

Quicktest



Sonuus i2M musicport £120

Two functions in one widget – guitar to MIDI and an audio interface

CONTACT: Sonuus **PHONE:** N/A **WEB:** www.sonuus.com

Want to record your guitar directly into your computer? Want to record MIDI notes from your guitar into your computer? If the answer to both questions is yes, the Sonuus i2M musicport could be exactly what you need. Connecting via and powered by USB, it's not only a compact audio interface designed to take a guitar signal, but also a pitch-to-MIDI converter that can convert single-string playing to MIDI notes to play and record virtual instruments.

In Use

The class-compliant audio-interface capability is always on, and sends a single channel of guitar to your computer, with monitoring taken care of by your computer's own output. We successfully recorded guitar into a Mac running the Logic DAW with decent-quality sound, and were able to access amp sim and recording apps on an iPad by

connecting the i2M via Apple's Camera Connection Kit. As for MIDI, the i2M lets you play virtual instruments such as GarageBand's pianos and organs on an iPad, and comes with a software editor for Mac and Windows so you can configure it for optimum results with a computer. It's monophonic, so chords and double-stops are out, but single-string lines track fine if you play your notes cleanly.

Verdict

As a companion to your laptop or iPad that you can slip into a pocket or a guitar case for composition, recording or practice on the go, there's little around that can challenge the i2M's practicality. **[TC]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A portable and practical add-on for software recordists who wish to input MIDI and audio from a guitar



Ibanez ES2 Echo Shifter £115

An analogue delay with a split personality

CONTACT: Headstock Distribution **PHONE:** 0121 508 6666 **WEB:** www.ibanez.co.jp

There's a long history of Ibanez analogue delays, but the ES2 possesses perhaps the most retro appearance of the lot, despite a fair share of modern – and oddball – appointments. At its heart, it's a pure analogue delay, but its tap-tempo footswitch, plus oscillation and modulation switches, sets it apart from the crowd.

Feedback and mix knobs control the core sound, plus a delay time slider, which adjusts between 30 milliseconds and one second. Flicking the oscillation switch increases the internal feedback gain to allow the pedal to oscillate easily for UFO landing sounds, while the modulation switch adds a chorus-esque shimmer to the repeats, controlled by a depth knob. The pedal has a buffered bypass, and can be powered by a nine-volt battery or a PSU.

Sounds

What's immediately noticeable about the ES2's repeats is not

just their warmth and richness, but how little noise they bring, even with longer delay times. Meanwhile, kick in the oscillation, and you have instant sci-fi madness and pitch-shiftability courtesy of the foot-adjustable delay time slider (though the modulation depth gets overly seasick from 12 o'clock onwards). If you're looking for a dramatic way to end your next gig, give it a try.

Verdict

The ES2 has plenty of sonic mayhem on tap, but also has warm, lush repeats for more practical endeavours. Overall, an analogue delay perfectly suited to traditionalists and experimentalists alike. **[MB]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Neither completely crazy nor totally traditional, the ES2 combines the best of both worlds for a really versatile analogue delay

Godin Multiac Grand Concert 7 SA **£1,599**

You thought seven-string guitars were just for down-tuning noiseniks? Think again – this one has nylon strings and synth access

CONTACT: 440 Distribution **PHONE:** 01132 589599 **WEB:** godinguitars.com

In today's guitar world, the seven-string has very much been claimed by the down-tuning chug-tastic metal fraternity, and the majority have high-output pickups and none-more-black finishes. However, the seven-string didn't start off as a metal machine; in its modern form, it was George Van Eps and a whole list of mainly jazz players who established its worth, plus there's frequent use of the nylon seven-string guitar in Brazilian music, which is where this writer connected. A brief instrumental on a soundtrack album really does spur you to think... those notes aren't on my guitar!

Godin's range of nylon-string Multiacs starts with the MultiUke and includes two MultiOuds, one fretless guitar and nine different Synth Access models. So, a seven-string is not as unusual as it might seem.

Think of a slightly over-sized, chambered Telecaster with mahogany back and sides and a cedar top – the bolt-on mahogany neck looks and indeed feels ultra-wide, the combination of a nylon string's broader string spread plus the additional low string. Tuning the low string to A makes more sense in the jazz world, but B (as supplied) and even C for some Brazilian pieces is quite common. The choice is yours.

Sounds

It's primarily a stage guitar, but has a surprisingly good, and tuneful, acoustic volume for the hours of practice you're going to need if, like this writer, you're a seven-string virgin.

