





NEURAL DSP QUAD CORTEX

£1449



One of the most hotly-anticipated floor modelling units is here to make you rethink your rig

Neural DSP is no stranger to delivering high quality amp modelling, you just need to check out its stellar roster of plugins to see that. So when the Helsinki-based firm showed up to last year's NAMM with the Quad Cortex floor modeller, you'll understand we got pretty excited about it, in fact, the whole guitar-playing world seemed to

All that power doesn't mean a thing if it can't deliver sonically and you can be rest assured that it can, in spades. But that's not all, one of the biggest surprises on using the Quad Cortex for the first time was how intuitive the interface layout is. As soon as we'd plugged in, we were instantly surfing the huge number of presets, cycling through and adding various effects as if we'd

the up and down stomp buttons cycle through those Banks, with a total of 32 available, meaning you have 256 presets to play with before you even need to start creating your own. Scene mode allows for eight snapshots of one preset, so you can bypass effects and tweak settings for eight different versions of the same preset, which effectively gives you over 2000 factory presets alone. Stomp mode drills down into a preset even further by allowing you to assign individual effects, amp models, Neural Captures and IRs to one of the eight stomp buttons. Once the individual module is selected then the eight stomp buttons can be used as rotary encoders for settings within that effect – genius!

The architecture for each preset is flexible as it comes and allows you to experiment to your heart's content. The individual models within a preset are laid out in a grid and when building your own, you can build up to four individual signal routings with an amp model, plus effects on each one,

WE'RE CONVINCED THIS IS THE ONE PEDAL TO RULE THEM ALL

get quite giddy over the prospect. Not just because a revered software company had released its first hardware product, but what lay within its aluminium unibody.

From the off, the Quad Cortex promises unrivalled power in such a small footprint that Neural DSP calls it “the most powerful floor modeller on the planet”, stuffed with 2GHz of dedicated DSP power straight out of its Quad-Core SHARC processor.

been using it for years. With the 7” screen, there is plenty of screen real estate to fit the whole signal chains, without the need for different menus dedicated to just effects, or amp models, etc.

For live performance, there are three main operation modes to the Quad Cortex, you can select either Preset, Stomp, or Scene. Preset mode allows you to use the eight stomp buttons to select one of eight presets per Bank and with

1 STOMP+ROTARY ACTUATORS

That's 'twisty stomp buttons' to you and us! A crazy amount of development has gone into the whole board, but the rotary actuators feel like the cherry on the cake.

2 INTERFACE

While all the functions are accessible via the touchscreen, the Quad Cortex also excels at giving much of this control over to the footswitches – perfect for gigging.

3 MORE HOLES THAN A SLICE OF LEERDAMMER

There's enough I/O to sate any guitarist's setup needs, be it in the studio, or on the road. With effects loops, multiple outputs and inputs, USB, plus MIDI and dual expression pedal ports at your disposal.

AT A GLANCE

- 50+ amp models
- 70+ effects
- 1000+ Impulse Responses
- 7” display with multi-touch sensors
- AI-powered Neural Capture™
- Proprietary stainless steel stomp+rotary actuators
- 2GHz Quad-Core SHARC® architecture
- Anodized aluminum unibody
- WIFI for wireless preset sharing, cloud backups and firmware updates
- Extra control via the Cortex app
- Dual combo inputs
- Dual effects-loops
- 2x 1/4” output jacks
- 2x XLR output jacks
- Headphone output
- MIDI in, out/thru
- Dual expression inputs
- USB audio interface with Cirrus Logic codecs



Sharing is caring

Expand your sonic palette with the Cortex app and give a little back to the community

Presumably not wanting to waste precious resources on an onboard web browser, the Quad Cortex utilises a mobile app (Android/iOS) to browse the community's Neural Captures and presets. To download either you will need to browse or search and then add to your Favourites within the app. Then, moving back over to the Quad Cortex you'll need to navigate to the Starred And Shared With Me menu in the main directory, where you will have the option to download. Uploading your own Neural Captures is somewhat quicker with a simple drag and drop motion to upload to the cloud.

routed to one of the four individual outputs. The signal path isn't linear either, with the option to split/mix the signal at any point.

Quad Cortex's biggest USP has to be the Neural Capture feature. Powered by AI, capturing your own amps and pedals is blindingly fast, excruciatingly simple and above all else, delivers accuracy. The Quad Cortex guides you through the process on screen every step of the way, ensuring the correct connections are made and appropriate levels are set. Similar to Kemper's profiling, Neural Capture sends and receives a test



tone through the target amp, or overdrive pedal. We tested it on the Orange Dark Terror and were completely stunned at the speed and accuracy with which the Neural Capture was created.

For those still baulking at the price, it is worth considering that this device is able to be updated over time, which further adds to the value. Our initial thoughts were that the unit would be best suited for studio use, but are now convinced this is the One Pedal To Rule Them All. It's portable, lightweight, rugged enough and perfectly adept for gigging. With an ever-growing collection of user Neural Captures at your disposal, the Quad Cortex experience can only get better.

There are a couple of gripes though. At the time of writing you're unable to use presets from your desktop Neural DSP plugins, but it is hoped that will be implemented in the future, as will the plugins themselves. So any Neural DSP plugins you currently own, should, in theory, be available for the Quad Cortex at no extra cost. There's currently no desktop app for the Quad Cortex either,



which may also be a future feature to arrive via an update. This means that uploading and downloading Captures and Presets can only be done with the aid of the Cortex app.

There is so much to like about the Quad Cortex, and despite the lofty price, it has us looking around at all the now-superfluous gear we could put up on eBay to make way for what could be the last all-in-one digital rig we'll ever need. Although, not before we've captured everything first.

Simon Arblaster

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

ALSO TRY...

KEMPER PROFILER STAGE £1389

Similar in price, and like the Quad Cortex it lacks an integrated expression pedal, but does feature a looper. However, tweaking those tones feels a little cramped.



LINE 6 HELIX £1230

Line 6's original flagship Helix model does come with an expression pedal onboard, so instantly gains points there, but it can't match the flexibility of the Quad Cortex.



FRACTAL FM3 £1299

The FM3 is closer to the Quad Cortex in size, albeit still carrying quite some bulk. And despite seeming like a condensed edition of the Axe-Fx range still has plenty to offer in the preset building stakes.

