

TOTAL
Guitar
BEST BUY
AWARD



ACOUSTIC PREAMP PEDALS

Gigging can be one of the best experiences in the world. It's also an opportunity to open a whole can of worms if you're not prepared with the right gear. And that doesn't mean spending a lot, but more choosing the right gear for your needs. Electro-acoustics can offer a range of controls on their preamps – some are comprehensive, some streamlined and in the case of those using retro-fitted soundhole magnetic pickups, there will be no onboard EQ at all. A preamp pedal can help to fill in the gaps between guitar and PA, giving you a combination of a DI box with more control over shaping your tone and troubleshooting issues like feedback. And these options offer four distinct approaches to do that...

Fishman Platinum Stage

WE'RE HOOKED ON THIS ONE

Fishman has a great reputation for electrifying acoustics, so expectations for its latest entry-level analog preamp are high. The Stage comes with a detachable belt clip but the metal shell feels rugged enough to go on the ground and it packs in a lot, too. EQ modes for guitar and acoustic bass, three-band EQ with a useful mid frequency control that's good for tweaking your tone to hear yourself and be heard. A switch on the side can give your volume a boost, a phase toggle helps deal with feedback, along with post/pre DI to give you the option of stage-only EQ. Street prices are closer to £150, too.

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

£229

Hotone A Station

NOT QUITE AN A-GRADE

First impressions here are positive with a metal chassis, user-friendly layout plus footswitchable mute and boost switches, with the latter offering a useful volume hike should you need it. The notch controls also allow you to eliminate unwanted feedback on specific frequencies. There's also a wealth of inputs and outputs – an effects loop and input for your mic with the ability to mix it with your pickup sound or use it as a dedicated microphone preamp. The three-band EQ delivers so what's the downer? There's a constant background noise when the A Station is activated (and we tested two units).

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

£129



If you're heading out to gig with your electro-acoustic these four could give you more control over your sound

Boss AD-2 Acoustic Preamp

£99

NOT TAKING CHARGE

We're initially confused by the AD-2. It's called a preamp but there are no EQ controls. Instead you get Ambience (reverb) and Acoustic Resonance (processing) controls with a notch filter. The Resonance is similar to the Xvive Mike and TC Bodyrez in that it aims to add a natural acoustic character back into your sound. It certainly warms and rounds off higher end piezo tone for mellower solo players – if that's what you want – and the reverb and notch are useful, along with dedicated TRS balanced out for going to a desk without a DI box, but the processing doesn't feel quite as organic as the competition.

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

Ashdown AA Preamp

£99

PRE-SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

Another rugged design, with a metal and plastic construction (no, those sides aren't actually wooden), the AA has its own approach to give your passive and active pickups more life and EQ control, with a balanced XLR to send to two sources. There's no mid EQ but instead low and high and the intriguing footswitch marked Pre-shape. This is a preset that can be activated adding bass and treble, but cutting mids for warmer tone. In practice it's useful to have another sound on tap and it really does give your presence a boost. Just be careful with the input levels (it will glow red to warn you to turn down).

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

AT A GLANCE

TYPE Preamp pedals

POWER REQUIREMENTS All 9V DC or battery
Fishman and Hotone offer phantom power

CONTACT

Fishman - John Hornby Skewes
01132 865381
www.jhs.co.uk

Hotone - MusicPsych
0207 607 6005
www.hotoneaudio.com

Boss - Roland UK Ltd
01792 702701
www.boss.info

Ashdown Engineering
01621 857853
www.ashdownmusic.com