Having used the six-string version of this guitar a lot, it

really is a stellar piece that, via its RMC pickups and three-band EQ, instantly achieves an accurate plugged-in nylon sound. The synth access side of things? Well, good luck... It certainly works, but whether or not you can incorporate those additional sounds into your playing might be another thing.

But if the guitar itself is more than familiar, the extra string certainly isn't. Getting your head around it is extraordinarily difficult. Quick Test? It took this writer more than a few evenings to still sound like a complete novice. But the extended range is quite orchestral. The extra low string seems to impart a deeper resonance; your low E somehow sounds darker and deeper, too. But it's not just the vertical range, as your horizontal range across the strings widens as well.

Verdict

If you seriously want to expand your music, the seven-string adds range to compositions and performances. And with gig rates diminishing, here's a chance to stay solo but add some of a bassist's lower register. Yet while the price is far from silly for the sorted, performing seven-stringer, for the rest of us, it's too much. Maybe Godin could consider a more basic Multiac model, without the synth access and a less involved pickup system – do we have a deal? **[DB]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: Not for the faint-hearted, here's a seriously well sorted seven-string that will expand your musical horizons



Rode NT1 £239

Record vocals, acoustic guitar and more

CONTACT: Source Distribution **PHONE:** 020 8962 5080 **WEB:** www.rodemic.com

Australian mic company Rode launched the original NT1 model back in the late 1990s, and has now revived the name with an all-new, completely redesigned version. The NT1 is a large-diaphragm cardioid condenser mic, a type that, due to its ability to accurately capture top-end frequencies, is ideal for recording vocals and also acoustic guitar. It comes as a package with very useful accessories, including Rode's new SMR shock mount, which features a unique double-Lyre suspension system to minimise vibrations being transmitted to the mic and sully the sound. You also get a rectangular metal pop filter, essential when recording vocals, which

attaches to the mount and sits about 5cm in front of the mic.

In Use

Extremely quiet in use, the NT1 accurately captures the full frequency range of a vocal, from the bottom-end warmth to the airy upper range. The attached pop shield came into its own here, staying exactly in place – much better than the budget method of tights stretched over a wire coat hanger and duct-taped to the stand! Excellent results were also obtained on recording three very different acoustic guitars, where crisp and detailed dynamic recordings were obtained, full-bodied with a silky smooth top end.

Verdict

Anyone who does any home recording of vocals and acoustic guitar should really be using a large-diaphragm condenser mic to achieve the best results, and the Rode NT1 is an ideal candidate for the job, at a decent price. **[TC]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: One of the best options around if you want to record vocals, acoustic guitar and pretty much anything else that has top-end content, such as cymbals, percussion or piano



Mono M80 & Pedaltrain 1 Limited Edition Combo £199

Rock-solid cases meet ever-popular pedalboards

CONTACT: Madison & Fifth **PHONE:** 01858 446782 **WEB:** www.monocreators.com

With lightweight aluminium frames and a range of sizes, Pedaltrain pedalboards have become something of an industry standard, while Mono is known for its high-end, durable yet lightweight gigbags. Now, these giants of the accessory world have joined forces to create a premium portable pedalboard package.

The Pedaltrain 1's eye-catching chrome finish affords the combo its limited-edition status, but elsewhere, it features the same open frame and elevated angle design for easy cable routing and access to top-row pedals. With measurements of 559 x 317 x

63mm (22 x 12.5 x 2.5 inches), the 'train comfortably fits 10 Boss-sized stompboxes, and comes complete with industrial-grade hook and loop material, plus cable ties for a tidy and secure 'board.

Inside the Mono M80 pedalboard case, meanwhile, is a well-cushioned vinyl lining, as well as plush top panels to protect knobs and switches.

A water-resistant Sharkskin outer shell covers the exterior of the case, too, which also comes equipped with industrial rubber soles. Thoughtfully, there are large exterior and smaller interior mesh pockets for storing accessories.

In Use

Some precious pedalboard obsessives may balk at the idea of carrying their stompboxes in a soft case, but the M80's impressive padding, steel-riveted handle and comfortable strap inspire confidence, and the weight-saving is welcome. The Pedaltrain design remains as functional as ever, too, and fits snugly in the M80's interior, keeping your precious pedals secure in transport.

Verdict

The portability costs, but this package is a rugged yet transportable solution to protecting your effects. **[MB]**

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

Guitarist says: A hard-wearing pedalboard/case combo that ably protects and serves your valuable stompboxes

