

DigiTech GNX4 £599

DIGITECH GNX4

PRICE: £599

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: Pedalboard multi-effects and modelling unit, multi-channel recording interface and MIDI sound module
FEATURES: Electric, acoustic and bass models, wide range of effects, built-in MIDI drum machine, six-channel 24-bit USB audio streaming, Lexicon reverb plug-in, microphone input with phantom power, bundled recording and editing software, mp3 and MIDI file playback, assignable expression pedal with V-Switch function

EFFECTS: Wah, pickup simulator, compressor, Whammy, Talker, intelligent pitch shifting, stompbox modelling, noise gate, 15 modulation effects, five delay types, 10 reverb types

PATCHES: 80 presets, plus 80 user memory slots (optional memory card gives 80 more)

MIDI: The GNX4 can transmit and receive program change and SysEx messages and receive control change messages. Type 0 MIDI files can be transmitted via the USB connection
DISPLAY: Eight-character LED with two-character numeric extension; song/time LED displays on eight-track recorder section

CONNECTIONS: Guitar input, microphone input (with level control, -20dB pad switch and 48V phantom power switch), left/right line inputs, 6.4mm balanced outputs (with level control and speaker compensation switch), XLR balanced outputs (with level control, speaker compensation switch and ground lift switch), headphone output, footswitch input, USB connection (cable supplied), MIDI in/out

POWER: Adaptor supplied

EXT CONTROLLERS:

The three-footswitch GNXFC is available as an optional extra (£49)

OPTIONS: For a simpler approach to the recording/multi-FX approach, the RPx400 retails at £299, the GNX3 costs £399. Compact Flash cards can be used for storing songs, MIDI files, mp3s and presets

Sound Technology
 01462 480000
www.guitarworkstation.com
www.digitech.com

Until DigiTech finds a way of adding a coffee machine and kitchen sink, you'll have to make do with their stunning new flagship model by Adrian Clark



While other manufacturers have dedicated their R&D efforts to exploring dedicated amp modellers and stompboxes in recent years, DigiTech has stuck the course, pushing at the limits of the pedalboard multi-FX format. Over the last couple of years, though, the Utah-based company has pushed things even further. With the RPx400, they took the basic layout of the RP300, but turned it into a recording and practice hub, supplying recording/sequencing software for a PC, which can then be controlled from the RPx400. DigiTech's latest, the GNX4, is like a combination of RPx400, GNX3, BNX3 (the bass version) and a whole lot more.

Right out of the box, the GNX4 will work perfectly well as a multi-FX unit. There are 80 factory presets, plus 80 memory slots for user presets, and an optional memory card can add space for up to 80 extra presets. As with all of the RP and GNX units, the component parts of a patch are shown in the matrix layout, though this has been made clearer on the GNX4 (a good move, seeing as the matrix is now so huge).

There are now 10 bass models in addition to the 15 electric guitar models and one acoustic guitar model, and in keeping with the expanded

DIGITECH GNX4	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
<p>■ WE LIKED It does its job(s) very well, and it makes you want to create music</p> <p>■ WE DISLIKED It's the wrong colour? Seriously... it's difficult to find any faults</p>	

nature of the GNX4, the preamp section now lives in a separate part of the matrix, above the parameter knobs. There are four sections for the preamps. The yellow GeNetX line is where you choose the amp and cabinet models for the two amp channels, as well as warping them together if necessary. The green and red lines deal purely with EQ settings for each amp channel, while the fourth (white) line contains the traditional amp controls: gain, level, bass, middle and treble. To adjust the overall level of a patch on the GNX3, you had to adjust the volume for both amp channels, but the GNX4 has a single overall preset level control. And speaking of controls, the GNX4 has continuous encoders in place of the standard pots on other models.

While we're looking at the main control panel, let's examine the various functions covered by the footswitches.

The function of each footswitch depends on the mode currently active. In preset mode, the GNX4 works like any patch-based effects unit; the bank up/down switches scroll through, and the five patches within each bank are selected using numbered switches. Normally, pressing any number a second time puts the GNX4 into bypass, but if you've selected the 'preset bounceback' facility via the utility menu, that second press returns to your previous preset. This is great for when you want to quickly switch between two sounds without having to look at your feet.

In all three modes, further functions can always be accessed by pressing two footswitches simultaneously: 1/2 enables or disables drums/mp3 sync, 2/3 bypasses the amp models and effects, 3/4 accesses the tuner, and 4/5 changes the footswitch mode.

Our next port of call is stompbox/control mode. Here, the up/down switches scroll through the patches rather than the banks, and numbered switches allow you to select or deselect individual components of the current patch. This is a fairly common facility nowadays; for BOSS users, think of it as being able to switch from an ME-33 to an ME-50 at the push of a button.

