



By Ken Volpe

Now that I've had AmpliTube 2 for a few weeks, I fully understand what all the good props are about. IK Multimedia developed this very intuitive software in 2002 and they continue to show their creative prowess with this recent version.

One fear for myself and other guitarists is software installation. Many companies have complex installation procedures to avoid piracy of their software. I must admit that the installation of AmpliTube 2 on my system was not a piece of cake. It required various E-mails and phone calls to their tech support department to get me up and running. Hence, my fear was once again realized. Although, part of the issue was not on their end, it was a glitch in my software, Digital Performer. I must add that the tech support department at IK Multimedia was extremely knowledgeable, patient and helpful.

Before I get into the specifics of AmpliTube 2 let's discuss 2 basic applications. First off, you can use it as a direct recording tool, where the sounds are printed to your track. In other words, the sound that you select during your recording will be the sound for the track. The second choice is to add any preset to an existing track that was previously recorded. This is very similar to the procedure of inserting a standard effect. One might think of the second procedure as virtual reamping.

For my signal chain, I run my guitar into a Chandler Germanium preamp then into a Mytek A/D converter, then to my MOTU interface. In Digital Performer, I set my buffer size rather low so I would not be dealing with any latency issues. As a direct recording tool, this was a lot of fun. Many great classic sounds were a mouse click away. I tended to prefer the clean tones and the mild crunch tones. For clean tones, one of my faves was a preset called Clean 30TB which was a Vox type sound. Bssmn Driven is an excellent Bassman w/ fuzz crunch type sound. Both of those presets are pretty darn authentic. In the direct recording mode, the highest gain tones did not work as well for my purposes. Most of the really high gain presets were not articulate enough to my ears. However, I am really picky. When I added AmpliTube 2 presets as a channel insert...that's when I really started to smile. I was working on a mix-down

in my studio and some of the guitar tracks needed some help. As I started to scroll through the presets the options were endless. As a side note, you can also insert any preset on an Aux track, and use the Send of an individual channel to access the sound. This very useful routing technique helps to avoid CPU overload and AmpliTube 2 was a perfect candidate for an Aux track.

The user interface of AmpliTube 2 is top shelf. The graphics are clear and sized perfectly for an easy read. There are various ways of accessing presets and sounds. The presets are grouped by Complete Rigs, Pure Amps, Styles, and a few other choices. There is also a Sub group section for Bass, Clean, Crunch, and Lead Hi Gain. I might add that the presets are a great starting point to create your own individual sounds, a "tweakers" delight. My only beef about the preset grouping is that some of the presets are not in the proper named group. For example, there are a few Crunch type tones in the Clean section.

Another great use for AmpliTube 2 is to insert a specific to a variety of other parts including bass, drum, keyboard and vocal tracks. I loved the preset called Phat Bass. It was very useful in fattening up a thin sounding bass track on one song. My original bass track was recorded with a Direct box and the Phat bass preset gave it the sound of an old SVT amp. I also used some of the presets to make the kick and snare tracks really jump out at you in a bunch of tunes. Even the onboard effects by themselves are very rich and organic sounding. I added them to a slew of dry guitar tracks and was pleased with the results.

In conclusion, I have to say that AmpliTube 2 is an amazing tool for guitar tones and production. I am fortunate enough to own an array of amazing guitar amps, effects and recording tools that I've used for years. I did not have any expectation of AmpliTube 2 completely replacing my existing guitar and production set-up. There is nothing like the feel of a real guitar amp, but dialing in tones and dealing with mic placements can be an arduous task. In addition, the volume of a real guitar amp can sometimes limit where and when you record. With that said, AmpliTube 2 is an excellent alternative tool for when the traditional approach is not practical. Due to its versatility it enhances your creative tonal palette and helps you to focus on your music. Considering how much money one can spend on a plethora of guitar and production gear, the price tag of \$399 is well worth every penny.