and chunky it may well be, but unlike so many smaller combos the BassKick 200 really has the low-end clout that you'd normally expect from a far bigger rig. At home with numerous styles it's simple to use – ideal for guitarists who also play bass! **[DB]**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Robust build; versatile; compressor  
**We dislike:** Heavy

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



Guitarist  
**CHOICE**

## Way Huge Aqua-Puss Mk II £229

A reissue of the fabled analogue delay

**CONTACT:** JHS **PHONE:** 0113 286 5381 **WEB:** www.wayhuge.com

**This is** a reissue of a classic analogue delay, one that this month's cover star has referred to as "one of my tone secrets". Way Huge main man George Trippis is behind it – as he was the original – pointing out that the new version features the same circuitry as its forebear, and is bereft of extra features that may compromise the much-loved original's sound.

Controls comprise delay, feedback and blend, alongside mono in and out jacks, plus a barrel jack for nine-volts DC. There is one welcome change in spec, however: battery access is on the leading face, rather than on the baseplate which means you don't have to un-Velcro it from your 'board to change batteries.

Delay time runs from a doubling 20ms up to a modest-by-digital-delay-standards 300ms and, as we've come to expect from the Dunlop stable, (of which Way Huge is now part), the unit is built like a small, yet formidable, tank.

### Sounds

The Aqua-Puss Mk II has that instantly warm sound for which analogue delays are loved. From vintage-style slapback to Brad Paisley-style pickin' repeats and beyond it thickens chords and adds mystique to arpeggios with immense character. The warm, degrading repeats and maximum 300ms delay time won't pass muster with fans of modern digital delays, and that's exactly the point!

### Verdict

The Aqua-Puss MkII is among the best, warmest sounding analogue delays available. As long as you don't need more than 300ms delay, it comes highly recommended. **[SB]**

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Great tones; easy to use; impressive heritage  
**We dislike:** 300ms ceiling

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★

## DMG O-Port £20

Enhance the performance of your cheapy acoustic?

CONTACT: Bill Lewington PHONE: 01268 419966 WEB: www.bill-lewington.com

We review some great acoustics here at Guitarist, but we know most player's initial investment isn't a Collings D2H. Most of us take our first steps on the guitar road grasping a laminated acoustic bearing a name we'd never heard of before or since.

Enter the O-Port, an ingenious device that's claimed to improve the tone and performance of just such an instrument. Comprising a soft plastic funnel that fits easily into your guitar's soundhole, it's available in two sizes and colours and works with steel- or nylon-stringers.

Simply loosen the strings, squash the O-Port to get it though the soundhole and manipulate the rim around the smaller circumference over the top of the hole. Installation is

really that simple and doesn't cause any damage to the wood whatsoever.

### In Use

The curved design resembles a traditional speaker chassis and is the result of research into how sound moves about inside an acoustic, and it indeed improves string clarity and projection of a cheapy acoustic. We undertook a before-and-after test with a truly battered old Nashville cutaway dread. Despite some initial scepticism, we are surprised to report a discernible – if not radical – improvement in sound.

### Verdict

We don't believe it's worth fitting an O-Port into a

high-end guitar (we fitted one to this issue's Takamine LTD 2010 with no improvement), or anything with a solid top for that matter, but for breathing new life into that neglected acoustic that lives under the bed, never has spending £20 been so worthwhile. [SB]



### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Easy to fit; does exactly what it boasts  
**We dislike:** Not worth using on an acoustic of any quality

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



## Vintage VSA535-12 £449

A Gibson-styled 12-string semi-acoustic at an affordable price

CONTACT: JHS PHONE: 0113 286 5381 WEB: www.jhs.co.uk

This guitar's twin-cutaway slim-depth body is clearly influenced by the ES-335 and construction is equally similar – a glued-in mahogany neck and maple laminate body, the latter incorporating an internal solid centre section.

The bound rosewood fingerboard features 22 medium gauge frets and a 628mm (24.75-inch) scale, while the 'C'-profile neck is the same as on the six-string Vintage version, so quarters are somewhat cramped for

12-string fingering. The nut slots have been left a little high too, and some string sticking is apparent, which makes smooth tuning tricky.

