



## Waves GTR3 software-only edition & iGTR £275 & £69

Waves updates its amp simulation software for recording and releases a cute hardware personal guitar processor as a spin-off **by Trevor Curwen**

Waves is well known in the professional studio world for its software plug-ins, used throughout the industry for recording, mixing and mastering. A couple of years ago the company made a move into the guitar side of things in

a collaboration with Paul Reed Smith that brought about the original version of the GTR amp and effects software reviewed in *Guitarist* issue 270. GTR is now in its third incarnation as GTR3 and Waves recently brought out a more affordable version known as

GTR Solo (see boxout). On top of all this, at the NAMM show in January the company introduced a hardware product: the iGTR, an iPod-style amplification device for guitar. High time then for us to take a fresh look at just what Waves has to offer to today's guitar players.

### GTR3

There have been changes since we looked at the first version of GTR. Back then GTR came as a package at £449 that included a high quality DI box to convert your guitar signal to an appropriate level for input into an audio interface's microphone input – not something universally useful as many audio interfaces have a dedicated instrument input anyway. Now you can buy GTR3 as software only and can buy the Waves DI box separately if you want one. The package of the two is still available with a small saving over the cost of the individual items, and the prices are lower overall.

What you get with GTR3 is software that is primarily designed to be used as a plug-in in a software recording package, but can also be used independently in standalone mode if you just want to plug into your computer and play guitar either for practice or onstage use. There are various possibilities when using GTR3 as

a plug-in, but in standalone mode GTR3 appears on your desktop as the GTR ToolRack, a rig where you can have up to six stomp effects and two amps that can be combined in various ways. These components can be chosen from a grand total of 19 guitar amp models and 26 stompbox effects. For each amp model there is a choice of 16 cabinets with each cabinet's sound defined by the positioning of a virtual microphone. Bass players are also catered for with seven bass amps and six bass cabs. Separate windows can be opened to show the amp/cabinet and stompbox options and new models can be chosen from drop down menus. Stompbox positions in the signal chain are changed by drag and drop procedures and the amp also appears in the stompbox window so effects can be easily placed pre or post. A comprehensive tuner also opens on its own page and there is a separate preset page that lists a whole bunch of factory presets and any of your own that you choose to save.

### Sounds - GTR3

Although nearly all are modelled on real examples of classic makes and models, GTR3's amps are categorised as either Clean, Drive, High Gain or Bass and each given a descriptive name which, depending on your point of view, may be useful in choosing a particular type of tone for a recording rather than going for the usual suspects or may be frustrating when you want, say, a Fender Bassman but can't remember what Waves calls it.

The actual range of sounds available should provide just about everything a busy studio recording various types of music would need, especially in terms of saturated and overdriven sounds with nine high-gain amp models alongside the five drive, five clean





and six bass models. Bearing out Waves' claim that GTR3 delivers the most realistic guitar amp sounds ever, the authenticity of the sound is consistently high with the modelling responding well to your playing dynamics. The range of stompboxes is equally wide, some of which can do the job of studio processing in a post-amp position. If you want to get into some tweaking of effects while playing, like using real wah instead of auto wah, dynamic automation is available via MIDI.

With GTR3 you get classy sounds with a well-produced sheen that would fit right into polished commercial recordings.

## iGTR

The iGTR is basically an iPod-style personal amp for guitarists – you plug your guitar into one end, plug a set of headphones into a

socket at the other end and away you go. The unit is powered by four LR6 type batteries or a DC power adapter which is not supplied – anything from 6-12 volts will do the job. You can just slip the iGTR into a convenient pocket but it does come with a clip on bracket so you can easily attach it to a belt or guitar strap. An auxiliary input socket is available on a mini jack (cable supplied) so you can plug in an mp3 player or other external sound source and play along – a volume control for the aux input sits next to the main guitar volume control on the side of the casing. All the other controls are laid out on the shiny black front panel. So you get three three-way selector switches, each coupled to a recessed knob.

The first selector switch chooses the amp model – either warm, normal or bright – while



the knob sets the amount of drive. The second switch selects one of three effects – phaser, tremolo or wah, the speed of the effect being increased by the knob. Fully counter-clockwise the effect is bypassed. A similar arrangement is in place for the third selector and its choice of one of three ambience effects – reverb, chorus or delay. This time the knob adjusts either reverb or chorus mix or delay time.

## Sounds - iGTR

Turn on the iGTR and the 'i' in the logo turns red. With just physical controls and no display or menus, the iGTR is simplicity itself to operate. Considering that you can use the amps on their own or with either one or two effects engaged there are actually 48 amp up combinations available (if we've done our maths correctly). Add to this the fact that, with the amps bypassed, there is a different clean sound available to which effects can be added if desired and you have even more options.

The three amps offer three viable variations of tone. Bright aims for a sparkly top end while the other two options have a little more body to the sound: normal having more of a scooped mid-range than warm, where the mid-range frequencies are more prominent. All three, set at a low setting of the drive control for a really clean sound, are fine for a bit of practice and benefit nicely from a touch of reverb, which counteracts the unnaturally dry isolated sound that using headphones can sometimes incur. Turning up the drive control is obviously going to add dirt to the sound and there are some very useful edgy and crunchy tones to be had. Get the dial much past two-o'clock though and the tones start to sound somewhat less natural. What's on offer are plenty

## The Rivals

### GTR3

**NI Guitar Rig 3** software edition (£229) and **IK Multimedia AmpliTube 2** (£264) are probably the most well known of their type. Besides the amp and effects emulations both also offer phrase training facilities. **Softube's Vintage Amp Room** (\$429) plug-in takes a more purist approach by simply having a choice of Fender, Vox AC30 or Marshall amp models. Pro Tools users now have the new option of **Digidesign's Eleven** (£289) amp and cabinet emulation plug-in.

