



# BOSS ES-8 £549

Boss comes up with a switching solution that will transform your whole pedal setup

**Words** Trevor Curwen **Photography** Joby Sessions

**P**edals: most of us can't be without them, but with multiple stompboxes underfoot we soon find ourselves doing more tap dancing than playing, not to mention looking like a contortionist angling your foot to hit three footswitches at once for a composite sound, for example. The obvious answer is, of course, to add a switching unit to organise your pedalboard, and Boss has recently entered the market with the ES-8: an effects-switching system boasting a feature set that makes it hard to resist.

The ES-8 features eight send-and-return loops to connect your pedals, with eight dedicated footswitches to activate them. The eight loops comprise six mono, one mono-in stereo-out, and one stereo-in stereo-out. At its most basic, you can use the ES-8 in its Manual mode with the eight footswitches simply calling up the individual effects connected to the eight loops. But the real power of the unit is in Memory mode, where you

can readily recall user-programmed patches. It couldn't be easier to switch between Manual and Memory mode – there's a dedicated footswitch for it and the change is instant, with all the LEDs changing from red to blue so you know exactly which mode you are in.

## In Use

The main advantage of using patches is that you can bring in various combinations of effects with a single footswitch, but the really powerful feature of this unit is that you don't have to stick to a rigid order for the effects. Each patch can arrange the loops in any order, so you can, for example, have distortion before or after a delay for a quite different sonic result. To take things even further, you can set up parallel effects paths within a patch and you can also program it so reverb and delays can ring out and decay naturally when a patch is switched, rather than cut dead. On top of that, each

**RIGHT** Manual mode switches in the individual effects in each individual loop, while Memory mode (shown with blue LEDs) recalls user-defined combinations of effects



patch can also store data to take care of a bunch of other useful functions.

Besides MIDI connections on the ES-8 for sending control and program-change messages and MIDI Clock, there are a bunch of outputs to feed pedals equipped to take expression and control input. Now, these can be fed from external expression pedals or footswitches plugged into two ES-8 inputs, but control parameter values can also be stored with patches to, say, call up a particular delay time.

The control outputs can also be used for channel-switching duties for any amps that take footswitch input. Incidentally, the ES-8 has two audio outputs, so you can connect two amps, and it also has two inputs, so you can have two instruments permanently connected – both of these outputs and inputs being selectable with patches. While many functions can be initiated automatically with a patch change, the ES-8 also lets you assign various functions to any footswitch, so you

could have one dedicated to amp switching, or one assigned as a tap-tempo switch. A footswitch can be assigned as latching or momentary, so you can trigger an effect for as long as it is held down.

There really is an awful lot of functionality under the hood, and with 800 patches in 100 banks (switched with dedicated Bank Up and Bank Down footswitches), you can exploit as much of it as you want.

Further ES-8 connections include a permanent tuner output (there's a mute footswitch so you can tune silently) and an extra send and return loop that can sit anywhere in the pedal chain. Intended for use with a volume pedal, it can alternatively be used in conjunction with your amp's effects loop to facilitate the four-cable method of having some effects in front of the amp and some in the loop.

In use, the ES-8 offers a very clean signal path and silent switching with no pops and clicks, plus the practicality of switchable buffers at the input and output to cater for different needs, and, while it can encompass many complex functions, it is not difficult to use. We would have liked a computer-based patch editor as an alternative to the front-panel buttons, while the comparable but pricier pro-grade G2 unit from TheGigRig offers more intuitive ease of use.

### Verdict

Guitarists with multi-effects pedals from Boss, Line 6 and others have been able to switch between individual effects and patches and change the order of their effects for some time, but have been limited to manufacturer-supplied sounds. Essentially, then, the beauty of the ES-8 is that it gives you all the switching and routing flexibility of a floor-placed multi-effects, but applied to your own favourite, carefully chosen stompboxes. In short, the ES-8 will gloriously transform your whole pedalboard experience. **G**

**PROS** Massive control for your pedalboard. Well-priced

**CONS** A recipe for cable spaghetti; no software editor

### Tech Spec

**ORIGIN:** Taiwan

**TYPE:** Effects switching system

**FEATURES:** 800 patch memories, switchable input and output buffers, flexible routings and assignments, tap tempo with subdivisions

**CONTROLS:** 8x edit buttons, 8x numbered footswitches, 2x bank footswitch, memory/manual footswitch, mute footswitch

**CONNECTIONS:** See image above and manufacturer website for further info

**POWER:** AC adaptor (supplied)

**DIMENSIONS:** 439 (w) x 137 (d) x 65mm (h)

**OPTIONS:** Footswitch: Boss FS-5U, FS-6, FS-7; Expression pedal: Boss FV-500L, FV-500H, Roland EV-5

**Roland UK**

**01792 702701**

**www.roland.co.uk**

**8/10**

