



Tascam GB-10 Guitar & Bass Trainer/Recorder

£141

Tascam's latest portable unit aims to be the guitarist's constant companion *by Trevor Curwen*

Tascam's range of phrase-trainers has proved very popular over the last few years and has evolved to reflect the latest audio technology. Phrase trainers based around a CD player are still very much a part of the Tascam range, but the latest offerings such as 2007's MP-GT1, the first in the range to utilise mp3 technology, rely on a computer connection to provide the music that you wish to play along with or learn.

Two almost identical units have been launched at the same time. While the GB-10, which we focus on in this review, is designed specifically for guitar and bass players, its sibling LR-10 offers facilities for players of other, more than likely acoustic, instruments (see opposite). Both units let you load music from computer, and both feature a recording facility so that you can record your own instrument and play the sounds back.

The GB-10, with four small rubber feet attached to its base, is designed to sit on a tabletop, but is compact enough to fit easily in your hand. It's portable, running off two AA batteries, but can also be powered from a computer's USB bus or

Tascam's 5V power adaptor. Operation is very simple, as all the regularly used functions have dedicated front panel controls, which are all logically laid out for ease of use.

In Use

Music downloaded from computer, or any fresh recording you wish to make, is stored in the GB-10 on an SD or SDHC card. You can use cards of up to 32GB with the unit, but the 2GB card supplied is sufficient to store over three hours worth of your own 16-bit, 44.1kHz (CD quality) recordings. Mp3 files or 16 and 24-bit wavs for playback can be loaded into the GB-10 from your computer via a USB connection – the GB-10 appears as a drive on your desktop and transferring files is a simple drag and drop process. Once loaded, you put your headphones on, plug in your guitar and play along with any audio files. The guitar input's gain is set by a rotary control on the side of the unit, but you also get a 'balance' feature that lets you set the optimum level of the track you may be playing along to against your guitar sound.

If you want more than just your dry guitar sound, there are

onboard effects that can be applied to it. These take the form of 10 presets that cover a bunch of styles and sound really good through the headphones, actually making you want to play, which is the whole point of a unit like this. Each of the presets is constructed from three effects blocks – amp,

compressor and FX (a choice of chorus, flanger, phaser, tremolo, autowah and delay) – all with a range of adjustable parameters (including reverb for the amp). There are 10 user memories for saving your own edited sounds.

If you just want to play guitar for a bit of silent practice there's



You can apply several onboard amp and effect presets to your dry recorded sound

The Rivals

Tascam has other options in its phrase trainer range – another unit that handles files downloaded from computer and has some training facilities is the **GT-R1** (£254) hand-held stereo recorder, while for CD-based machines there's the **CD-GT2** (£127) and the **CD-BT2** (£127), designed for guitar and bass respectively. With the discontinuation of the Alesis Playmate Guitarist, we're unaware of any hardware guitar phrase trainers from other manufacturers.

Several of the software amp simulators (see company websites for prices and further information) offer phrase-training alongside amp sims, for example **IK Multimedia's AmpliTube** has Speedtrainer and **Native Instruments' Guitar Rig** has its Tape Decks.

**Guitarist
CHOICE**



A range of playback and loop options makes this an ideal practice tool

The digital recorder part of the GB-10 is designed so you can record your guitar playing quickly and easily

an onboard metronome with adjustable speed to help you keep time. For learning to play the downloaded songs, there are the usual phrase-training tools – you can slow the speed up or down without changing the pitch and you can alter the pitch up or down in six semitone steps without changing speed. Fine pitch tuning in cents is also possible. It's also dead easy to loop a section of the music for constant play and there's a handy 'flashback' facility during playback that lets you jump back a few seconds into the track with a single button push. One feature that is absent is a centre-cancelling function as found in previous Tascam units – it was often a bit hit and miss depending on how the song had been mixed, but nevertheless sometimes useful, so it's a shame to see it go.

The digital recorder element of the GB-10 is designed so that you can record your guitar playing quickly and easily, it features a set of standard transport controls and will start recording with a single button press when inspiration strikes. To store new ideas you can just record all your playing, but if you don't want to use up memory you can simply put the machine in record ready mode and start playing, then quickly hit the record button if you

recognise that you've just played something special – your playing will be instantly captured, as it continuously records two seconds of audio into a buffer. A hands-free start to recording is also possible using a dynamically triggered auto-record function that will start recording the moment you start playing. There's also the option for adding Tascam's RC-3F triple footswitch that offers foot control of various

recording and trainer functions. An overdubbing facility is also available – you can record as many overdubs as you want onto any audio file, a new file being created each time. A useful compositional tool when knocking new songs into shape.

Verdict

Both of the new Tascam units offer excellent facilities not only for learning and practising music, but also for composing it and keeping a record of it. If you play electric guitar or bass you could load a GB-10 with some favourite tracks, stick it in your guitar case along with a lead and be guaranteed a quality practice experience wherever you may be, as well as the chance to record any new ideas before they slip away. Every guitarist should have one. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Compact size; easy to use; recording facility with a practical feature set; guitar sounds that encourage you to play
We dislike: No centre cancel function
Guitarist says: Excellent portable practice facility for guitar and/or bass players



Tascam LR-10

If you play acoustic guitar, the LR-10 may be your preferred choice of the two new Tascam trainers. The main difference is that in place of a Hi-Z jack input, the LR-10 features onboard stereo mics and a small playback speaker, plus a mini-jack line input to connect any line-level instrument or equipment, such as a keyboard or hardware amp simulator.

The stereo mics are on the front of the unit so you can sit it on a table, play acoustic guitar and get decent results. There's also the bonus of being able to use the unit to record band rehearsals. If you want to add effects when recording or listening back, then instead of the amp sims and effects found in the GB-10 you get a choice of reverbs – two halls, room, studio and two plates – all with adjustable level and reverb time.



Tascam GB-10

PRICE: £141
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Instrument trainer/recorder
RECORDING MEDIA: SD card (64MB-2GB)/SDHC card (4GB-32GB)
RECORDING FORMATS: 44.1kHz/16-bit wav
PLAYBACK: 16- or 24-bit wav files or mp3 files
CONNECTIONS: Standard jack guitar/bass input with plug-in power, mini jack stereo mini jack headphone/line output, USB 2.0 Mini-B type, 2.5mm TRS remote jack
EFFECTS: Amp and cabinet simulation, reverb, compression, chorus, flanger, phaser, tremolo, autowah and delay
OTHER FEATURES: Tuner, metronome
DIMENSIONS: 158 (w) x 30 (h) x 70mm (d)
POWER REQUIREMENTS: 2 x AA batteries (included) or USB bus power
BATTERY OPERATION TIME: 11 to 13.5 hours depending on usage and battery type
INCLUDED ACCESSORIES: 2 x AA batteries, USB cable, 2GB SD card
OPTIONS: Power adaptor PS-P520 (£25), footswitch RC-3F (£45)
RANGE OPTIONS: LR-10 (£168) is designed for strings, wind players, keyboardists, vocalists and others
COMPUTER OS SUPPORTED: Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7, Mac OS X 10.2 or later
WINDOWS: Pentium 300Mhz or faster, 128 MB or more memory, USB port (USB 2.0 recommended)
MAC: Power PC, iMac, G3, G4 266Mhz or faster, 64MB or more memory, USB port (USB 2.0 recommended)
Tascam UK
01923 438888
www.tascam.co.uk

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★