Hitting footswitches 4 and 5 again activates recorder mode. Put simply, you now have a multitrack digital recorder at your disposal, without having to take your hands off your guitar! →

For a complete rehearsal, gigging and home recording solution, there's nothing to match the GNX4



DIGITECH GNX4 £599
EFFECTS CD TRACKS 9 & 10



DigiTech's familiar interface takes patch editing to new, user-friendly heights



Redefining the studio

The GNX4 isn't designed to be a professional recording tool, but it's still way beyond most compact multitrack units. The most convenient way is to use the on-board eight-track digital recorder, which has a full control panel but is designed to be used hands-free. For more sophisticated use, you can connect the GNX4 to a PC or Mac, using the computer's hard drive storage. The GNX4 comes with two pieces of recording software: Pro Tracks Plus (an enhanced version of the software that comes with the RPx400) for Windows

XP/2000 and BIAS Deck SE for Mac OSX. You'll then be able to record up to 64 mono tracks (in Deck SE) or 32 stereo tracks (in Pro Tracks Plus) and take advantage of the bundled Lexicon Pantheon reverb plug-in. The real treat, though, is the hands-free facility. As long as you're in recording mode (hit footswitches 4 and 5), footswitch 3 will arm a new track ready for recording. If you don't want to jump right in on the first beat, you can set up to 16 beats of pre-roll, and use a click track to keep time. A little more preparation is required for setting up the GNX4 to record to your computer, but it's not difficult; mostly just making sure the computer and GNX4 can 'see' each other.

modules, such as the tracking accuracy in pitch-shifting effects. We couldn't say how much difference this has made, but the effects are of very high quality. DigiTech has an enviable pedigree in effects design, so the Whammy and Talker effects are the real thing, rather than imitations. What's more, DigiTech's parent company, Harman International, now also owns classy effects gurus Lexicon, so the JamMan looper and Pantheon reverb plug-in are also from the horse's mouth, as it were.

Verdict

There's a lot to digest in the GNX4's manual, and we've only really scratched the surface here. Although the basic functions are clear, the great thing about the GNX4 is how much flexibility you have over how you use them, giving you the chance to find your own way of working. Despite the many features, the unit is not too difficult to use, but it's unlikely you'll be able to master it after a couple of exploratory sessions as you can with most DigiTech products; to get the best out of the GNX4, you need to spend some time with the manual. For more help, try the GNX website (www.guitarworkstation.com) which features video tutorials by Craig Anderton.

Price-wise, the GNX4 is clearly not aimed at the first-time buyer, but we don't think it's overly expensive, considering what you'd have to pay for a modelling/effects unit of similar quality, along with a recording interface and software and MIDI drum machine. If you can do without the computer recording facility and the MIDI/mp3 playback, the GNX3 is £200 cheaper, but for a complete rehearsal, gigging and home recording solution, there's nothing to match the GNX4. **G**

The rivals

DIGITECH GNX4	
BOSS GT6	£399
Line 6 PODxt	£369
DigiTech RPx400/GNX3	£299/£399

To be fair, there's nothing on the market yet which can match the GNX4 in terms of features. The BOSS and Line 6 units are its nearest rivals in terms of amp models and effects, and are every bit as good, allowing for personal taste. As far as we're aware, the only other unit that combines amp modelling and multi-effects with a PC recording interface is DigiTech's own RPx400, and the only unit to feature on-board eight-track digital recording is the GNX3. There must be someone out there with a competitive urge...

→ Previous GNX and RP units had a rhythm trainer, but the GNX4 has a fully functional drum machine! There are 110 patterns and five metronome settings, and you can even fine-tune the sound by choosing from the eight available kits. And that's not all... you can use the drum machine to play back any MIDI files from a Compact Flash card. Or, for playing along with your favourite Guitarist backing tracks (what else?) without having to connect a CD player, you can download mp3 files to your CF card and play them back via the drum machine.

This flexibility and versatility is mirrored across the whole feature range. Take the expression pedal for instance. Up to three parameters can be assigned, and the 'live' parameter is selected using the V-Switch function, by applying extra pressure to the toe end of the pedal. The exact amount of pressure required can be adjusted (so you don't switch parameters by accident during a frenzied wah

moment), as can the max/min points of assigned parameters. And, if you're in stompbox/control mode, footswitches 2, 3 and 4 can also be assigned to other parameters, and the amp channel footswitch can be set to toggle between different combinations of channel one, channel two and the Warped channel.

SOUNDS: The sounds on the GNX4 are essentially the same as those on the GNX3, but that's not a problem. The price difference between the two is amply covered by the enhanced recording and MIDI functions on the GNX4. It's worth echoing what we said about the GNX3 a couple of years ago: the amp models cover just about all musical bases, with an almost infinite range of sounds available by blending them to create 'hypermodels'. Whether or not the GeNetX models are accurate reproductions of the 'real' amps, they're excellent sounds in their own right.

Since the GNX3, DigiTech has improved a few details in the effects

DigiTech GNX4

Guitarist RATING

