



Eric in a box: could this be the answer to all your Clapton prayers?

DigiTech Crossroads £149

DIGITECH CROSSROADS

PRICE: £149

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Digital modelling multi-effects pedal

FEATURES: Seven classic Clapton sounds featuring modelled guitars, amps and effects

CONTROLS: Level, Control 1, Control 2, Model

CONNECTIONS: In, dual outputs (mixer, amp)

MIDI: No

POWER: 9V battery or DC adaptor (included)

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: Dan Donegan's The Weapon costs £149, and look out for the Jimi Hendrix Experience pedal which debuted at NAMM '05 (see pages 77-85)

Sound Technology
01462 480000
www.digitech.com

DigiTech celebrates the 40-year career of Eric Clapton with a pedal devoted to some of his classic sounds by Adrian Clark

In the past, signature gear has mostly been restricted to guitars and amps.

Signature effects units have gradually started to appear over the past few years, but they're still comparatively rare, and mostly consist of existing products modified to an artist's specifications. There's been nothing quite like the Ibanez Jem, Brian May's home-made Red Special or the Gibson Les Paul – the granddaddy of all signature models.

However, with digital modelling, the effects market has the ability to take a different approach to the 'signature' concept. Rather than having an artist-approved pedal, which might only work with his/her rig, why not have your top designers recreate some classic sounds for use with anyone's rig? DigiTech's first signature pedal was Dan Donegan's The Weapon, which now forms the

basic blue-print for the new Eric Clapton Crossroads pedal.

In terms of the design, there isn't much to explain. Along with the guitar input, a pair of outputs allow you to feed the digitally modelled sounds directly into a mixer/recorder or into your amp. Both outputs work simultaneously, so you could easily use an A/B box to switch between amp and PA in a live situation. For a couple of the settings, both outputs are designed to be heard simultaneously, either via a mixer or dual amps.

Of the four controls, one is a master output level control, while another is a rotary switch for selecting the seven classic Clapton sounds on offer. The other two, Control 1 and Control 2, vary according to the sound selected; they are usually gain and tone, but we'll look at the exceptions later. The pedal runs

on a single nine-volt battery, although DigiTech also provides a DC adaptor. In keeping with the 'limited edition' profile of the pedal, the (rather overpackaged, to be fair) box also contains a tiny gigbag for keeping your Crossroads pedal in pristine condition.

SOUNDS: Eric Clapton has had plenty of time to explore a few guitar sounds, and the Crossroads pedal comes with seven of the most instantly recognisable. What's surprising, though, is that there's nothing from before Cream. Jeff Beck was arguably the more important Yardbird from a tonal point of view, but the lack of a Bluesbreaker tone is a curious decision.

There are, however, three sounds from the Cream era. The first two, based on Sunshine Of Your Love and the live version of Crossroads are

DIGITECH CROSSROADS	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
<p>■ WE LIKED Easy to use and some very convincing sounds</p> <p>■ WE DISLIKED Some models not as good through mixer output; no Bluesbreaker sound!</p>	

similar, with the addition of a mid-range boost (for which Eric would have used a static wah pedal) on the former. Not surprisingly, both sounds work best with neck-position humbuckers, offering plenty of rich, thick sustain. While the former is primarily a rhythm sound, there's enough gain available for lead use. The third Cream sound is based on the jangly, chorused arpeggio part from Badge. This setting can be used in stereo, and Control 2 adjusts the modulation speed of the rotary speaker model.

The overdriven tone from Layla has a mid-range honk that sounds very close to Eric's Fender Champ on the original

Moving into the 1970s, you'll need to switch to a Strat to get the best results from the next two settings. The overdriven tone from Layla comes first, with a mid-range honk that sounds very close to Eric's Fender Champ on the original. From later in the decade, Lay Down Sally is a clean, country tone, although you can add a little bite via the gain control.

The last two settings demonstrate the power of the pedal's digital modelling. The second Layla tone recreates the sound of the Martin OOO-42 used on the Unplugged album, while Reptile has a very impressive jazz tone

(modelled on a Gibson L5). For both of these settings, the Control 2 knob adjusts the reverb level; for the acoustic sound, Control 1 boosts the resonant body frequencies.

Throughout our tests, we kept A/B-ing the pedal between amp and mixer outputs to compare the sounds. In general, we thought the overdriven sounds worked best through an amp; the basic modelled sounds were a little mid-range-heavy for our liking. However, this isn't necessarily a bad thing in the case of the first Layla setting, which does a very convincing impersonation of a Fender Twin. The acoustic and Gibson L5 sounds are best through a mixer, unaffected by the tone of an amp, and the Badge tone works well either way.

Verdict

It'll be interesting to see what sort of market there is for the Crossroads. Multi-effects units have been doing 'sound-alike' presets for years, but this

could be a great way of getting the sounds of your favourite player without having hundreds of other features you'll never use.

We were a little surprised by the choice of Clapton sounds. The acoustic and jazz guitar sounds, while excellent, aren't particularly reminiscent of EC, and there's no Marshall 1962 'Bluesbreaker' sound at all. That said, the Crossroads does its job very well, with just enough versatility without being over complex. It's a little on the expensive side for a single stompbox, although you do get seven radically different sounds. Also, a portion of the



proceeds from sales will be donated to Eric's Crossroads Centre for drug addiction, so you don't need to feel too bad about the expense! 🎸

DigiTech Crossroads

Guitarist RATING ★★★★★

The rivals

Korg AX10G	£115
Yamaha	
MagicStomp	£169
BOSS ME-50	£229

There's nothing in the stompbox market that will compete directly with the Crossroads, so the nearest equivalents are multi-effects units. All three units here can easily be plugged directly into an amp (rather than worrying about effects loops) and, for people with traditional pedalboards, the Korg and Yamaha units don't take up too much space



Twin outputs allow you to feed modelled sounds into a mixer/recorder or your amp