



# DigiTech HammerOn

Time to get wacky with this unique legato-generating, pitch-shifter-slash-sequencer

By Matt McCracken

▶ **ONE OF THE** most intriguing launches from NAMM ‘25 had to be the DigiTech HammerOn. Representing another all-new pedal from DigiTech since being acquired by Cor-Tek in 2022, it’s designed to deliver “hands-free hammer-ons” in a decidedly experimental pitch-shifter pedal that’s absolutely on brand for the company.

At first glance, the HammerOn bears a striking resemblance to one of my all-time favorite DigiTech pedals, the Whammy Ricochet. First glance is where the similarities end though, as when I put them side by side I discovered the HammerOn is slightly taller and distinctly wider than the Ricochet.

The HammerOn features two momentary footswitches, one to control one octave up and the second to control two octaves up. At the midpoint of the chassis, you have three buttons for Dry+, Trill, and Mode. The final control is a large black knob that sits in the upper right of the pedal for selecting a variety of functions depending on what you’re doing with the pedal.

It features a single in and out and is powered with a 9V, 300mA power supply, with no battery compartment. Despite its relatively simple design, there’s a lot you can do with this pedal as we’ll find out.x

## Build quality

As a pedal with momentary switches, it’s going to get stomped on a lot, so it needs to be up to the task. The HammerOn overall felt very robust to me when I got it out of the box, similar in build quality to my Whammy Ricochet which has been getting regularly stomped on for the past few years and still works perfectly.

There are a lot of LEDs on the front, with 20 in total, plus three buttons that also feature colored LEDs in their center. It makes the HammerOn look very space-age when engaged, but these LEDs also provide an excellent visual cue, moving as you utilize the pedal to show you what notes are being triggered.

The footswitches have a nice bit of resistance to them which I always appreciate on this sort of pedal. It means when you stomp down on them you can really feel the response, great for taking your foot on and off quickly. The large selector knob feels nice and solid, with detents all around that fix it in place when you take your hand off.

The only thing that feels a little out of place are the three buttons in the middle, which are decidedly less solid feeling than anything else on the pedal. These are recessed into the chassis though, so I can’t see anything going wrong with them in the long run.

## Usability

My first test of the Digitech HammerOn was excitedly bringing it with me to rehearsal to show the rest of my band. With no manual to refer to however, I quickly realized that this isn’t the sort of pedal you just start tweaking and get good results. There are a lot of options available here, so I’ll try to explain them all as best I can within the constraints of this review.

The mode the pedal defaulted to when I initially turn it on is called Hammer On, which allows you to select a note for the pedal to change your pitch to. It’s very similar to how the Whammy Ricochet works, with a press of each footswitch pitching your note up or down to whichever octave or interval you set. This is great if you want to manually control your pitch shifting to time with other members of

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the band or specific song tempo.

With the Trill button engaged, Hammer On mode becomes more sequencer-like, automatically flitting between the selected notes at whatever pace you set it. It can be a long and slow rise and fall or can be set so rapidly that it ends up sounding like a single, mangled warbling note. It’s incredibly fun, and you can make some really intense sounds or it can be used more subtly depending on the speed setting and notes you’re pitching to.

Adding in the Dry+ button at any time allows you to hear your dry guitar tone at the same time as the pitch-shifted note, accessing ways to harmonize with your own guitar. Pressing the Mode button again got me onto ‘Impossible’, which gives you a sequence of pitch shifts alternating between two amounts. This could mean going up an octave and then down a 5th for example, and with the speed at higher amounts gives some really wild tones.

Pressing the Mode button again moves you to the first of the sequencer modes which flicks between your original note and adds two more into the equation, pressing again gives you three additional pitch shifts and once more gets you five. To select your notes you need to make sure the Trill button is disengaged, then each press of either Pitch Shift footswitch will cycle through your notes and you can use the selector knob to change these.

