



Within each app, you can choose from five amp heads, five cabinets, two mics, and set up a chain of up to four effects pedals (three on the iPhone). Supplementary tools include a tuner, metronome with tap tempo, audio Recorder, and a Song Player that lets you import audio files and play over them with speed control and A-B looping; AmpliTube 2's Player now offers a center-cancel No Voice button as well (also good for removing some guitar solos).

The Fender app offers amps like the Twin Reverb, Super-Sonic, Pro Junior, Bassman, and Deluxe Reverb, and five very cool-sounding effects including a tasty Tape Echo and Phaser and the Fender Blender germanium fuzz with tone boost. The standard AmpliTube's five amps and ten effects have generic names (e.g. Clean, Crunch, Lead; Flanger, Delay, Phaser) but sound very good as well; the magic that made AmpliTube so popular on PCs and Macs is definitely there for the hearing, even if your options are more limited.

AmpliTube Fender costs a little less and is really intended for Fender fans who'll be content with Fender sounds; you can't add new amps or pedals to it. On the other hand, the standard version of AmpliTube lets you in-app purchase all of the effects, amps, and cabinets of AmpliTube Fender, one at a time or all in a bundle, and offers five additional guitar effects and all of the effects from Vocalive (see below). Getting everything is a pretty hefty investment for an app (over triple the initial cost of the app itself!) but you end up with a very effective setup for signal processing and multitracking.

Vocalists needn't feel left out; IK has a complete hardware/software solution for them too. The iRig Mic is a handheld mic that hooks up to the TRRS jack of an iOS device and again offers a headphone output; it's a cardioid electret condenser (therefore requiring no battery or phantom power) with a 3-position sensitivity switch, and comes with a carrying pouch and standard mic stand clip. With the same caveats with respect to input/output crosstalk, the iRig Mic is a creditable inexpensive vocal mic with a mid-forward sound typical of "rock and roll" handheld mics and workable off-axis rejection.

Just as the iRig teams with AmpliTube, the iRig Mic is matched with a nifty app called Vocalive. It's laid out similarly to AmpliTube, with a chain of up to four effects and a list of categories and presets in place of the amp and cabinet models. In place of a tuner, Vocalive has a Vocal Trainer, a simple playback of piano arpeggios in major or minor scales in the key of your choice; it retains the metronome and Recorder.

The effects in Vocalive run the gamut from conventional to insane—Delay, Chorus, Compressor, Parametric EQ, Reverb, Envelope Filter, Phaser, Double, De-Esser, Choir, PitchFix, and Morph. The latter five effects are high-powered vocal effects that can only be used once or twice in a chain. They're easy to set up and sound quite good; the Choir effect is a 3-part harmonizer, PitchFix is a scale-settable intonation tuner, and Morph lets you warp either the pitch or formant of vocals in real time.

It's possible to get very tasteful and great-sounding vocal tweaks from Vocalive, but my guess is that a lot of folks will buy it for special-effects use or just plain fun. There are a large number of really out-there sounds available... not something you could use every day, but great for adding a splash of something attention-grabbing to a track.

IK encourages buyers to register their apps on the IK website; when you create an account there, you get a free effect pedal added to your app—an Overdrive in AmpliTube, a Fender Compressor in AmpliTube Fender, and a Doubler in Vocalive. The Recorder in each app can only record a single track; to turn it into an 8-track recorder (4 on the iPhone) with built-in Master FX (reverb, eq, and compressor) is a \$14.99 in-app purchase.

There are feature-limited Free versions of all apps available, plus a \$2.99 AmpliTube LE version. Note that all of these products except AmpliTube LE come as separate iPad and iPhone versions; be sure to buy for the right device. Whichever you pick, be prepared to have a ton of low-cost fun and lay down some great sounds.

Prices: iRig, \$39.99; iRig Mic, \$59.99; AmpliTube 2 and Vocalive, \$19.99 each; AmpliTube Fender, \$14.99; in-app purchases \$2.99 and up.

More from: IK Multimedia, www.ikmultimedia.com.

IsoAcoustics ISO•L8R Monitor Stands

It's been known for quite some time that monitor stands can improve your listening experience in a number of ways. The ideal monitor stand positions your monitor at an appropriate height and angle for listening, and also decouples it from whatever surface it's sitting on. This is important because energy lost in vibration between the monitor and the surface beneath it equals energy that's not coming to your ears.

IsoAcoustics is a new firm with an innovative and effective monitor stand it calls the ISO•L8R (get it?). The company showed a new design for larger monitors at the recent NAMM Show as reported in this issue, but I had a chance to set up and test its first product out of the starting gate, the ISO•L8R155 for small nearfield and desktop-audio monitors.

Out of the box, onto the table

The 155 consists of two metal platforms (one resting on the table or shelf, the other supporting the speaker), roughly 6" x 8", with rubberized feet. The two platforms are connected together by a set of four steel tubes, and the magic happens in the connection; the tubes slide into friction-fit rubberized sleeves on the two platforms, which provides the needed decoupling and allows the stands to be quickly assembled without tools.



Each stand has two sets of four tubes. One set is 3" long and the other is 8" long, yielding heights of roughly 3.5" or 8.5". In addition, each set of tubes has sets of plastic end-plug inserts of two different thicknesses, to slightly offset the heights of two tubes vs. the other two. These inserts allow you to build the stands to hold your speakers at an angle for optimum placement, aiming them at your ears in the recommended equilateral triangle configuration we all know and love.

You can use one or both sets of inserts, or none at all, for four different angles. In one of my tests, I used both inserts and achieved a scary amount of forward tilt to compensate for a situation where my speakers were way too high for optimum listening. The stands held my monitors firmly without sliding or tipping over, but if you have very top-heavy speakers, the manual suggests that you test your setup for stability beforehand.

In use

The difference a good speaker stand makes can be dramatic, whether you're talking about a multi-thousand-dollar reference monitor or a set of affordable desktop speakers. I had several sets of speakers suitably sized for these stands, including the ADAM Audio A5 and the Cerwin-Vega! XD3 (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), and found the difference in audio with vs. without the ISO•L8R stands to be considerable.

The place where improper stand mounting can really mess with a speaker's sound is in the bass; low frequency energy can be leached away by the contact between the speaker and what it's resting on, and small desktop speakers with their 5" or smaller woofers have precious little bass to waste. With the IsoAcoustics stands in place, I heard more and better bass: improved extension, a tighter and more focused sound—in effect, a very inexpensive and effective upgrade!

The only time I ever needed tools when reconfiguring the stands to different heights and angles was when I took them apart and an endplug insert was left inside the stand; a pair of pliers let me gently grab and pull out the insert easily. It was trivially simple to reconfigure them to different heights and angles; after the first time figuring out what all the parts were and how they fit together, adjusting size could be done in a minute or two.

So

There are several ways to isolate speakers, each with its proponents. Some systems use acoustic foam to damp and decouple speaker from surface, with or without added mass in the form of metal plates; others minimize points of contact between the two objects, and it is into the latter camp that the ISO•L8R stands fall. The added convenience of built-in stable angle adjustment gives these stands an advantage over simpler "pointed speaker feet" while still providing clearly audible sonic improvements.

If you're working with small speakers in a less-than-ideal monitoring arrangement, check out what IsoAcoustics has to offer; the ISO•L8R stands can't turn horrible speakers good, but they can give any speaker a fighting chance to deliver the audio it was designed to deliver. ➤

Price: \$119.95

More from: IsoAcoustics,
www.isoacoustics.com