



PHOTOGRAPH BY SIMON LEE

BOSS Micro BR BR-80 £235

Possibly all you'll need for recording and practice... and it fits in your pocket! **by Trevor Curwen**

BOSS figured out some time ago that musicians might want to have a multitrack recorder that they could carry around in a pocket, a gigbag or a guitar case. As a result it came up with the original Micro-BR, which, with four-track recording, built-in mic and COSM amp sims, was pretty much as good as it got in such a small footprint in 2006. Time and technology move on, though, and anyone can now have a multitrack recorder and more in their pocket simply by purchasing apps for their phone and combining it with a similarly pocket-sized mic or input device. So, when BOSS designed the new version of the Micro – the BR-80 – it needed to come up with something a bit special, and we reckon it has.

What you get with the BR-80 is an extremely practical multi-purpose facility ideally suited for guitarists. Battery-powered

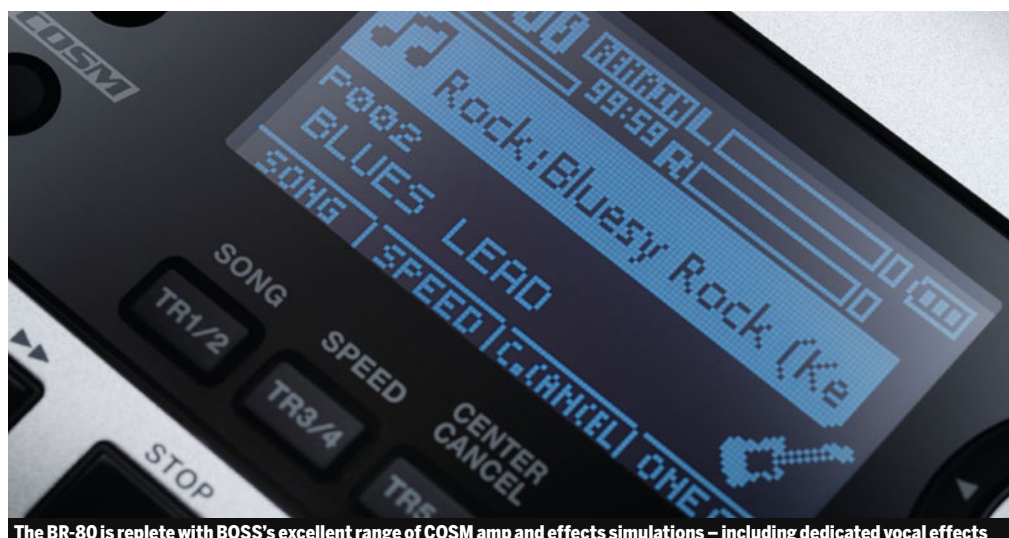
and completely portable with built-in stereo mic, it combines a stereo field recorder, an eight-track multitrack recorder, a potent practice and phrase-training facility and a USB audio interface.

In Use

While the BR-80 is small enough to slip into most pockets, it doesn't compromise on its control layout and ease of use – all the controls are logically laid out and the display

clearly shows all the functions. There are three selectable modes of BR-80 operation: MTR, eBand and Live Rec.

MTR is multitrack mode where you can record one or two tracks simultaneously into the eight-track recorder. This could be through the built-in mics, but you also get a jack input for guitar or microphone as well as a stereo line input. Each of the eight playback tracks actually has eight associated virtual tracks, so you can have lots of attempts at getting a take right. For timing



The BR-80 is replete with BOSS's excellent range of COSM amp and effects simulations – including dedicated vocal effects



The Rivals

Tascam offers a portable compact eight-track multitracker in the shape of the **DP-008** (£295), with built-in microphones and EQ and reverb for the tracks but no amp sims. If you want something that will fit in a bag rather than a pocket, the **Zoom R8** (£250) is an eight-track recorder that is also an audio interface, a DAW control surface and a sampler/rhythm machine. A larger **BOSS** machine with similar facilities to the **BR-80** is the **BR-800** (£399). It doesn't have the eBand facility but, if that really appeals, check out the original **eBand JS-8** (£329).

help, or for use as an integral part of the song, there is a stereo rhythm track and a whole bunch of onboard rhythm patterns in a variety of musical styles. These rhythms include separate intro, verse and chorus parts etc, which you can easily sequence together to create a drum track that will fit your song – you can also import MIDI files in order to trigger the drum kits.

