

MUSICOM LAB EFX MkII

Price: £439 inc UK delivery **Contact:** Moonphase Ltd, 01223 841035, www.musicomlab.co.uk

The concept of an all-in-one switching solution is nothing new. The idea that you could combine the sound quality and modular concept of stand-alone effects with multiple presets, outputs and switching options – not to mention MIDI compatibility – is something that has been harnessed by some of the greatest guitar techs of all time, such as Bob Bradshaw and Pete Cornish, as well as our very own Dan Steinhardt of TheGigRig. The problem with a lot of their solutions is that, in their uncompromising pursuit of the perfect switching system, either the price tags or physical size of the units can quickly increase – a big problem for the average weekend warrior.

Musicom Lab's EFX MkII controller offers a much smaller footprint than most, and at a

much lower price. Build is solid, with eight chunky footswitches arranged on the unit's top – four of which give instant access to presets, with two further switches allowing you to sort through all 25 banks, giving 100 patches in all. The final pair of switches are used for muting the output and mode selection respectively. A small but clear LED is easily visible, and although there is a bit of a learning curve, the EFX MkII is relatively simple in operation, even in terms of its MIDI functionality. At the back of the unit are a slew of quarter-inch jacks, 16 of which are used as send and return connections for each of the EFX MkII's effects loops, with

additional jacks for amplifier control, tuner out and MIDI switching. The enclosure itself is robust, and the footswitches and jacks all feel solid and reliable. Additionally, the built-in buffer circuits and especially the 'pop-free' switching system work a treat, and overall there is very

little else your average amateur or semi-pro player would need. It might not boast the more advanced features of some of its more costly competitors, but for the price there is little that can touch it.

GBRATING ★★★★★



PLANET WAVES RENEW STRING CLEANING SYSTEM

Price: £8.99 **Contact:** Summerfield, 0191 414 9000, www.planetwaves.com

Extending the life of your strings is a little more involved than simply wiping them with a cloth every now and then. A suitable cleaning fluid which only removes dirt without tarnishing the metal beneath should be used, and it should be applied evenly to every part of the string – after all, it isn't just the top of the string that becomes dirty.

This handy new system from Planet Waves neatly covers both requirements. Firstly, a small bottle of clear string cleaner and lubricator is provided. To apply it adequately, however, two identical black plastic implements have also been supplied. These feature a small handle at one end and a pair of staggered flat surfaces with a gap between them at the other. Simply stick the included foam pads to each of the flat surfaces and apply a couple of

drops of the cleaning fluid to each. You can then get two strings at a time between the two pads, and cleaning is easily achieved by applying pressure and moving up and down the strings' lengths several times, though it is recommended that the strings are slackened off before doing so. Planet Waves also suggests that you can stretch new strings using the tool rather than your fingers, which will no doubt help to avoid immediately compromising new strings with your grubby hands! This system is fairly cheap and straight-forward to use – you should even be able to recoup the cost of this pack with the money saved by reducing the frequency of your string changes, and that 'new string' tone each new set provides should last significantly longer too.

GBRATING ★★★★★

