





## ZOOM G5N £249

Zoom's latest multi-effects processors reimagines its G5 sibling providing an all-in-one solution for those who shy away from DIY 'boards

**Words** Trevor Curwen **Photography** Neil Godwin

### What You Need To Know

- 1 Zoom seems to like this type of floor processor...**  
Yes, the company has briefly had a range of conventional stompboxes, but, for the most part, it has a long history in multi-effects processors that offer plenty of facilities without breaking the bank.
- 2 So, is this a new version of the G5?**  
In name and in spirit, certainly, but it's a radical revamp that loses some salient features while adding others.
- 3 Are there any tasty extras?**  
Yes, there's a looper with 80 seconds of memory that operates from a single footswitch, plus a drum machine with 68 rhythm patterns that can be used on their own or in conjunction with the looper.

**Z**oom's original G5 has been around for several years now (we reviewed it back in issue 356), but the company has recently chosen to revive the name with the G5n. This new model adds some features while consigning certain others to history, most notably the G5's balanced XLR output, the valve-based boost and the Z-pedal that offered sideways as well as up-and-down movement for morphing effects. What you're actually getting is a radical redesign that adds five extra footswitches to streamline usability.

The G5n is a multi-effects processor with amp simulations. You can choose to use it purely as an effects processor (an all-in-one pedalboard) in front of your amp or, by including the amp sims, as a full rig either going straight to the PA, plugged into a FRFR (Full Range Flat Response) monitor or a recording system. There is mono or stereo output on standard jacks, but for computer-based recording you can connect via USB, the G5n operating as an audio interface, with monitoring via its headphone output if required.

The feature set is impressive. There are 200 memory locations onboard in 50 banks of four, and each patch is made up of a signal chain that offers nine blocks. Each block can host any effect, so, in theory, you can run

nine simultaneous effects, DSP permitting. When the G5n launched, it offered 68 digital effects onboard, covering all the major effects categories, plus five amp simulations and five cabinet simulations – but more have since been added via online updates. Zoom tells us that a new amp and cabinet model, as well as new effects and artist patches, will be available to download for free every month. Other facilities include a tuner, a looper and an aux input for connecting a music player for practice purposes, for example.

### Usability

Two rows of footswitches control the action in the G5n and can operate in two different modes – Memory and Stomp – that are instantly switched using a lower row footswitch. In Stomp mode, the upper footswitches give you switching capability for four of the effects in the loaded patch; in Memory mode, they select the four patches of the loaded bank. Other functions of the lower row of footswitches, besides tap tempo and tuner call-up, are to switch banks or scroll the effects chain left and right. As there are just four effects footswitches, only four of up to nine effects are switchable at any one time, but scrolling left or right effectively moves the chain





There's plenty to have fun with and get you playing, but you'll soon be wanting to build patches of your own

sideways, so that you can get access to all of the effects for footswitching (and editing). It's a clever feature and allows the G5n to remain compact rather than be covered in footswitches, but it might take a bit of getting used to. The displays telling you which effect is assigned are not that easy to read from five feet above, so some sort of colour-coding backlighting would have been useful. Also, the lower row of five footswitches, although neatly designed, is the same dark colour as the chassis, so may be hard to see on a dark stage (though this is nothing you couldn't sort out with some strategically placed white tape).

### Sounds

There's an eclectic variety of factory patches loaded into the G5n, some recreating the tones of famous players

## The Rivals

**Line 6's AmpliFi FX100 (£229), a Bluetooth-enabled floor unit, has 100 presets onboard (plus unlimited presets via an app) and features 200 amps and effects models. You can call up presets but not individual effects. Meanwhile, Boss's ME-80 (£249) has 72 memories (36 user/36 preset) built from eight simultaneous effects and features 68 amps and effects models, and a flexible footswitching system. Also look out for DigiTech's RP1000 (£262), which offers 200 memories (100 user/100 preset) and features over 160 amps and effects models – Pedalboard Mode to use five footswitches to turn stompboxes and effects on and off within a patch.**



1. The rear panel has a minimal but workable set of connections. Some may miss the balanced XLR output that was found on the previous G5

2. The display window shows the loaded patch for the footswitch but can also show the corresponding effect to be tweaked by the four small knobs



and songs, others the typically OTT creations that tend to populate these units. There's certainly plenty to have fun with and get you playing, but you'll soon be wanting to get in and build some patches of your own. Assigning an effect to the chain and tweaking it is really easy – each of the four windows has cursor buttons for effects type and four small knobs to adjust parameters. At the moment, any editing has to take place from the front panel, but Zoom tells us that it's working on a software editor to replace the current Zoom Guitar Lab

(which is a patch librarian software that allows instant download of new patches, effects, and amp/cabinet simulators) with a web connection.

Patches utilising amp simulation cover plenty of range: the first five amp models are a Marshall JCM800, Fender Twin, Mesa/Boogie Mark III, Vox AC30, plus a Bogner, all authentically flavoured and a practical recording resource. An amp takes up two effects blocks and a speaker cabinet one, but that leaves six blocks to build a sound, unless you're also using the drum



3. The signal chain for the loaded patch is clearly laid out in the top display, all ready for any changes you wish to make

4. The top row of footswitches are quite distinct from the dark plastic paddle-style switches in the lower row and easier to see on a darkened stage

machine and looper (great for practice and songwriting), which take up one each.

Using it purely as an effects unit without the amps, you may be able to have nine effects in a patch, but some are more DSP-hungry than others and you'll get a warning message if you're being too ambitious! Nevertheless, there are a host of really good effects here and you have the chance to create a whole bunch of different 'pedalboards' for live use with practical switching and expression via the pedal treadle (with wah every bit as good as some expensive name pedals) or an external expression pedal.

### Verdict

The G5n is an immensely practical self-contained floor processor for anyone who doesn't want to go down the individual pedal route in front of an amp, with plenty of options for practice and recording – and it will get better with the constant updates, too. Okay, it's not going to compete with a Line 6 Helix or one of Fractal's offerings, but let's not lose sight of how much it costs. With a street price that seems to have levelled out at £229, this is one hell of a bargain. **G**



## ZOOM G5N

**PRICE:** £249

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Amp modeller/multi-effects pedalboard processor

**FEATURES:** Tap tempo, tuner, 80 second looper, onboard rhythms

**PRESETS:** 200

**MODELS:** Over 80 and counting

**CONTROLS:** Data entry, Menu button, Master Level, Output Boost, 16x Output Tone 'soft' knobs, 8x buttons, 9x footswitches, pedal treadle

**CONNECTIONS:** Standard guitar input, mini-jack aux input, standard outputs (L/Mono, R), mini-jack stereo phones output, USB, Control input

**POWER:** 9V DC adapter 500mA (supplied)

**DIMENSIONS:** 454 (w) x 225 (d) x 75mm (h)

**OPTIONS:** FP02M Expression Pedal (£39), SCG5 carrying bag (£20)

**Zoom UK**

**08432 080 999**

**www.zoomcorp.co.uk**

# 8/10

**PROS** Value for money; solid build quality; expansive range of sounds; looper and drum machine; practical patch and effects switching

**CONS** Lower footswitches could be hard to see; no editing software as yet; no external effects loop; looper and drum machine take up slots