As usual in a BOSS unit there are plenty of insert effects including a shedload of excellent COSM amp and FX sounds for guitar and bass plus a bunch for vocals, including

The BR-80 might just be the most useful electronic device you could keep in your guitar case

harmony generation, and pitch-correction for those of us who don't always get it right.

Fulfilling the same role as the many hand-held stereo recorders on the market, Live Rec mode allows you to make instant stereo recordings through the onboard mics. If you want to be able to record your gigs or rehearsals you need look no further.

This facility is also ideal for quickly humming or strumming new musical ideas. You could also use it to, for example, record a full drum kit and then import the audio file into MTR mode to use it as the basis for further overdubs.

The eBand mode, as pioneered in the BOSS JS-8, exists to play tracks that you can jam along to (while recording your playing, if desired) or perhaps use for backing at gigs. Phrase training staples, pitch and tempo change, are available along with a centre-cancel function.

You can also load anything you've already recorded into the BR-80, take mp3 or wav files from your computer or instead use the onboard backing tracks – a set of fully produced instrumental tracks that cover many styles.

Verdict

The BR-80 is incredibly easy to use, and we achieved excellent recording results with it. The onboard mics can capture quality stereo sound whether it's just acoustic guitar, vocals or a whole band, while the multitracker will allow you to put nicely polished demos together, utilising the reverb and three-band EQ for each track and an overall mastering effect when mixing. Plus you can use it as an audio interface to record COSM-treated guitar straight to your computer (SONAR X1 LE software is included) and for targeted practice wherever you are. We reckon this is a marvellous little tool that every guitarist could find a use for. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Compact size; ease-of-use; versatile range of functions

We dislike: Nothing
Guitarist says: The combination of facilities in the BR-80 make it probably the most useful electronic device that you could keep in your guitar case

BOSS BR-80

PRICE: £235

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Portable digital multitrack recorder

OTHER FEATURES: eBand phrase training, USB audio interface, tuner, onboard rhythms

RECORDING MEDIA: SDHC Memory Card (4GB to 32GB), SD Memory Card (1GB to 2GB)

PLAYBACK TRACKS: Eight
SIMULTANEOUS RECORDING TRACKS: Two

V-TRACKS: 64 (eight V-Tracks per each track)

MAX RECORDING TIME: MTR Mode: Single-track 3 hrs (1GB), 100 hrs (32GB). Live rec mode: Stereo wav, 1.5 hrs (1GB), 50 hrs (32GB). Stereo mp3 128 kbps, 16 hrs (1GB), 550 hrs (32GB). eBAND mode: eBand Song: 4 hrs (1GB), 130 hrs (32GB). Stereo wav, 1.5 hrs (1GB), 50 hrs (32GB). Stereo mp3 128 kbps, 16 hrs (1GB), 550 hrs (32GB)

A/D, D/A CONVERSION: 24-bit

SAMPLE RATE: 44.1kHz

CONNECTIONS: Standard jack guitar/mic input, stereo mini jack line input, stereo mini jack phones/line output, USB

DIMENSIONS: 138 (w) x 22 (h) x 86mm (d)

POWER REQUIREMENTS: AC adaptor (PSA series: sold separately), Alkaline or rechargeable Ni-MH AA x 2, USB bus power
BATTERY LIFE: Approximately six hours (Alkaline dry cell batteries/with continuous playback of eight tracks, power save function)

INCLUDED ACCESSORIES: SD Memory Card, SONAR X1 LE DVD-ROM, USB cable (mini-B type), Alkaline battery (AA) x 2, owner's manual

OPTIONS: AC adaptor (PSA series), silicone rubber case and carrying pouch: BA-BR80S (£25)

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Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★