### iGTR

iGTR's selling point is the fact that it is so small and portable, which leaves a very short list of rivals. **Korg's Pandora** range is the only serious contender that could easily slip into a shirt pocket and the latest **PX5D** (£189) has a very large number of amps and effects plus phrase trainer and rhythm patterns. **Line 6's Pocket POD** (£81) is larger than the iGTR but it is still portable and has a useful range of POD sounds.

of sustain, but tonally a little too fizzy for our tastes and not really in the same league as the super-authentic overdriven tones in GTR3. Having said that, we wouldn't be put off using the fully overdriven tones for practice with headphones, especially for playing along with a track coming through the aux input where the trebly nature of the amp sims cut through the mix nicely.

As previously stated, a little reverb opens up the sound nicely







but delay can do a similar trick at lower settings of the tweak knob. At higher settings the longer delay times just emphasise the fact that the delay is a ping pong delay which can be irritating at the best of times, but especially so when listening with headphones and having the delay bounce across your head – not good. If you'd prefer chorus instead, the one here is deep and spacious.

As for the other three effects, the phaser sounds great with a similar flavour to the MXR Phase 90 and a useful speed range, although the last segment of the dial takes you into not very musical raygun territory. The tremolo is equally good and can take you from a very slow undulation through to a fast shimmer with all the variations in-between. Wah is a lot of fun, with autowah sounds through quacky Mu-tron-like auto filter sounds that add spice to funk riffs.

**Verdict**

Waves GTR3 is now a much more attractive proposition than when it first appeared – it's not just that the software has been comprehensively upgraded to feature many more models but also because the price has dropped and you don't have to buy a (perhaps unwanted) DI box. If you need a variety of classky sounding amp and effects rigs for recording, GTR3 should amply fulfil your needs.

The greatest asset of the iGTR is its sheer practicality in being so small and portable yet still easy to use – attach one to your guitar strap and you can practice anywhere. While we have reservations about the overdriven sounds, and are aware you can get more authenticity and a wider range of sounds from rival products, there is enough variation in the onboard sounds to make playing through the iGTR an enjoyable experience.

### The Bottom Line

Waves GTR3

**We Like:** Classy sounds; easy operation

**We Dislike:** iLok key needed – ties up a USB port

**Guitarist says:** A practical software amp and effects package with the emphasis on quality sound.

### Waves iGTR

**We Liked:** Eminently portable; simple operation.

**We Disliked:** Front panel gets messy with fingerprints; overdriven sounds get a bit fizzy

**Guitarist says:** A simple but affordable pocket-sized amp modeller for silent practice anywhere.



**Waves GTR3 Software Edition**

**PRICE:** £275

**TYPE:** Software guitar recording system

**ORIGIN:** Israel

**SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:** See Waves website

**AUTHORISATION:** iLok required

**AMPS:** Direct, Clean, Warm, Punchy, Sweet, Cream Edgy, Drive, Overdrive, Scream, Crunch, Crush, Scorch, Inferno, Monster, Hot, Modern, Shredder, Supernatural

**BASS AMPS:** Directube, Activator, SolidState, Mo'Town, SuperTube, Thunder, OverBass

**SPEAKER CABINETS:** Choice of 22

**MICS:** Seven guitar mics. Six bass mics. All available on axis or off axis

**EFFECTS:** OverDrive, Distortion, Fuzz, Metal, Flanger, Vibrolo, Panner, Phaser, Octaver, WahWah, Chorus, Doubler, Pitcher, Bass Pitcher, Delay, Lay-D, Reverb, Spring, Gate/Comp, Compressor, Gate, Tone, EQ, Axx Press, Volume Pedal

**AUTOMATION:** Real time MIDI control including dynamic automation for the Stomps

**OPTIONS:** GTR Studio Guitar Interface £89.

**RANGE OPTIONS:** GTR3 Complete System comprising of GTR3 software and guitar interface £359. GTR Solo £99

**Sonic Distribution 0845 500 2500**

**www.sonic-distribution.com**



### Test results

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

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



**iGTR**

**PRICE:** £69

**TYPE:** Personal guitar processor

**CONNECTIONS:** 6.4mm jack guitar/bass input, 3.2mm stereo aux input, 3.2mm stereo line/headphones output x 2

**DIMENSIONS:** 106 (l), 68 (w), 21mm (h)

**POWER REQUIREMENTS:** Four AAA Batteries (alkaline or rechargeable), 6-12V DC/300mA 3.5mm mains adaptor (not supplied)

### Test results

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

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★

### GTR Solo £99

Solo is the very latest in the GTR range. It offers fewer models than GTR3 – a stripped-down selection, albeit with the same sound quality. The price is likely to tempt those who feel the full GTR package to be beyond their means. Solo is strong on the Fender, Marshall and Vox triumvirate but is missing the Dual Rectifier and others found in GTR3. Nevertheless, with 10 amp models, 10 cabinets and 13 stompboxes there is still plenty of firepower to dial up an impressive range of tones, making it a good buy for less than £100.