It’s not an easy pedal to use, that’s for sure. I wouldn’t call it a flaw though, it’s just that it’s capable of so many different things there would be no easy way to understand all of its capabilities quickly. Once I’d read through the manual it didn’t take me too long to start crafting my own sequences however, so if you spend a little time with it you’ll soon get yourself up to speed.

## Sounds

After my initial failed attempt to get much out of it in the practice room, I sat down in the studio with the HammerOn, a Fender Player II Jaguar, and my HX Stomp for amp modeling tones to really get into the guts of it. Using both my favorite Orange amp simulation for gain tones and a Fender Twin model for clean tones, I set about seeing what kind of craziness I could cook up.

Beginning in the 5 Sequence Mode because I like to do things the hard way, I quickly realized there are endless possibilities to arrange sounds on this pedal. You can get it do a scale run for you, make it sound like you’re sweep-picking, do EVH-style tapping licks, and make it sound like a synthesizer by just playing a single note. Honestly, it’s unlike any other pedal I’ve played.

There are some nice touches to how it ‘hammers on’ and ‘pulls off’ that make it sound like you’re playing the lick and not cheating, particularly when its simpler pitch shifts at slower paces. Those lift-off finger noises and not quite perfectly hit notes you get when playing actual legato, and at times it’s uncanny how realistic it is. That said it’s very setting-dependent, and there are other times when it’s very, very digital sounding which may put some

## GUITAR WORLD VERDICT



A pedal that can do sounds like nothing else I’ve heard, the DigiTech HammerOn can make you a legato-monster like Satch, give you EVH-level tapping skills, or turn your guitar into a synth sequencer. If you take the time to learn all of its many capabilities, you’ll be rewarded with some of the most unique sounds available from a guitar pedal right now.

### PROS

- + Does something totally unique.
- + Massive depth for creating a huge variety of sounds.
- + Does surprisingly accurate legato on certain settings.
- + Ultra-rugged build quality will put up with regular stomping.

### CONS

- Needs time to get the best from it.
- Will be too digital-sounding for some.

### SPECS

**TYPE:** Pitch shifter, sequencer  
**CONTROLS:** Multi-purpose knob, Dry+ button, Trill button, Mode button, Pitch 1 momentary footswitch, Pitch 2 momentary footswitch  
**CONNECTIVITY:** 1/4-inch input, 1/4-inch output  
**BYPASS:** True bypass  
**POWER:** 9V, 300mA  
**DIMENSIONS:** 130 x 90 x 46mm  
**WEIGHT:** 1.12lbs (508g)

purists off.

It also responds very differently to various playing techniques. You can for example hit one note to let the sequence play out and strike a different note at the start of the sequence. You can play notes all the way through the sequence to make it sound fuller and less like legato playing. Adding harmonics opens up some wildly different textures and when I palm muted with it gave it a decidedly more round and synthesizer-esque sound.

One of my favorite sounds was hitting a long note with one of the multiple-note sequences engaged and bending gradually up. It gives you that pitch bend on a synthesizer-type feel and depending on your chosen pitch shifts can make for some very creepy atmospherics as the sequence fades out and you keep the bend going.

On the Hammer On mode, you can get some really awesome-sounding trills that are great for interspersing between your guitar licks. Whether you’re playing a heavy breakdown and want to pop some stutters in the breaks, or you’re getting all moody and post-punk with heavy reverb and want some noisy sounds to play behind a chugging bass riff, it can really deliver on a lot of fronts.

## Verdict

You’re probably going to annoy your bandmates/partners/pets using it all the time, but when you hit the Digitech HammerOn at just the right moment, it’s a really inspiring sound, and one that you can’t find anywhere else. When I took it back to rehearsal having learned it some more, my bandmates were really impressed with its capabilities and for me, that says something about just how unique it is.

You will, however, need to dive into the manual to get the best of it. It’s not an easy pedal to use at all without any prior knowledge, but the manual does a great job of getting you up to speed. Once I’d jumped that initial hurdle, I found myself going back to it again and again just to see what crazy sounds I could create with it.

