

Horse Power

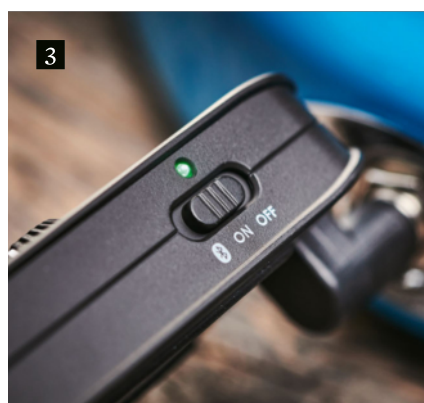
Fender's tiny new headphone amp is brimming with vibey amp models and effects for under £100. Where do they put it all?

Words Jamie Dickson Photography Phil Barker



**FENDER
MUSTANG MICRO**
£89

WHAT IS IT? An affordable headphone amp and recording interface that's packed with amp models and classic effects



1. A single volume control sits at the front – with plus/minus controls on the side for amp models, EQ and effects
2. A headphone output jack provides monitoring while the USB-C socket is for charging, recording and firmware updates
3. The on/off switch also engages the Mustang's Bluetooth functions, so you can jam along to music streamed from a phone or other device

Though it's smaller than a credit card (albeit thicker) the Mustang Micro can do a *lot*. It can serve as everything from a silent practice tool to a recording interface, with 12 classic amp models and an equal number of effects onboard, ranging from slapback delay to harmonic tremolo. Fender wanted the Mustang Micro to offer a feature-rich but intuitive user experience and, largely speaking, it achieves it – with one or two caveats.

To get going, fold out the quarter-inch jack built into the unit, plug that into your guitar then plug your headphones into the Micro. A sliding on-off switch turns it on, whereupon four coloured lights fire up, each mounted above a plus/minus rocker switch on the opposite edge of the device. These switches select (from left to right): the amp model in use; the EQ mode; the effect applied to the selected amp model; and a Modify function that alters a key

parameter of that effect, whether it be Delay Level or the Rate of a flanger. There's a single dial on the front of the Mustang Micro for volume, plus a Bluetooth-pairing function that's engaged by sliding the on-off switch left, allowing you to jam to music streamed from a mobile device.

The first amp model, by default, is a '65 Twin with added compression, while further clicks of the Amp + button takes you on through the famous names of Fender history, including a '57 Twin model and some more eclectic stuff, such as an AC30. The amps are arranged in groups of four, with the first group being Clean, the next Crunch and the last High-Gain – plus a Direct mode that just gives a preamp'd signal but no modelling.

Sounds are very decent, if bright, but you can tone that down with the EQ switch, which shifts through five preset EQ settings from extra-dark to brighter than Einstein.

The high-gain tones, inspired by Bogner, EVH and Friedman classics, are especially impressive, being girthy and articulate. The model of a 2290 Delay is also nice, and it was easy to dial in vibey cleans with reverb and trem. The tones might not be quite up to Kemper standard, but they ain't light-years away either, making the Micro a very handy tool for silent practice sessions, demo recordings and writing songs on the go. **G**



9/10

PROS Wide range of surprisingly usable tones and handy functions; simple controls and small size. At this price, it's great value, too

CONS Feels just a little flimsy and vulnerable to damage; the 12 hues of light indicating mode are confusing without the manual to hand