

Kemper Profiling Amplifier | £1,249

An amplifier/cabinet modeller that enables you – yes you! – to digitally model and capture your guitar setups. **Steve Evans** fails to contain his excitement

INCLUDES AUDIO

WHAT IS IT?

Next generation amp/distortion modelling hardware

CONTACT

Who: Kemper
Web: www.kemper-amps.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Capture the sound of your own amp/cab setup
- 2 Superb modelled presets/stomps and effects
- 3 Superb gating/output routings for studio/live work

Not many new bits of hardware make a striking impression like the Kemper Profiling Amplifier. It looks

like a cross between a '50s valve radio and an accordion, but its shape, the green or cream colour schemes and its quasi-Masonic logo, are ballsy and memorable, and that's before you power up with the retro 'chicken-head' dial and the thing lights up like a Christmas tree. Killer.

The KPA is an amplifier/cabinet modeller and effect unit for guitarists. Your guitar plugs in the front and either

you run your own power amp and cab, or the sound of a complete modelled guitar rig, including cab, stomps and effects connects direct to your DAW (via XLRs or SPDIF).

What sets it apart from serious rivals like Fractal's Axe FXII, Digidesign's Eleven or Line 6's Pod HD Pro is that you can use the KPA to capture the sound of your own setups. Yes! You can go into the studio, set up a rig, set up your best recording chain, and profile it. Not only does this process work, but it's easy (see *Making Your Own Profiles*) and sounds excellent.

Lifting the KPA from its packaging by its leather carrying strap you get the impression of a delicate boutique amp head. Though it's stronger than it looks, I would always have it lovingly cradled in a flightcase on stage.

The front is divided into upper and lower panels. The top is vertical and deals with the five rig settings: Input, Stomps, Stack (Kemper's name for an amp, EQ and cab combination), Effects and Output. The bottom is angled slightly out at you and dominated by a properly big LCD display above which are four soft-function keys. Beneath this screen are the big gain, EQ and volume knobs for the modelled rig.

Lights fantastic

All the knobs are metallic silver and all the buttons are illuminated. The icing on the cake are the beautiful rings of circular green LEDs around the infinite 'amp' knobs. There are more round LED indicators above the top panel buttons and they change colour according to effect category. As well as looking great, these illuminations actually offer a comprehensive, 'at a glance' status report.

The review model needed a firmware update. This gave me a chance to trial



the USB stick method chosen by Kemper. The process of having the KPA format the stick was painless, and all I had to do PC-wise was drop a downloaded file into the right directory. The stick gets put back into the back of the KPA, and a restart autoboots the update. Job done.

I connected the KPA to a stereo channel in ProTools and instantly it sounded great. From gritty little amps with attitude to hi-gain monsters and sumptuous stereo soundscapes, I was left in no doubt that any kind of sound was achievable.

Find your way

Navigating through the rigs is a little clunky, especially with the autoload option on, which of course you want when you're exploring. Now I keep that off and paging through the rigs either with the browse knob or the four navigator buttons is much brisker. It

Making Your Own Profiles

To make your own profile, set up your amp, mics and outboard as usual. The KPA sits between the guitar and the real amplifier input, and the mix or the mics is returned to the Return Input on the KPA. You monitor your real sound via the main L and R KPA

outputs. After checking levels hit the Start Profiling button. There follows a minute of loud test signals through the amp. When it's finished, you can use the Refine process by playing some loud chords for 20 seconds or so. And that's essentially it. You can A/B

between the real sound and the profiled sound at the touch of a soft-key. There are deeper options to explore, but a group of highly sceptical 'golden-ears' awarded the KPA an unheard of 9.5/10 for accuracy. Why not 10? Ever so slightly light on the bottom octave, see.

would be really useful to have a number/rename option included alongside the 'sort by' date/author/patch name system.

The sound of the amps is very playable and inspiring, and the expander-based noise control on the input is effective and non-intrusive. The claim made by Kemper that the

It would also be fantastic if a single expression pedal or MIDI controller could control multiple parameters as implemented in the TC Electronic G-System. To be fair to Kemper, there are improvements and refinements planned with upcoming firmware updates including the mysterious 'Performance' mode...

“The sound of the amps is very inspiring, and the expander-based noise control is effective”

Impressive

I haven't stopped using the Kemper Profiling Amplifier since I unpacked it. It feels way better than using a plug-in, and has

input impedance allows for lifelike amplifier response when using the volume control on the guitar is well borne out, and the depth of control over the amp (and valve) behaviour is awesome, perhaps only bettered by the über-detailed valve behaviour modelling of the Fractal Axe FXII.

Copying and pasting module setups between rigs is easy, and the ability to lock certain modules as you scroll through rigs makes designing your own rigs a pleasure.

There's all the stumps and effects you're likely to need, but the KPA allows you to take well-known amps and drive them to new extremes of filth – and also cleanliness. The Definition, Pick, and Clarity settings are a godsend for a mix engineer, allowing you to manipulate clean and filthy in new and subtle ways that would be impossible in any other environment.

Minor grumbles

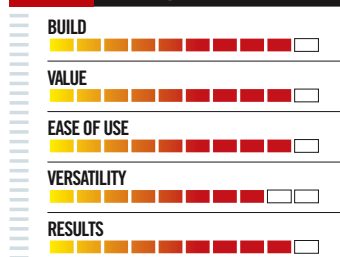
A USB/computer software GUI editor would be great, especially for patch management, and a proper tuner meter would be better than the slightly jokey spirit level bubble used in v1.1 – perhaps a stroboscopic meter? The display is certainly big enough.

real character. Everything has been thought of, and there's not the room to go into detail about the utilities/output configurations available to enable the KPA to handle any environment and any guitar.

All parameters are MIDI controllable and there's analogue inputs for two dual momentary switch controls and two expression pedals, all user routable. You can insert your own real stumps at any point, and feed your own real power amp and cab, and the ability to capture your own actual rig is nothing short of revolutionary.

The Kemper is in a class of its own, and I will not be without it. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT



Profile your own sound with this unique studio tool – the KPA is not to be missed.

SPECS

Presets: More than 200 complete rigs

Stomps: EQ, Distortion, Compression, Gate, Chorus, Vibrato, Rotary, Tremolo, Phaser, Flanger, Insert loop

Effects: 'X': as stomps but in stereo, Mod: as stomps but stereo and with hardware knobs, Delay: Tap, Free and Analogue (with pitch artifacts), Reverb: Hall, Large/Small Room, Ambience and Matchbo

Control and data interfaces:

MIDI: In/Out/Thru
Switch/pedal: Two 1/4-inch TRS, each for mono/stereo switch or expression pedal (10kOhm min, 100kOhm max impedance)

Network: RL45 connector
USB: USB2 (FS) compatible device, USB-A and USB-B connectors

Digital inputs and outputs: S/PDIF In/Out 44.1kHz (24-bit)

RCA Phono

Dimensions:

378 x 217 x 173mm

Weight:

5.32kg

ALTERNATIVES



Line 6 Pod HD Pro
£699

From the home of amp modelling this 2U rack unit has a ton of effects, microphone models, a 48s looper, stereo inputs and integration with Line 6 Variax and DT series amps.

www.line6.com



Fractal Axe FXII
2,299 euros

Awesome sound and deep editing available. IR Cab capture tool and 'Tone Match' function approaching KPA's modelling capabilities.

www.g66.eu



Digidesign Eleven Rack
£807

Everything you would expect, no surprises, and probably the world's best rotary speaker emulator.

www.avid.com

