



Mooer SD10i Intelligent Amp

A mini amp with 52 amp modes, 49 effects, tuner, drum machine and recording interface all in a compact, portable package

BY RICHARD BLENKINSOP

THE MOOER SD10I is a compact, portable modeling amp boasting 10W of power, two 2" speakers and a rechargeable battery. On board, you've got 52 amp models and 49 effects ensuring that you can cover a really wide range of musical styles, plus as an integrated tuner, 80 second looper and drum machine.

There are a few select controls on the top of the amp allowing you to instantly plug in and play, but the majority of its parameters are controlled via the Mooer iAmp app which can be downloaded for free on your smartphone or tablet.

The amp has a USB-C slot which can be used for charging, audio playback and direct recording, making it a potential tool for practice, performance and home recording.

The market isn't short of this type of practice amp, so what sets this apart? Mooer call it an 'intelligent' amp; when using the looper, it can automatically synchronise your loops with the built-in drum machine.

It's also worth mentioning the price point at which it sits. You can get cheaper portable amps out there, but if the features and sounds deliver here, there's potential for excellent value for money.

Build quality

Mooer is known for being a budget brand, so you might expect the build quality to reflect that, however, it really doesn't. It's put together really well and the controls on the top provide a reassuring amount of resistance when you turn them.

The on/off toggle switch is also nice and solid and gives a healthy 'click' when moved into position.

Having reviewed and spent time with a number of similar practice amps, I can safely say that the build quality of this one is up there with the more premium (and more expensive) brands.

Usability

Having just a few controls on the top of the unit makes it really easy to use. There's a dial that lets you switch between different amp types; you've got a few varieties of clean, drive, crunch and distortion.

There's no gain control on the amp, so this is the only way to can control the amount of drive you've got without using the app. There's then a knob for instrument volume and then Bluetooth volume, plus a preset button that scrolls through four different presets.

I have previously used a Mooer app with one of its Prime modeling pedals, so I thought it might be the same app - it isn't. I downloaded the new one, but then had to wait a little while for the firmware to update. It's all part and parcel of using digital gear, but if you're prone to having an 'old man yells at cloud' moment now and again - as I am - then it's something to consider.

When using the amp with the app, there's so much you can do in terms of crafting your sound. You've got a clear map of your signal flow with slots for overdrive, amp, dynamics (ie compression), modulation, delay and reverb. Simply tap on the icon to switch it on or off, and tap underneath to browse the different effect or amp styles within that category.

When you're on this page within the app, your base sound is one of four slots within one of ten banks. This is where the preset button comes into use. You can scroll between four predetermined sounds using just that button. You do however need to use the app to go up to

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the next bank. You can alter any of the sounds, or start from scratch and save them within a slot.

You've got a lot of options in terms of shaping your sound, but they're not endless. With 52 amp types and 49 effects, you've got enough to cater for any style of music, but not hundreds, so you won't get lost in a sea of possibilities.

It's really easy to shape any specific tone you're chasing, but there's also then a library of presets to choose from, organised in categories such as pop, blues, rock and heavy. You can even create an account and access a ton of user-created sounds too.

The intelligent looping works well. When you press record to start the loop, you get a four beat count-in and then it starts, allowing you to get your hands on the fretboard. Then, if you don't quite start your next loop exactly in time, or if you hit the overdub button a little too late, the software will nudge it slightly so it loops in time.

I did make a quick demo using the amp as a direct recording interface. It was incredibly easy to do - literally, just plug in and play. The sound was just as good as it was coming out of the speaker too, so I'd have no hesitation using this to make quick demos.

Sounds

Having played through a number of small, portable amps, I'd have to say that the quality of sounds from this amp are on the better side. The clean sounds have character to them; they're not sterile, or DI-sounding, they actually sound like they're coming out of a 'proper' amp; they're fairly tube-like.

There are plenty of great-sounding lower gain tones too, all with different tonal characteristics other than how much distortion is applied. Now, the JCM800 setting doesn't sound exactly like a real 800, nor the AC30 etc but they're close enough to give beginners who might not be familiar with the real thing an idea of what these amps are all about.

Many of the sounds respond well to picking dynamics. I tried the amp out with my two favourite testing guitars - a Jazzmaster and an SG. The tones would clean up with a lighter attack and break up more with a heavier one. It's not quite as detailed or nuanced as it is with a tube amp, but for something of this size, it's pretty impressive.

The effects are impressive too; everything's clearly labelled so you know what you're getting. The modulations and delays are lovely and smooth-sounding, but I'd like to be able to do a little more in terms of the reverb sounds; having a few more popular choices like shimmer or octave would certainly augment an already decent selection.

I particularly liked the fuzz effects; it's easy to control and you can dial in enough so there's some real hair around the notes, but not so much that the notes become inaudible.

A lot of the ready-made preset slots are also appealing. Quite often, they're soaked in effects on multi-fx and modeling amps, but it seems like care has gone into most of the presets being used as everyday tones here, though of course you can alter them to become wilder and more experimental. Some of the higher gain settings

GUITAR WORLD VERDICT



The Mooer SD10i is a solid little amp that can provide an array of excellent tones suitable for any style of music. While you won't get tons of volume out of it, it's perfect for home use and has some excellent features on board that make it an invaluable practice and writing tool.

PROS

- + Great variety of tones.
- + Easy to use app.
- + Excellent features.

CONS

- Speakers can't keep up with the volume.
- Do we need another portable amp?

SPECS

- TYPE:** Modeling combo amp
- ORIGIN:** China
- OUTPUT:** 10 Watts RMS
- SPEAKER:** 2 x 2"
- CHANNELS:** 52 amp types, 10 banks, 4 presets within each bank
- CONTROLS:** Amp select, instrument volume, audio volume
- CONNECTIVITY:** Jack input, headphone output, USB-C, Bluetooth
- FOOTSWITCH:** Mooer F4 sold separately
- WEIGHT:** 1.95kg, 4lbs 5oz
- DIMENSIONS:** 233x115x140mm
- FINISH OPTIONS:** Red, White, Black (as reviewed)

do sound quite samey though, especially once you've scrolled through a few of them.

The biggest pitfall of the amp is its physical size, or to be more accurate, the size of its speakers. When you crank the volume, the speakers start to give out, adding unwanted distortion and just generally sounding like they can't handle it. It's more noticeable on distorted tones, but overall the amp isn't suited to loud scenarios.

It's a shame, as with it being portable you might think you'd be able to use it for busking, but I'd be worried about not getting good enough sound quality at those volumes. It is however perfect for home use and even jamming with other guitarists.

Verdict

The Mooer SD10i is a fantastic little modeling amp and pairs with an intuitive, easy to use app. As long as you don't mind tweaking the majority of your sounds using your phone or tablet, it's completely painless dialling in a wide array of tones.

When the volume is kept to bedroom levels, the sound quality is good and tones are excellent too. Push it too far though and you start hearing the sonic limitations imposed by the small speakers.

You do have lots of great tones to choose from though. If you're a beginner looking for a bedroom amp, then this can cover any style of playing you can throw at it; jazz, pop, metal, country - everything! More experienced players might like it as a home-friendly alternative to a big tube amp too. It doubling up as a recording interface also makes it extremely handy for those wanting to track ideas at home.

