

Step On It

This new flagship floorboard is the latest in a long line from multi-effects pioneer Zoom. But is it still valid in today's market?

Words Trevor Curwen Photography Olly Curtis



ZOOM G11 £699

CONTACT **Sound Service GmbH** WEB <https://zoomcorp.com>



Basic functions are carried out via the touchscreen, which has four scrollable pages

What You Need To Know

- 1 Another do-it-all floorboard. Aren't there enough around?**
Maybe, but Zoom has been making these for a very long time and it's about time there was a successor to the G5n.
- 2 How is this different to the G5n?**
It's slightly bigger, for a start, with more footswitches. It also increases the amount of modelled amps and allows you to use onboard and imported IRs, plus it has a touchscreen.
- 3 Isn't a touchscreen a bit of a gimmick?**
Not at all! It lays out everything you need to get the job done with less fuss than wrangling menus, cursors and a data wheel.

Zoom was one of the pioneers of the floorboard multi-effects processor, but it's been several years since the company released a new one. Now, building on what the previous G5n offered, it's back with this brand-new G11, which is certainly feature-packed.

It comes equipped with an intuitive touchscreen display, two banks of footswitches and a pedal treadle. It has a stereo or dual mono effects loop for adding external pedals or for four-cable connection, and an input for an expression pedal. A USB connection allows operation as 4-in/4-out 24-bit audio interface as well as providing access to computer-based editing via the free Zoom Guitar Lab software, also accessible with an iOS/iPadOS device by connecting a Zoom BTA-1 wireless adaptor.

A looper that records up to five minutes in stereo can be synchronised to the 68 onboard rhythm patterns, which are handy for playing along to for a bit

of silent practice using the headphone output. There's also a degree of MIDI capability with Program Changes and Clock synchronisation supported.

As for its sounds, the G11 offers 240 onboard patch memories in 60 banks of four, each preset having a signal chain built from a linear array of 10 blocks (DSP permitting). An amplifier can be assigned to one of the effect blocks as can a cabinet model or IR. There are 24 cabinets matching the 24 modelled amps as well as 70 matching IRs, but there are also 130 memory locations where you can load your own and third parties' impulse responses using a USB flash drive. The range of effects is pretty comprehensive, with the everyday nestling next to the esoteric.

In Use

The G11 is slim and weighs only 2.8kg (6.2lb), so it's easy to move around. That light weight is no doubt due to extensive use of plastic, but there's nothing flimsy about it.





THE RIVALS

Considering that a major asset of Zoom's G11 is its footswitching setup, its nearest equivalents really have to be units that are similarly endowed with plenty of footswitches and a treadle. Line 6's Helix LT (£989) and the HeadRush Pedalboard (£739 street price), with its seven-inch touch display, or even the older Boss GT-1000 (£799 street price) all fall into that particular category. All of these, however, are more expensive options than the Zoom on review, but if you're looking for something closer in price there's Mooer's GE3000 at £749 (with a £599 street price), the company's flagship unit, offering a pretty comprehensive feature set, including its Tone Capture instrument matching technology.



Where some amp and effects modellers these days seem to have a minimal amount of footswitches and mode-switching to use them, this Zoom floorboard offers 11 in an ergonomic layout that's presented for a very logical way of working, which will make immediate sense to anyone used to an amp and effects setup.

In fact, the unit is laid out in three distinct sections from top to bottom. To the right of the touchscreen you get your amp section with a standard six-knob array: Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble, Presence and Volume. The middle section is set out like a row of five stompboxes, each with a chromed footswitch, a window to show the name of the effect and four parameter knobs for each effect – you just switch effects in and out and tweak them at will. The final section has six red footswitches for more general tasks. There's an up/down pair for selecting patches, a similar pair for selecting banks, and a pair for horizontal scrolling whose

main purpose is to move the colour-coded effects chain left or right so you can access them all. In addition, these footswitches can call up the tuner, operate tap tempo and take care of looper functions.

Sounds

Running through the 100 factory programmed presets, our first impressions weren't exactly positive. Many of them are not really ready for any practical musical use straight out of the box as they're laden with exaggerated use of effects,

The ability to load third-party IRs to the amp means that you can really tailor the degree of realism

odd EQ, inappropriate ambiences and so on. Nevertheless, that doesn't mean the component sounds are bad. There's plenty of good stuff among the individual models; you simply need to get tweaking or create your own from scratch.

Fortunately, touchscreen editing is a breeze. Swiping to change effects order and adding effects to the chain is easy. The amps are a mixture of vintage classics, more contemporary designs and Zoom's own creations, including some specifically voiced for seven- and eight-string guitars and dropped tunings, which may give a clue to where Zoom's target audience lies.

A careful choice of the onboard IRs added to the amp can add a useful touch of mic'd amp flavour, although the ability to load third-party IRs means that you can really tailor the degree of realism. A full patch with amp and speaker simulation plus effects will give you a wide range of options for recording or direct into a PA or FRFR



Fundamentally, these are a connected chain of pedals, each with a footswitch and four parameter knobs



ZOOM G11

PRICE: £699

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: Amp and effects modelling floorboard

FEATURES: 4-in/4-out audio interface, tuner, looper, 68 onboard rhythms, MIDI, 240 preset slots, 70 impulse responses

CONTROLS: Touchscreen, Master output, Gain, Bass, Middle, Treble, Presence, Volume, 20x effects pedal knobs, 5x effects pedal footswitches, 6x footswitches, treadle

CONNECTIONS: Standard guitar input, stereo mini jack aux input, standard stereo phones output, standard Main outputs L (mono) and R, standard Send outputs (1 and 2), standard Return inputs (1 and 2), Control in, Remote, MIDI In, MIDI Out, 2x USB

POWER: Supplied Zoom AD-19 12V adaptor

DIMENSIONS: 495 (w) x 253 (d) x 64mm (h)

speaker system. Alternatively, you can set up patches that purely contain up to 10 effects, providing a range of fully loaded pedalboards for use with your own amp.

To this end, the range of effects is extensive. There are plenty of different types of dynamic and filter effects, modulations, delays and reverbs. There are also some special effects such as the 'hot spice' sitar simulation, and 28 effects in the drive category including models of well-known drive pedals and even a decent-sounding acoustic simulator.

We also get some pedal effects, although assigned to a footswitch like the rest, these can make use of the treadle to adjust one specific fixed parameter. There's the obvious volume pedal, wah or whammy-style pitch shifters, but you also get options such as drive with pedal-adjustable gain, or a rotary speaker with speed change via the treadle. A second added expression pedal can be assigned to another pedal effect.

All of this works well as a closed effects system, but for increased flexibility you can integrate your own pedals: the two mono or one stereo effects loop can be anywhere in the signal chain, footswitchable from the G11, with positioning saved with the patch.

Verdict

Get beyond the pretty naff presets and the G11 provides a comprehensive set of facilities for home recording, practice and onstage use, where it can supply perhaps all the effects you'd need in a very practical format. When we looked at the G5n back in issue 410, our verdict was that it was a worthy bargain at a street price of £229. However, while the G11 is a definite upgrade on the G5n, it's three times the price, something that will probably make some potential users think twice about a purchase, not least as an extra £100 could snag them an established performer such as the Line 6 Helix LT. **G**

8/10

PROS Lightweight; good ergonomic footswitching arrangement; instant amp and effect tweaks; USB recording facility; rhythms for practice/songwriting

CONS Could have better factory presets; no parallel signal paths