

SCREEN

THIS lil' screen is your main point of entry to the HD500X's wealth of tonal riches, and it's mighty bright this time around, making signal chain alterations even easier

EXPRESSION

YOU can assign this expression pedal to manipulate just about anything onboard, from pitch bends to rotating speaker speed – it expands your control options considerably

FOOTSWITCHES

FS1 to **FS4** switch components of your signal chain on and off, while **FS6** to **FS8** switch presets. There are also switches to activate the looper and tap tempo



LINE 6 POD HD500X £429

The latest in a long line of amp modellers welcomes you to the house of POD



SINCE 1997, the POD's amp-modelling brains have appeared in various guises – rackmount unit, plastic bean, mobile app – but these days, Line 6 is focusing its big guns on the floor. Now, it's released the HD500X, an updated version of 2010's HD500, the flagship unit for Line 6's "10 times more amp DNA" HD amps.

What's new, then? Well, there's a higher-contrast display, upgraded footswitches for increased durability and more processing power for more advanced signal chains. They're all welcome tweaks to the HD500X's rugged exterior and DSP chip-loaded insides, but that's hardly going to get HD500 owners chucking their units in the nearest bin and logging on to their favourite online retailer.

The good news is Line 6 hasn't messed with what made the HD series so overwhelmingly ace: the 30 amp models return in all their HD glory, with the option of 17 cabs and eight guitar-amp mic models to tweak. Add in over 100 effects taken from the company's popular M series, plus a 48-second looper, and you can see why Line 6 is touting this as the best POD yet.

In operation, the floor-based PODs have 512 user-writable presets in total, organised into eight Set Lists, which are then sorted into 16 banks of presets. Each bank contains four presets, which you switch between using the lower FS footswitches. The upper FS switches turn pedals, amps or effects on or off within your signal chain – simples.

A versatile unit that's ready for any live or recording scenario

Assembling that signal chain is easy, especially with the HD500X's brighter screen: all the controls surrounding the display correspond to what's onscreen, making preset tweaking simple. You'll still need to study the manual to make the most of any POD, but at least the row of knobs on the HD500X's front panel make for painless amp adjustments.

Amp modelling has come a long way since the POD was first launched, and the HD500X's tones are testament to that. From pristine Fender 'blackface' cleans

to Soldano SLO-100 raunch, the models are utterly convincing. There's great flexibility, too: Line 6 has included preamp-only versions of all its models – so, switch off the cab modelling and you can run them straight into the effects return on your amp for authentically amp-like tones. Otherwise, you have the option of running direct to a PA using

the cab and mic'ing options, or hooking up to your computer via the USB port for recording.

Throw in the impressively authentic effects (which are a soundscaper's dream), the easy-to-use looper and computer-based preset editing and you have a versatile unit ready to take into any live or recording scenario. If you already have a floor-based HD POD, the HD500X is unlikely to persuade you to upgrade, but if you're yet to go HD, then it needs to be experienced.

Michael Brown

AT A GLANCE

TYPE: Floor pedal amp/effects modeller

EFFECTS: 30 amp models, 17 cab models, 8 guitar amp mic models, 100+ effects

CONTROLS: Save, view, enter, move, 2x preset control, 4x multi-function knobs, 4-way navigation pad, drive, bass, mid, treble, presence, volume, master volume; looper: rec/overdub, play/stop, 1/2 speed, reverse, undo, play once, pre/post

SOCKETS: Guitar input, CD/mp3 input, stereo outputs, stereo XLR outputs, headphone out, aux in, mic in, stereo FX send/return, XLR mic input, Variac, S/PDIF out, MIDI in/out, USB, I/L Link

BYPASS: Buffered

POWER: PSU only (supplied)

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