



# Fishman Loudbox Artist £649

Acoustic pickup expert Fishman adds a new mid-power Loudbox to the acoustic amp market *by Dave Burrluck*

**A**nounced earlier this year, the Artist is the latest addition to Fishman's Loudbox series and replaces the Loudbox 100, offering more power and more onboard effects. The Artist follows the new, less industrial, more acoustic-vibe Loudbox styling as used on the Loudbox Mini (reviewed in issue 335), and although it has a wider footprint than AER's Compact concept, it falls nicely into the compact market; it's not overly weighty, but it's a shame there's no supplied carry case or even cover (that's a £49 extra).

The concept is simple enough: a 120W mono amp with eight-inch driver and one-inch tweeter and two identical

channels, each featuring three-band EQ (each lightly centre-notched) and essential anti-feedback rotary and phase switch. The controls, which all have the same moulded knobs (it might have been nicer if the EQs, for example, were smaller to avoid any confusion during a gig) sit on a lightly angled-back beige fascia, again easy enough to see and access. The cab has a brown leather-like covering, matched by the woven baffle.

The A effects – hall one and two, delay and echo (with fewer repeats than the delay) – are a part of each channel with a dedicated level control. The B effects – chorus one and two, flanger and slap echo – can be added to this via a push switch

per channel. Parameter adjustments are just time (effect A) and modulation rate (effect B).

Other treats include a tweeter level control, dual mini and standard jack aux inputs, FX loops and pre-XLR outputs per channel and global post EQ/FX master XLR output. Typically for a Fishman, it's a very easy-to-use, thought through design.

Certainly if you're performing, especially with a dual pickup/mic system, these

XLR outputs can become essential – especially if there are other onstage monitors. For example, via the individual channel pre outputs you can send both the mic and pickup signals to the main PA but then the soundman can leave the troublesome mic signal out of the onstage monitoring while using it out front. Another use comes with using two different guitars onstage – one channel for each. These dual outputs mean that both can be EQ'd front of house. Certainly, the Fishman isn't the only amp with these extensive facilities but bear them in mind when you're selecting any amp, especially if you're planning to use it hooked up to a PA in larger venues.

## Sounds

Each channel's input pad switch doubles as an LED input gain indicator, although audible

Easily transportable, not heavy, this is an attractive package aimed squarely at the small-venue musician – and hooked up to a PA, the sky's the limit

## The Rivals

**AER's Compact 60** (£799, inc carry case) is still the go-to acoustic amp for many: highly compact, 60W, two-channel design with digital reverb/delay and bells and whistles aplenty. **Roland's AC-90** (£659) is a stereo combo (2 x 45 watts) with guitar and mic/line inputs, feedback controls and digital effects. **Vox's twin-channel AGA150** (£528) boasts 150W of power and a similar weight to the Loudbox Artist along with reverb and chorus and a tube-driven preamp.

distortion is evident before the red LED lights; but with that exception, everything else seems straightforward. It's dead easy to shape your sound – there's a rich bass that belies the amp's size, the mid-range control cleans up your sound removing boxiness from smaller-bodied instruments; the highs are crisp not sharp. The vari-level tweeter adds a little hi-fi high-end – 40 per cent works for us.

Of course, the neat thing about the dual channel set-up is that it's multi-purpose. It proves excellent to set up different levels/EQ and FX for both our nylon and steel-strings; alternately one channel can be used either for a vocal or an instrument mic – the latter proving perfect, not least with the channel-specific feedback controls, to mic a resonator via one channel and run its magnetic pickup into the other.

The effects sound very natural; hall one should take



The effects are natural-sounding, and the option to add slap echo is a neat touch

care of most circumstances but the ability to kick in slap echo from channel B is welcome. A tap tempo control would be handy – setting precise delays isn't easy otherwise. Overall, it's all good: volume is generous, if not excessive then certainly plenty as a stage monitor with the output going to the PA, or standalone for smaller solo/ensemble gigs.

### Verdict

This is an attractive package aimed squarely at the small-venue musician. But hooked up

to a PA, the sky's the limit. It's highly intuitive in use and although you can't preset the effects section, the dual effects offer more than enough for most acoustic players. Easily transportable, not heavy, it's ideal for travelling musicians, although a cover/carry case should have been included, rather than offered as an extra.

But, it's the warm, natural sound that appeals – a little more spacious perhaps than our reference AER – along with its ease-of-use and sensible specification. **A**



## Fishman Loudbox Artist

**PRICE:** £649

**ORIGIN:** Korea

**TYPE:** Twin-channel, solid-state acoustic combo

**POWER:** 120W RMS

**SPEAKERS:** Eight-inch woofer plus one-inch tweeter (with level control)

**CONTROLS:** Dual standard jack/XLR input, input pad switch, gain, low, mid, high EQ, anti-feedback rotary, phase switch, effect A level, effect B switch per channel. Effect A selector and time control, effect B selector and depth control, aux level, master volume, channel mute switch, tweeter level, phantom power (24V)

**EFFECTS:** Effect A – reverb one and two, delay, echo; effect B – chorus one and two, flanger, slap echo

**ADDITIONAL FEATURES:** Aux in (6.4mm & 3.2mm jacks), Mix DI (Post) out, channel one FX loop send & return jacks, channel one XLR output (pre-EQ), channel two FX loop send & return jacks, channel two XLR output (pre-EQ)

**FOOTSWITCH:** Dual footswitch (not included) for channel mute and effect B mute

**RANGE OPTIONS:** Other Fishman acoustic amps include the Loudbox Mini (£459), the Loudbox Performer (£1,029) and the SA220 Solo Performance System (£1,349)

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 11.6/25.5

**DIMENSIONS:** 343 (h) x 394 (w) x 292mm (d)

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### Test results

|                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| <b>Build quality</b>   | ★★★★★ |
| <b>Playability</b>     | ★★★★★ |
| <b>Sound</b>           | ★★★★★ |
| <b>Value for money</b> | ★★★★★ |

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



Two channels enables you to put one instrument through each and EQ separately

### The Bottom Line

**We like:** Feature set; price; ease-of-use; overall tone

**We dislike:** Clip indication; no carry case/cover included in price; no tap tempo control

**Guitarist says:** A worthy successor to the Loudbox 100, the Artist ups the power and adds effects but remains a well-spec'd, easy-to-use, good-sounding acoustic combo