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# LINE 6 POD EXPRESS £199

## Nostalgic digital modelling with hands-on control

It's been over a quarter of a century since Line 6's unmistakable red, kidney bean-shaped modeller burst onto the scene and kickstarted a tonal revolution, laying foundations for what is today a commonplace alternative to using an amp. The POD, of course, still exists, even if it's in the more conventional floorboard format. Line 6's latest release also falls into the POD family, and while it takes the shape of a stompbox, there are parallels to be drawn with its ancestors.

The POD Express comes loaded with HX-derived amp and effects models – seven amps, seven cabs and 17 effects, distilled into a compact-sized pedal. There's an on-board looper, a tuner, tap-tempo switch and a USB-C audio interface, plus you can hook up an external expression pedal, two footswitches, or a combination of expression and footswitch using a splitter cable. The battery power, plastic casing, headphone socket and consumer-style volume wheel suggest this is aimed at headphone practice, but it can also be chained into your rig like

any other pedal, or used as your amp simulator into a PA or cab. In short, it's a Jack of all trades.

That's well and good, but we're hardly lacking for solutions when it comes to playing or recording our guitars in 2024, so the proof is in the tonal pudding. The POD Express works in either Preset mode (you can save 21 of your own) or Manual mode. The first is a good way of getting to grips with some of the capabilities, but the fun starts with building your own sounds. There's no display, as such. Instead, everything is centred around the LED segments surrounding the Amp control in the middle. The POD Express is laid out into five sections (Dist, Amp, Mod, Delay and Reverb), and the LED bezel displays the range for whichever control you're turning at that moment.

The controls serve double-duty when it comes to sound-shaping, with amp gain, three-band EQ and channel volume all accessed by holding down the Alt switch. There's a lot going on, and the amps sound great, holding up that HX reputation nicely. The same goes for the effects:

deep, rich modulation, analogue flavour to the delays, and very usable, rich-sounding reverbs. In basic operation, everything is simple, but, delving deeper, you'll find yourself having to memorise several combinations of button-presses.

There's no doubt that there are a lot of features here, but we can't ignore products such as the Positive Grid Spark GO and Boss Katana GO, both of which offer 'smart' features for practice and sound editing. In fact, a computer or mobile-based editor would make unlocking the POD's full potential very easy. That said, the POD Express has the added edge of being able to integrate into our existing rigs, and not everyone wants to get their hands dirty with the details. Ultimately, it's an excellent all-rounder, even if it's not quite a master in any single area.

*Stuart Williams*

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★	★	★	★	★
	SOUND QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★	★	★	★	★
	BUILD QUALITY	★	★	★	★	★
	USABILITY	★	★	★	★	★
	OVERALL RATING	★	★	★	★	★

**1 MODELLING**  
The amps and effects are derived from the HX series and sound brilliant. Each amp loads a matching cab by default, but you can mix and match any of the seven amps and cabinets for customisation.

**2 OPERATION**  
On the face of it, everything is accessible via the controls and switches. However, there are many 'hidden' settings operated via combined button presses. We'd love to see a software editor to make this easier.

**3 CONNECTIVITY**  
As well as the on-board looper and audio interface, the POD Express can be placed into your rig, with mono input/stereo outputs. You can also hook up an expression pedal or footswitch for more control.

### AT A GLANCE

**TYPE:** Amp/Effects modelling pedal  
**AMPS:** 7 amps with 7 matching cabs (interchangeable)  
**EFFECTS:** 7  
**FEATURES:** Tuner, looper, audio interface  
**CONNECTIONS:** Input, output (L/R), headphones, external footswitch (1x TRS socket), USB C  
**POWER:** 3X AA or PSU (sold separately)  
**DIMENSIONS:** [WXHXD] 92 x 56 x 130mm  
**CONTACT:** Line 6, line6.com