

Boss Micro BR BR-80 | £235



What's the most useful musical tool that you could easily slip into your pocket? **John Andrews** reckons it might just be the Boss BR-80

WHAT IS IT?

Personal portable multi-track/stereo recorder with audio interface capability and practice facilities

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Quick stereo recording via inbuilt mics
- 2 Comprehensive multi-tracking facilities
- 3 Onboard tracks for music practice

SPECS

Recording Media: SDHC Memory Card (4 GB to 32 GB), SD Memory Card (1 GB to 2 GB)

File Type: WAV, MP3

Playback Tracks: 8

Simultaneous Recording Tracks: 2

Connections: 1/4" guitar/mic jack input, stereo minijack line input, stereo minijack phones/line output, USB

Power supply: DC 9 V: AC Adaptor (PSA series: sold separately), Alkaline battery (AA, LR6) x 2, Rechargeable Ni-MH battery (AA, HR6) x 2, USB bus power

Dimensions:
138mm x 86mm x 22mm

Weight:
140g

There have been other pocket-sized hardware multi-track studios, not least the original Boss Micro BR

launched 5 years ago, but with a sleek design and minimalist set of controls, their new BR-80 model is the most graceful yet... and it doesn't half pack a punch too. What you're getting is a versatile, hand-held and completely portable little widget that is an 8-track digital multi-tracker, a stereo field recorder, a musician's practice tool and USB audio interface all rolled into one.

Flexible friend

The BR-80 is based around three working modes. The first of these is Live Rec, where the unit makes use of a pair of built-in microphones to instantly make stereo recordings – great for recording gigs, rehearsals or random musical ideas whenever inspiration strikes. Any audio you record in this mode can also be used as the initial tracks of a song if you switch to MTR mode and import the file into the 8-track multi-tracker.

The multi-tracker enables you to record up to two tracks at a time, using the inbuilt mics, a 1/4" jack input that will take a guitar or microphone, or a stereo line input. There are a bunch of insert effects that can be recorded with your signal. Most are fully produced COSM amp/effects sounds for guitarists, but there are also several for vocalists, including some useful doubling and harmony effects as well as pitch correction. Besides the eight tracks, there's a dedicated stereo rhythm track with a library of onboard patterns that can be sequenced together to make a complete song – you can also create your own by importing MIDI files. Each recording track has eight virtual tracks, allowing different takes of each performance and, with 3-band EQ, reverb, panning and volume for each track, there's scope for creative mixing – with onboard mastering effects to apply a final polish.

Multi benefits

The third mode of operation is eBand, based on the dedicated Boss JS-8

practice tool, enabling you to jam along with rhythm tracks and pre-recorded music, perhaps while making use of phrase training facilities – variable speed and pitch, centre-cancelling and looped repeat. A range of onboard tracks plugged through the COSM effects are suited to guitarists, but you could play along with any instrument. You can also import CD, MP3, and WAV audio files from a computer via USB (or use something of your own that you've recorded on the BR-80).

Operation is straightforward, with a clear display and intuitive navigation around it via a 4-way cursor and dial, and linking with a computer is seamless – the BR-80 comes with Sonar X1 LE but the bundled Wave Converter software enables easy exchange of data between the BR-80 and any computer-based DAW. You can also record straight to a DAW using the BR-80 as an audio interface, possibly while using the insert effects. Multi-tracker? Sure. Multi-purpose? Absolutely.

Pocket power

If you want to make music on the move, you could slip a mobile phone loaded with a bunch of musical apps into your pocket but, if quality audio recordings made with a minimum of fuss are the order of the day, whether that be impromptu idea archiving, formal stereo recording or painstaking demo creation, a dedicated unit like this takes some beating. Some have been predicting the death of the hardware multi-tracker for a while now, but the mix of facilities that Boss has packed into the BR-80 should ensure that the genre will go on and on and on... **FM**



FutureMusic	VERDICT
BUILD	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
VALUE	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
EASE OF USE	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
VERSATILITY	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
RESULTS	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
The musician's go-anywhere companion – record, compose or practice wherever you may be.	