

BOSS ME-25 £169
GUITAR EFFECTS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSE WILD



BOSS ME-25 £169
GUITAR EFFECTS



BOSS ME-25 Guitar Multiple Effects £169

Multiple effects and multiple uses - the new BOSS is one versatile little floor pedal... *by Trevor Curwen*

BOSS's ME-25 is the new affordable multi-effects pedal in the ME range, but it's quite different in several ways to its ME-20 predecessor. Whereas the ME-20 was dedicated to effects and was described by BOSS as being like having three of its pedals side by side, the ME-25 adds COSM amp models to the sonic stew and, with its USB connection, could be described as being just as much an amp modeller for recording as it could a multiple effects unit for live work.

What you get is a really solidly built unit, crafted in the main from sheet metal, but with a plastic pedal treadle and three plastic footswitches. Power is from six AA batteries, easily accessed on the base of the unit, or from a 9V adaptor. Input is a single 6.4mm jack, but you can

take a mono or stereo output, or use the ME-20 with a set of headphones. There's also a mini-jack aux input for jamming along with external music devices (mp3/CD players and so on).

The ME-25 features no individual switching of single effects. The modus operandi here is to call up a preset that has exactly the sound that you need - made up from a signal path with six blocks, (compressor/effects, overdrive/distortion, amp simulation, modulation, delay, reverb), a noise suppressor and an expression pedal treadle that can be used for volume, wah, pitch up/down or to 'freeze' (sustain) a segment of sound. There are 60 of these onboard memories that can be stepped through in either direction

using the first two footswitches - a bright red LED display shows the memory number. As shipped from the factory, you get a wide range of sounds pre-programmed into the memory locations, but all of these can be overwritten, so you can easily change what's there and save it again, or simply put a whole new sound in there that you've programmed into the memory slot yourself.

The ME-25 also has another 60 preset sounds onboard. This is the sound library, and the patches are called up via six buttons and a knob rather than by footswitch. The sounds are divided into six categories (clean, crunch, drive, heavy, lead and extreme) each called up by an illuminating button, while a 10-way knob selects the variations in the category.

The rivals

DigiTech's RP355 (£211) has a similar three-footswitch-plus-treadle format and features 140 presets, a 20-second looper, USB connection, drum patterns, phrase trainer and Cubase LE software. **Line 6's Floor POD** (£163) also adheres to this control format but has no USB computer connection - to get that from a Line 6 floor unit you'd have to be looking at the **PODxt Live** (£398). **Vox's Tonelab ST** (£211) offers a USB connection in a format that includes a treadle and a pair of footswitches to step through its 100 presets.

Whether you're playing using a sound from the memory bank or the sound library, you can instantly tweak it with the self-explanatory drive, tone and volume knobs. But to really edit a sound you have take one of the sounds in the memory bank and enter edit mode. In edit mode the six sound library buttons call up each of the six blocks in the signal chain, while the 10-way switch calls up the



different effects type in each block. So for example, you get 10 different amp simulations, eight different types of modulation and four delay models. When you have the ME-25 in Edit mode, the Drive, Tone and Volume knobs each tweak a different parameter of whatever effect is being edited. Once a sound has been edited to perfection, it can be saved back into its memory slot.

Whatever preset you happen to be using, there are two other variations that can be called up. The third footswitch, solo, boosts the level of the sound for solos while another front panel button turns on super stack mode, which is designed to give you the sound of a large stack-style valve amp by adding in extra low-end punch. The solo footswitch also doubles as a tap tempo switch for the delay and can be used to initiate the ME-25's phrase loop feature that allows you to record, overdub and play over loops up to 38 seconds long.

With the supplied drivers installed on your computer, the ME-25 acts as two-in/two-out audio interface for recording and you can record the amp and FX sounds directly into your DAW – a copy of Cakewalk's Sonar LE is included with the package for PC users who don't have recording software. BOSS also provides free librarian software for the ME-25 so that you can easily archive and save sounds. It can also be used to import new sound library sounds (available from the BOSS website) to the ME-25.

Sounds

The ME-25 isn't at all difficult to use, although admittedly it did take us a little time pondering the relationship between the sound library and the memory bank. They're just names though – think of them as factory presets and user-presets and it all makes sense. The easiest way to dial in the exact sound that you want is to find a sound in the categorised Sound Library that's close to what you need, maybe quickly tweak it with the drive, tone and volume knobs and then save that into one of the memory slots. Fine tuning can then be carried out using the edit mode. Simple as...



The ME-25 can also be used as a computer recording interface

Roland's COSM sounds have always been top-drawer recreations and the ME-25 really does have a superb sonic quality that belies its lowly price tag

Roland's COSM sounds have always been top-drawer recreations and the ME-25 really does have a superb sonic quality that belies its lowly price tag. It's a versatile beast, too, with tones to suit all manner of musical persuasions. The 10 amp models offer all the usual Fender, Marshall, Vox and Mesa flavours, but there's also the new ultra metal model that offers more screaming hi-gain than you can shake some devil horns at. There's also an expressive wah, a bunch of sparkly, swirly and pulse-like modulation effects, up to six seconds of delay, and 'room' and 'hall' reverbs to round the package off. All of this creates a broad palette that's great for recording – which is easily facilitated by the USB computer connection – and for practising in different styles.

It's in the area of live use, though, that we have some slight reservations. The ME-25 is certainly rugged enough to handle the job, but it's not exactly geared up for spontaneity should you want to switch effects on the fly. While the solo switch is an immensely practical feature, the other two switches flit through the memories sequentially, so if you need several different sounds within the same song you'd have to place them into adjacent memory slots to call them up in the right order. To some players,

that might seem like an entirely welcome and logical approach to playing a set. To others it may seem tedious and restrictive – you can make up your own mind on that one.

Verdict

The ME-25 is a versatile little unit that can be used for silent practice, computer recording and, albeit perhaps to a lesser extent, live work. Above all it's crammed with quality sounds and most of the bells and whistles you'd expect. It's a no-brainer for anyone who's starting out playing guitar and needs some serious practice aids. But thanks to the bundled software, it would also be a fine place to start for anyone wanting to enter the world of home recording. **G**

The Bottom Line

We like: Versatile range of quality sounds; USB connection for direct recording; solo switch for instant boosts

We dislike: Sequential preset switching could take a bit of forward planning for effective live use

Guitarist says: Cool COSM amp sounds and a comprehensive selection of effects in a practical and affordable package



BOSS ME-25

PRICE: £169

TYPE: Guitar multi-FX pedal

ORIGIN: Taiwan

EXTRA FEATURES: Tuner, 38-second looper, audio interface capability

SAMPLING RATE: 44.1 kHz

AD/DA CONVERSION: 24-bit

EFFECTS: Noise suppressor, compressor, auto wah, acoustic simulator, 10 overdrive/distortion effects, 10 amp models, chorus, phaser, flanger, rotary, univibe, tremolo, harmonist, octave, delay, reverb, pedal wah, pedal octave up, pedal octave down, pedal freeze, pedal volume

EFFECT PATCHES: 60 memory, 60 sound library

CONNECTIONS: Input, mini stereo jack aux input, jack L (mono) and R outputs, stereo headphone output, USB port

DIMENSIONS: 300 (w) x 191 (d) x 93 mm (h)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.9/4.2

POWER SUPPLY: Six AA batteries, AC adaptor (BOSS PSA series) not included

EXTRAS: Cakewalk Sonar 8.5 LE software

Roland UK
01792 702701

www.roland.co.uk

Test results

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

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★