

Amp Modelers: Better Than The Real Thing?

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DigiTech GNX1



This unit made me think of late night TV infomercials; whenever I was exploring a particular function of the GNX1, a Ginsu knife-bearing chef would appear and shout "BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!" This box has so many tricks up its sleeve that it might be unfair to call it an Amp Modeler. (And DigiTech doesn't; they call it a "GeNetX™ Guitar Processor powered by AudioDNA™.")

It is a formidable amp modeler/multi-effect processor housed in a compact metal floorboard enclosure, complete with four multifunction footswitches and a programmable expression/wah pedal. Clearly designed with the performing guitarist in mind, the GNX1 allows many different programming functions to be accessed with one's feet...yet it also has the deepest, most complex interface of any of the units in the roundup.

The GNX1 has 17 different amp models, including the obligatory Marshall, Fender, Hiwatt, MESA/Boogie, Vox, and Matchless emulations, plus a couple non-specific tube amps and an acoustic steel string model. "BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!"

The GNX1 has both a Green and a Red amp channel; a different amp model can be loaded into each channel, and you can Warp between the two! ("Warp" is DigiTech's term for creating new amps with parameters in between two other models).

Warping is a parameter that can be tweaked and then saved as part of a preset...or the Warp parameter can be assigned to the expression pedal so that the player has continuously variable balance between the Green and Red amp channels. The footswitches can also be used to select the Green channel, the Red channel, or the Warped combination of the two.

"BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!" That Warped combination of two amp models, with the balance between the Green and Red channels determined by you, can be saved as a HyperModel™. The GNX1 has nine memory locations for

HyperModels™...and these can be used just like any of the "normal" amp models to create user presets.

Or to create further HyperModels™. Imagine this: the funky grit of an overdriven 1959 Fender Bassman in a 30/70% blend with the caterwauling buzz of a Marshall JCM900. Sweet. Or imagine crossfading seamlessly from one to the other as a way of adding punctuation to musical phrases.

Or imagine saving that combination as a HyperModel™ and then blending that with some other HyperModel™ constructed from, oh, a 50/50 blend of Vox AC30 with top boost and Flat Top Acoustic guitar. It boggles the mind.

The GNX1 offers eight different speaker cabinet models, consisting of a variety of 2x12 and 4x12 cabinets, plus one 1x12. "BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!" The resonant frequency of each of these virtual speaker cabinets can be tuned over a range of two octaves. These re-tuned cabinets can then be stored as one of nine user speaker cabinets. Or the resonance parameter can be assigned to the expression pedal for (you guessed it) continuously variable speaker cabinet resonance in real time.

OR the resonance parameter can be assigned to one of the two onboard Low Frequency Oscillators. In fact there are 32 different parameters that can be modulated by these LFOs (one parameter each per program) or by the expression pedal (up to three at a time). All parameters are also MIDI-addressable.

Most of those parameters are part of the vast effects section. The GNX1 features eight different types of effects, all available simultaneously, including Wah, Compressor, Pitch Shifting, EQ, Noise Gate, Chorus/Mod, Delay, and Reverb.

"BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!" (Are you as sick of this gag as I am?) Not only are there ten different Reverb types, but there are four different Delay types, 15 different Chorus/Mod types, two different Gates, four different Whammy™ Intelligent Pitch Shifter types (not counting the pitch shifting that's available as one of the Chorus/Mod types), and three different Wahs!

Last but certainly not least there's even a Pickup Simulator that does a surprisingly effective job of making single coil guitar pickups sound like double coil humbuckers, and vice-versa. The order of the effects in the signal path is fixed, but the sheer enor-

mity of effects should certainly make up for any limitation that might suggest.

To store this potential abundance of sonic mayhem, the GNX1 has 48 user presets in RAM, in addition to 48 factory presets in ROM. These are organized in 16 banks of three presets each; not only can each preset be given its own unique name (limited to six characters), but each bank can be named as well.

The interface is reasonably informative, consisting of that 6-character green alphanumeric display, a 2-character red numeric display, and a 6x9 matrix of knobs, buttons, and LEDs. Plus six more buttons with integral status LEDs. And two different sets of Up/Down buttons. And the aforementioned four footswitches.

Okay, on second thought the interface is kinda obtuse. But obviously there's an awful lot going on in the GNX1, and given the limited real estate of the 14.5 by 9 floorboard, DigiTech did a fair job of making it all available to the user. For an easier time tweaking, the GNX1 ships with GenEdit™, an editor/librarian program for Mac or Windows.

MIDI implementation is sufficiently thorough, and it includes not only bulk dumps but also separate Preset and Amp Model (HyperModel™) dumps. Every parameter responds to continuous controllers (though curiously doesn't send them) and Presets can be mapped to any incoming patch change commands.

...and I haven't even mentioned the Learn-A-Lick phrase recorder (nine seconds of digital audio recording with time compression). Or the Jam-A-Long input (a line-level input that's mixed with your guitar signal at the output). Or the Rhythm Trainer (a simple infinite-loop pattern-based drum machine with 31 different preset patterns). Did I say this box was deep?

The DigiTech GNX1 may be the deepest guitar processor on the market that still can appeal to the guitarist looking for a plug-and-play footpedal.

Price: \$499

More from: DigiTech, 8760 S. Sandy Pkwy., Sandy, UT 84070. 801/566-8800, fax 801/566-7005, www.digitech.com.