The Zoom Player 2020

review

At last, a Zoom you can stomp on! David Mead is our man in the Doc Martens

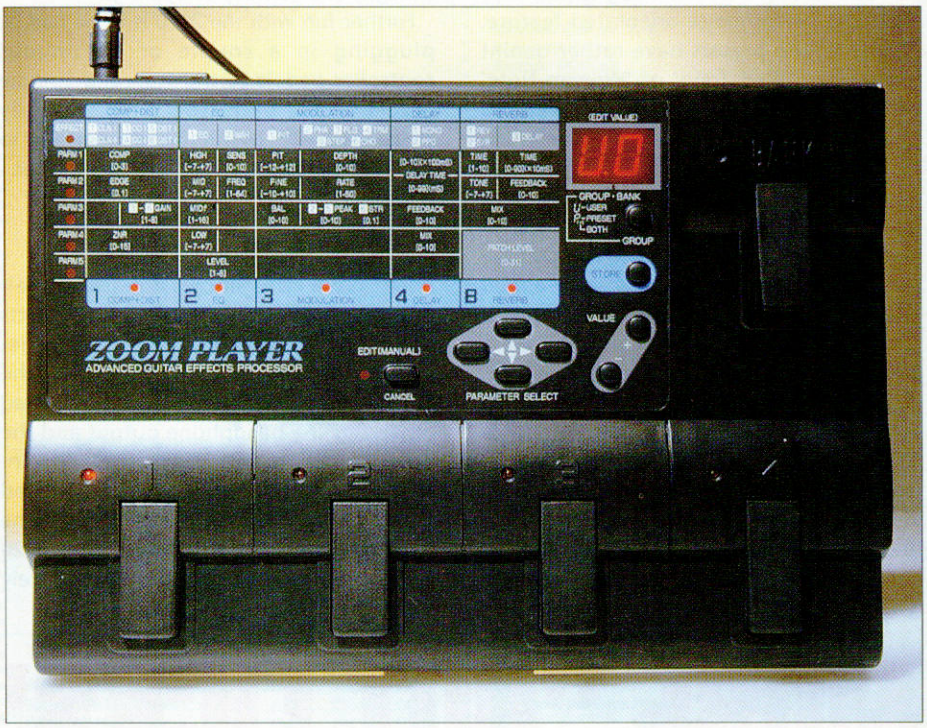

Photo: James Cumpsty

I think a lot of people have been asking themselves when Zoom were going to release their own floor-mounted multi-effects unit. I was always a little put off by those funny little spaceship-shaped boxes that either had to hang from your guitar strap or defy gravity atop your amp. Mind you, those original models sounded good enough to convince the likes of Brian May and Joe Satriani to record with them...

What You See

The 2020 is really compact, only 300mm(W) x 210mm(D) x 42mm(H). At the back, there is a guitar input, tuner output, control inputs for volume and wah, left and right outputs with a stereo headphones socket which doubles as a frequency compensated recording output. The headphone jack is of the mini/personal stereo type which is perhaps slightly strange in view of its dual identity. It would mean, for instance, that you would have to make up a special (and potentially fiddly) lead to record with – a full-size stereo jack *may* have been a better idea.

The front/top of the machine has four footswitches at its lower edge with a further one at the top right, all accompanied by a status LED. The job of this latter pedal, marked 'bank', is to step through the internal preset banks from '0' to '4'. It has been put out of the way to avoid switching accidents but, because of the compact nature of the unit in general, it is a mite difficult to get to. A little bit of care and practice would soon overcome any potential inconvenience, though.

Top left is a menu of all the internal effects, broken down into individual components. They have been grouped together under the headings 'compression/distortion', 'EQ', 'modulation', 'delay' and 'reverb' and are sub-grouped into different effect parameters. For instance, under the heading 'EQ', you can preset the auto-wah frequency as well as adjusting the four-band EQ.

There are push button controls to switch between manual/edit and preset functions, cursor controls to adjust effect parameters, + and – controls to alter the various effect increments, a bank switch to toggle between user and preset functions and a 'store' button for use when programming your own effect patches. The front panel is rounded off by an LED display which gives details of patch number, edit value and so on.

What You Get

In a nutshell, the 2020 has 19 different effects including many Zoom favourites like pitch shift, delays, reverb, auto-wah, distortion, etc., and is capable of combining up to six at once.

As I mentioned earlier, the effects have been split into five basic groups. As far as memory is concerned, the 2020 has 40 presets – 20 are user-programmable, the remaining 20 are indelible factory presets. Instead of duplicating the 20 presets in the user-programmable locations, Zoom have very thoughtfully provided a further 20, effectively giving you 40 original sounds. It is then up to the user to modify and tweak at will. Another clever twist is the facility to alter the factory presets and store them in a user programmable location.

The 2020 also allows you to assign four effects to the footpedals and use the unit as you would four individual stomp boxes.

In Use

I'm inclined to give the 2020 maximum points straight away by virtue of the fact that I didn't have to learn to recite the manual before I understood how the thing worked! A brief flirtation with the written word and I was ready to take on the world.

The first thing I did was try the presets both through an amplifier and then through stereo headphones. On both occasions I was knocked sideways by the sheer quality of effects on offer here. Stepping through the different effect patches is simple as they are stored as five groups of four; user presets have a 'U' prefix, factory presets a 'P'. Select a bank (0-4), step on one of the four footswitches and you're ready to go. When you want to change patch, the Zoom has a very useful 'cue' function allowing you to select another patch before you actually need it. If you had selected patch number U2/4, you