

Quicktest

Welcome to Guitarist's regular round-up of the best of the rest of the gear that's passed through our hands this issue

Markbass Mark Studio 1 £190

The popular Italian bass amp maker now offers software...

CONTACT: Proel International Ltd **PHONE:** 0208 761 9911 **WEB:** www.proelint.co.uk

Most of the amp simulation packages available for guitarists offer a few bass amps among the models, but software specifically designed for bass is a rarer beast. IK Multimedia's Ampeg SVX is one option, as is the latest addition to the genre: the Markbass Mark Studio 1, software that is designed to replicate the sound of the Italian company's bass amplification. It is available for both OSX and Windows in RTAS/AU/VST plug-in formats and can also be used in standalone mode.

What you get are models of three amp heads – the TA 501, R 500 and Classic 300 – coupled with six different speaker cabs. Tools to tailor the sound include six virtual microphones and one preset two-mic combination. There's also a fully adjustable compressor in the signal chain.

In Use/Sounds

The 64 factory presets offer a

wealth of solid bass tones suitable for a range of musical genres, with plenty more available by tweaking amp controls, positioning the virtual mics (even on the rear port of ported cabs) and adding the very effective room ambience. The compressor can keep dynamics nicely under control, and the ability to mix the direct dry sound with the processed offers real versatility.

Verdict

A valuable asset for recording and tweaking bass sounds on your computer. [TC]

The Bottom Line

We like: Variation in bass tone; solid compressor

We Dislike: More expensive than we would like

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Bonding Solutions Pedal Board Tape

£7.99 per metre

Is there an alternative to Velcro? We think so

CONTACT: Bonding Solutions **PHONE:** 0118 3268764 **WEB:** www.bondingsolutions.co.uk

The tedium of keeping your pedalboard neat and adjustable resonates with pedal addicts and casual tweekers alike. Velcro is the common choice and, until now, the most used solution for keeping those precious stompboxes on the 'board. The main issue with Velcro is that after extended use it loses its effectiveness, especially after many beer-soaked gigs.

Bonding Solutions has introduced a pedal tape with a re-closable fastening system utilising hundreds of mini plastic mushrooms, promising to offer secure, clean bonding without the drawbacks of Velcro fraying and slippage.

In use

The Pedal Board Tape is indeed a more user-friendly product than Velcro. The adhesive is strong and takes to pedalboard and pedals reasonably quickly. Also, the grip isn't so strong that pedals can't be replaced without using a foot as leverage. The downside, as with many other products, is that the adhesive doesn't tack to the

rubber bottom of a BOSS-style pedal, and therefore you may find it rolling around your pedalboard after some heavy handedness.

Verdict

Great for metal-bottomed pedals and has an easy fix and detach grip. However, the good ol' cable tie still seems more viable when it comes to those rubber-bottomed pedals. [DD]

The Bottom Line

We like: Ease of use; long-term tape grip

We dislike: Doesn't deal well with BOSS-style rubber bottomed pedals!

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Carl Martin Rock Bug £119

A Swiss army knife in stomptbox form...

CONTACT: First Line PHONE: 01626 830336 WEB: www.carlmartin.com

A strange yet potentially gig-saving unit: intended for use as a rudimentary speaker simulator that doubles as a headphone amp, it could be just the thing to slip into your gig-bag to be conscripted into use should your main amp go down at the wrong moment.

The idea in that scenario would be to plug your effects chain into it, then take a line out from the on-board XLR out and go straight into the FOH desk. You would need further effects – such as a drive pedal, for example – but the basic tone would certainly be just about authentic enough.

A more controlled environment would be as a personal practice aid. Again, you'll need external pedals to get the tone you're used to, but the Bug includes phono aux in

sockets to feed in your media player and you can use the master and guitar controls to balance the signals.

Cleverly, you can also select either a closed or open-backed simulation to further augment the tones via a dedicated microswitch.

In Use

We use a BOSS OS-2 to give us some drive, then go straight through the Bug into our bog-standard headphones. Normally this would end up being as harsh and fizzy as a cola factory but, although not really setting the world alight tonally, the sound we find here is more than useable – especially if used for private practice. We did find that we prefer the open-back setting a little more as it adds slightly more presence.



Verdict

There are many products that are far better suited to getting a great tone to tape but, in an emergency, the Bug could save your gigging bacon. And if your amp rig is reliable, it has mileage as a compact practice tool. [SB]

The Bottom Line

We like: A great gig standby
We dislike: Hard to find a tone you may be used to

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

TheGigRig Effect Pedal Power System from £129

Guitarist
CHOICE

The complete bespoke DC pedal power solution...

CONTACT: TheGigRig Ltd PHONE: 01793 726137 WEB: www.thegigrig.com

Here are three products from TheGigRig that promise to revolutionise your pedalboard, making things much neater, and more power efficient to boot.

First is the Generator 9V DC power supply (£76.99 bought alone), which offers a whopping

5,000 milliamps of regulated current – enough power to supply more than 50 standard pedals; it works anywhere in the world and also with Line 6 pedals. Next, the Distributor (£29.31) gets power to your pedals via six 2.1mm power

leads: you simply cut them to the desired length and clip them into the Distributor with no need for solder. (You can also link Distributors together if you need to power more than six pedals on your 'board.)

Last but not least, the Virtual Battery (£29.31 each) is a small box that imitates the way a battery delivers current and comes in two forms. The VB-BC clips to a standard 9V battery terminal inside the pedal, and the VB-DC has a 2.1mm centre-negative, BOSS-style DC output (reverse polarity also available). The Virtual Battery then enables vintage and boutique battery-only pedals to run on a 9V supply, isolated, and when doubled up can also be used with 18V pedals – like we've

done here with the lovely Ibanez AD-80.

In use

The system is not only simple to set up but it also enables you to tailor your 'board for maximum efficiency. More importantly, all pedals perform to the height of their sonic abilities, especially the battery-only pedals – great news for anyone struggling with £4 for every Duracell!

Verdict

Coming in under the cost of many other pro-level power solutions, and with the added bonus of the ingenious Virtual Battery, this should be on the list for any pedal buff. [MT]

The Bottom Line

We like: Small size; ease of use; price
We dislike: Nothing
Guitarist says: Perfect customisable pedalboard solution for anyone amateur, semi pro or professional

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★