Plastic-buttoned, vintage-style tuners help keep headstock weight down, while

twin humbuckers (and controls for each) maintains the Gibson vibe. The bridge is a standard tune-o-matic type and each string pair shares a single saddle, which compromises intonation, but the bar tailpiece boasts 12 anchor holes.

### Sounds

Humbuckers don't always make ideal 12-string pickups, but these examples combine rich lows with a healthy high-end, delivering the necessary note definition and typical ringing chime via all three switch positions.

### Verdict

Tuning issues aside, this Vintage should please any player who fancies a good sounding 12-string semi for a wallet-friendly figure that includes a nice hard case. [PD]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Sounds  
**We dislike:** Neck width; nut; six-saddle bridge

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

## BOSS TU-3 £80

The market leading pedal tuner, updated

CONTACT: Roland UK PHONE: 01792 702701 WEB: www.roland.co.uk

**BOSS created** an industry standard with the TU-2 pedal tuner in 1998 – they’re ubiquitous. Over the ensuing 12 years, however, its +/- 3 cent accuracy and limited display drew questions – though we’ve never had any issues live – as other brands offered better specs. Time for an update...

### In Use

First and foremost, accuracy of the new TU-3 is quoted at +/- 1 cent over a 23-segment LED display, which means it tunes more accurately. Tested against a 10-year-old TU-2 and a TU-12, the TU-3 outperforms its predecessor; unnoticeable in most live situations, but it does mean that the TU-3 is a better companion for adjusting your intonation. Improved accuracy

means landing bang-on in tune is marginally more fiddly live; for example, this reviewer doesn’t wait the extra half a second or so for the ‘AccuPitch’ confirmation display after the single green LED lights up. Other functions include drop tuning up to six semitones and bass tuning up to three flats.

A new high brightness mode means that maximum current draw is up from 55mA (TU-2) to 85mA. Using the recommended BOSS supply and a PCS-20A daisy chain, the TU-3 will also supply a total of 200mA up to seven other BOSS Compacts.

BOSS is resisting true-bypass switching which may be an issue for the tone-obsessed, but the usual BOSS buffered output helps when using long leads and numerous pedals. Also there’s



no facility for sweetened tunings but the truth of that matter is that only a tiny proportion of players either know or care about them!

### Verdict

Simple: a classic, updated. Success awaits you, TU-3. [MT]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Improved accuracy; high brightness mode; no-nonsense operation; price  
**We dislike:** Nothing

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

## Blue Mikey iPod microphone £59

An extremely neat stereo mic for your iPod

CONTACT: TC Electronic PHONE: 0800 917 8926 WEB: www.bluemic.com

**Apple iPod user?** Can’t be bothered with a portable field recorder or multitrack, but want better audio quality than a dictaphone? Blue has the answer. The company behind those extremely desirable studio microphones has come up with Mikey, a stereo condenser, cardioid-pattern microphone that attaches neatly to your iPod (or iPhone – see below). It doesn’t require any software; simply plug it in, angle into your position of choice and select a recording application such as Voice Memo.

### In Use

Mikey has three sensitivity settings to enable a good recording level regardless of the source. We’ve recorded artist

interviews, rehearsals and even a gig with impressive results. A pair of Neumann U87s it isn’t, but it’s infinitely better than you can expect from the iPhone or iPod’s built-in mic.

A couple of practical considerations: like all sensitive condenser mics any extraneous knocks or vibrations will cause a loud thud on your recordings, so be careful where you place it. Also, it’s worth setting your iPod not to auto lock the screen as unlocking it again can stop the recording (it’s not officially supposed to work with iPhone, but it works with this reviewer’s 3G no problem). Mikey’s frequency response is a claimed 35Hz to 20kHz, with a sample rate of 44.1kHz/16 bit, which means you get CD audio quality,



even if Apple’s Voice Memo software does knock it all down to mp3 quality.

### Verdict

Every music making iPod owner should have one. And there’s an updated model in the pipeline that officially works with iPhone, too... [MT]

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Neat design; sensible features; good sound quality  
**We dislike:** Serious (but justified) price

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★