



Planet Waves
Tru-Strobe



TC Electronic
PolyTune



Group Test

Gigging Tuner Pedals

Gigging can be stressful enough without worrying if your guitar's in tune. With the help of a decent tuner, you'll keep the pressure to a minimum and be ready for the next song before your drummer

WORDS **STUART WILLIAMS**

Boss TU-3

DigiTech HardWire



We've all been there. Show up to any local band night at the Arse And Feather and you won't have to wait long before the sound of 5th fret harmonics starts ringing out between songs. It's a rookie error that sits right next to 'mid-set free-jazz jams' and 'let the bass player tell a joke' in the big book of irritating gigging no-nos. But attempting to tune up by ear is one that is made surprisingly often.

A good quality chromatic tuner pedal is a valuable addition to any gigger's setup, allowing you to quickly tune up in silence between songs with the minimum disruption to your set. We've lined up a quartet of stompboxes from four big names to

determine who will end up with your cash. First up is DigiTech's HardWire HT-2, which promises to be accurate to under one per cent of a semitone. Next is Planet Waves Tru-Strobe pedal, based on its desktop tuner, and the only pedal in the test to offer a true strobe array of LEDs. TC Electronic attempts to revolutionise the way you tune your guitar forever with its PolyTune pedal, and then there's the Boss TU-3, coming from a pedigree of pedalboard veterans. ■

"ATTEMPTING TO TUNE YOUR GUITAR BY EAR IS A GIGGING NO-NO"



Flip the page to find out which one won our Group Test head-to-head



Boss TU-3 £79

Nice TU see you...

Display ■
The High Brightness mode makes viewing the screen even easier



Accu-Pitch Sign
Fixated with seeing a green light? This gives you closure on each string

TU-3
We've seen Boss tuners on countless pedalboards – the TU-3 is the latest

At a glance

Boss TU-3
TYPE: Tuner pedal
DISPLAY MODES: Stream/Cent
TUNING PRESETS: 14
TRUE BYPASS: No
SOCKETS: Input, Output, Bypass Output, Power in/daisy chain out
POWER: Battery, PSU (optional)
CONTACT: Roland UK 01792 702701
WEB: www.roland.co.uk

Out of the four pedals in this month's test, the Boss TU-3 has the most right to be eying up the crown before it even gets started. We've seen its predecessor, the TU-2, on more big-name pedalboards than we care to think of, and the TU-3 is its smarter, updated replacement. Expectations are high, but we're not going to let it stride home on reputation alone.

According to Boss, its main improvements are the High Brightness mode (for enhanced



visibility) and Accu-Pitch Sign (to indicate your note is steadily in tune). If you obsess over seeing an unwavering green light before moving on to your next string, the TU-3's Accu-Pitch Sign will help. Once the green light shows,

the display sweeps towards the centre from either edge, helping you to draw a line under each note. Boss has also added six flat tuning modes that let you down-tune your guitar by string number (rather than note name) by up to six semitones.

Conclusion: The TU-3 works very well. The main display is bright enough for use in dim light, and the High Brightness mode makes this even better. But if you want to run it at full brightness constantly, we'd suggest using

a Boss PSA adaptor (optional). Our only other complaint would be that the display is rather cluttered, making mode-shifting more fiddly. Ultimately, the TU-3 does everything you want from a tuner pedal well and at a competitive price. The only problem is, it's among some equally capable competition.

SUMMARY

For: Well spec'd, good price tag
Against: Display is a bit cluttered



TG says: Not the Boss of this test

Planet Waves Tru-Strobe £110

...Tru-see you, nice

Strobe ■
True strobe tuning is the most accurate method, but it does take a bit more persistence

Buzz Feiten Presets ■
The Tru-Strobe offers tempered tunings for Buzz Feiten equipped guitars



Build quality
It's a heavy little brute that'll withstand the punishment of regular gigs

At a glance

Planet Waves Tru-Strobe
TYPE: Tuner Pedal
DISPLAY MODES: Strobe
TUNING PRESETS: 11 including Buzz Feiten modes
TRUE BYPASS: Yes
SOCKETS: Input, output, bypass, power in/daisy chain out
POWER: Battery, PSU (optional)
CONTACT: D'Addario UK 01913 003000
WEB: www.daddario.com

As its name suggests, this is the only pedal in the test to feature true LED strobe technology. It's based on Planet Wave's desktop strobe tuner, so if you've used one like this before, you'll know it's the most accurate way of tuning, getting you to within 0.1 per cent of a semitone.

The note your guitar is being tuned to is displayed clearly in the centre of the backlit display (perfect for dimly lit stages but you can turn it off if you're



playing outside). The pedal also has a range of modes for drop-tuning and guitars equipped with the Buzz Feiten system.

