





KEMPER PROFILER STAGE

£1449

Kemper reboots its Profiler in floorboard form

This is a Kemper Profiler. Yes, yes, we know it says as much at the top of the page, but it's so important we thought we'd say it again. Why so? Well, it's a very important point. What you have here is the guts of Kemper's longstanding Profiler combined with the foot-switching functionality of the company's Remote floor controller. Essentially nothing is 'new' under

giggable solution. And the Stage isn't sufficiently diminutive to be compared to, say, HeadRush's Gigboard or Line 6's HX Stomp, which are stripped back versions of bigger, more fully-featured offerings. No, this is a flagship device. Need an expression pedal? Sorry, you'll just have to buy one.

Putting the negative to one side though, let's remind ourselves of just what you do get from the Kemper ecosystem, because it's

Kemper's effects could be better. We'd say that's a can of worms and not necessarily true. Suffice to say, the Kemper is primarily about the authenticity of its amp tones.

Of course, Kemper Profilers have a USP – the ability to profile your own amps. Just like Kemper's standard "toaster" model, the Stage can copy, ie, 'profile' your amp's sound, allowing you to play through a digital version of your amp's *exact* signature tone. Let that sink in. It's not a company's model of someone else's amp. It's a profile of your own amp set up in its sweet spot just as you like it. There's not really space to go into detail here, suffice to say that astonishing levels of mimicry have been Kemper's 'thing' since launch. Not convinced? Thousands of pros and high-profile artists have ditched cumbersome traditional amplification in favour of digital devices like the Kemper. Even renowned tonehound and bona fide guitar legend Mark Knopfler recently switched to Kemper for his world tour. If it's good enough the Knopf it's good enough for us!

In use, the Stage does have one notable shortcoming. The screen, for us, is simply too small. A few

TOP CLASS SOUND QUALITY. AND WE MEAN TOP CLASS

the bonnet. What you do get is a decent saving over the price of a standard Profiler and Remote. Happy days! More affordable Kemper is good news all round.

However, we're starting with a bit of a gripe. We're talking about Kemper's decision not to integrate an expression pedal into the Stage. For us, it's a glaring omission. The Stage is in the firing line of the expression-equipped Line 6 Helix Floor and HeadRush Pedalboard. Forgive the French, but surely the *raison d'être* of a floorboard is to offer a convenient one-box

undoubtedly impressive... Access to thousands of online profiled amps from the free Rig Manager desktop app for Mac and PC; more than you could ever possibly need if we're honest. Top class sound quality. And we mean truly top class, arguably surpassing Line 6's Helix and up there with Fractal Audio's Axe-Fx III – a far more expensive beast. Coupled with a full range of high-quality effects (including drives, distortions, a looper, modulations and so on), the Kemper could be all the rig you ever need. Some will say the

1 MAIN FOOTSWITCHES

The footswitches are clear to use, so you won't need much guesswork. They indicate bank shift, effect on/off and patch select

2 TYPE, BROWSE, BROWSER

These are your main access points to start editing. Some of these functions would benefit from clearer names. "Browse" and "Browser" anyone?

3 RETURN

You'll need to plug a mic in to one of the returns to profile your own amp. Not marked as such, it's easily overlooked

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Amp profiler / multi-effects floorboard

CONTROLS: On/off, mode select, input select, module/section buttons, output/master button, master volume, system button, pedals button, rig button, type knob, browse knob, soft buttons/knobs, morph button, lock button, edit button, store button, back button, page buttons, gain knob, up/down buttons, rig buttons, tap tempo button, tuner, effect switches (1-4), looper

SOCKETS: Instrument input, four balanced return TRS inputs (two stereo), two TRS sends, two balanced XLR, two TRS main outs, two monitor outs, 3.5 mm headphone jack, S/PDIF digital in/out, switch/pedal input for external controllers, five-pin DIN MIDI I/O, USB type A and B, Kensington Lock connector, IEC mains power

POWER: IEC mains power 100V-240V

CONTACT: Kemper
kemper-amps.com



Profiling or modelling?

Finding the sweet spot

To the end user, the difference between profiling and modelling is moot. They're simply different ways of providing a digital recreation of an amp's tone. Like offerings from Line 6, Fractal Audio and HeadRush, plug into a Kemper Profiler and you'll find a slew of legendary virtual amp presets. Where the Profiler differs is that it allows users to profile their own amps, capturing the nuance and response of amp, speaker and mic placement in a user-accessible preset. But because each profile represents a snapshot of the amp, to get the best profile you'll need to set your amp to its sweet spot – and that usually means loud! You'll also need to know how to mic up your own amp – a subject we could fill the entire mag on.

years ago there was little choice on offer when it came to floorboard displays. Today, Line 6 and HeadRush have moved things on, offering more intuitive UIs and, in the latter's case, touchscreen control. Even the rackmount offerings from Fractal Audio and Line 6 have greater screen real estate. Keep in mind that Kemper Profilers are aimed at tweekers – the kind of guitarists who like to go under the hood and get forensic with their setups. It's not as involved as the Axe-Fx, but there is a lot of tweakability and not much space to work with. And beware:



the Rig Manager software doesn't offer patch editing capability so the screen really is all you have to work with. And, though the physical footswitches, LEDs and backlit buttons are intuitive enough, particularly if you are familiar with the standard Profiler and Remote, other companies are offering more practical floorboards.

We love Kemper. Class-leading sound quality, user profiling capability and seemingly limitless online profiles are worth the price of entry alone. Despite our criticisms, the Kemper Stage is an awesome all-in-one floorboard

that we'd happily recommend as the core of any digital rig. However, the Stage isn't quite a seismic addition to the Kemper product line. Though its tonal abilities stand up to any comparison, we can't help but feel that in 2019 we expect a more contemporary and user-friendly experience.

Chris Bird

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

ALSO TRY...

LINE 6 HELIX FLOOR £1199

Perhaps the closest direct competitor to the Profiler Stage, Line 6's flagship Helix Floor offers greater control over the virtual signal chain and an expression pedal.



HEADRUSH PEDALBOARD

Undercutting both Line 6 and Kemper on price, this modeller from Headrush offers a well-designed layout and a nice big screen.



FRactal Audio FX8 MULTI-EFFECTS £1149

The FX8 offers all the effects without the amp modelling of its bigger, more expensive brother, the Axe-Fx III. Ideal if you just can't let go of your 'real' amp.