The guts are housed within a reassuringly heavy die-cast

casing that should have no problems living up to life on the floor. It's very well designed, with two outputs (one that's silenced while tuning), but if you're used to a meter-style tuner, you might find the technology too finicky.

Conclusion: If the Tru-Strobe was a human, it'd be a traffic warden – anally accurate, always right and extremely good at its job. Thing is, this jobsworth's impeccable efficiency can also be counted as a downside

because, while its level of accuracy is the best in this test, you might find it to too laborious for speedy onstage tuning. If you need a pedal to provide great features and flawless accuracy (particularly for studio use), this is it. If you're in a hurry for a green light, keep reading.

SUMMARY

For: Precise, built like a tank
Against: Too accurate for fast tuning



TG says: It's very good, but fussy

"POLYPHONIC TUNING IS THE SORT OF BRILLIANT IDEA EVERYONE HOPED FOR"

DigiTech HardWire HT-2

£97

Turn on, tune up, rock out

Display ■
The display reads in standard pitch, even if you're using the drop-tuning presets



LEDs ■
The simple display makes tuning a doddle on the HT-2

True bypass ■
You get the same true bypass wiring as the rest of the HardWire range

At a glance

DigiTech HardWire HT-2

TYPE: Tuner pedal
DISPLAY MODES: Strobe (virtual), normal
TUNING PRESETS: 3
TRUE BYPASS: Yes
SOCKETS: Input, Output, Thru, Power in
POWER: Battery, PSU (optional)
CONTACT: Sound Technology 01462 480000
WEB: www.digitech.com

DigiTech's HardWire series has built up a solid reputation for itself since its launch in mid 2008. The HT-2 is probably the most straightforward in the group of "extreme performance pedals", lacking any of the fancy branded technology of the others. That's not to say it isn't well stocked, though.

Like the rest of the HardWire range, the HT-2 unit is equipped with true bypass, as well as a choice of standard meter or strobe-style display modes, and



two preset tunings that can take you down by a tone.

There are fewer preset tunings on the HT-2, so it's simple to get going. The display consists of a seven-segment LED display that tells you the note you're tuning

to, and 11 single LEDs that show how far in/out of tune you are. The HT-2 is one of the quickest pedals to use in the group, but the note display always reads at a standard guitar pitch, not a string number. If you're in either of the flat tuning modes, it can be confusing to still see the sixth string referred to as E when it's actually sounding as a D or E_b.

Conclusion: Much like the other tuners on test, the HT-2 is more than accurate and stable enough to use onstage without

fear of it failing you. We'd have liked to have seen a few more options for drop-tunings, but being chromatic it will still tune to notes outside of standard tunings – you'll just have to know which note you're aiming for. As such, this is best suited to someone who wants a fuss-free workhorse tuner onstage.

SUMMARY

For: Easy to use, clear display
Against: Less features than some



TG says: The blue-collar tuner

TC Electronic PolyTune

£75

The tuning revolution?

Design ■
If it's possible for a guitar tuner to be sexy, this is it

PolyTune ■
Accuracy, build quality, visibility and innovation – TC has delivered



PolyTune mode ■
Get lightning-fast onstage tune-ups of all your strings



At a glance

TC Electronic PolyTune

TYPE: Tuner pedal
MODES: PolyTune, meter, strobe (virtual)
TUNING PRESETS: 6
TRUE BYPASS: Yes
SOCKETS: Input, Output, mini USB
POWER: Battery, PSU (optional)
CONTACT: TC Electronic info@tcelectronic.com
WEB: www.tcelectronic.com

TC Electronic is no stranger to digital wizardry, but the PolyTune sets out to do something unique. The idea is that, in polyphonic mode, you can strum all six strings together and let the pedal work out which ones are out of tune. If it works, it'll be as triumphant an upset as last year's Christmas No 1.

The brains of the pedal offer six preset tunings to choose from before tuning. Like the rest of the pedals here, the PolyTune



remembers your settings, so if even if you're tuning to B every time you won't have to reconfigure the pedal. When you strum more than one note at once, it detects the pitch of all

incoming signals and displays each string as a short, horizontal green line. Red lines denote out of tune notes: sharp, above; flat below. At this point, you can choose to adjust the strings while strumming in PolyTune mode or tune each string individually using a meter or a simulated strobe display. Either way, it's quick, accurate and very, very clever.

Conclusion: Polyphonic tuning is the sort of brilliant idea everyone

hoped for, but nobody actually created. Until now. The PolyTune tunes up quickly and accurately, with the minimum of fuss, which is exactly what TG was looking for. If its sleek design doesn't win you over, the innovative features, solid build quality and great price tag certainly should.

SUMMARY

For: Innovative, simple, great price
Against: No selectable output



TG says: Poly, put the tuner on!