



Variax 600: the original digital modelling guitar

## VG vs Variax

The Fender VG Strat isn't the world's first digital modelling guitar.

The VG is pitched directly against Line 6's Variax. While both use digitally modelled sounds, however, they are very different. Firstly, Variax doesn't have any magnetic pickups, which some would say makes it look odd, like there's something's missing. It does, however, feature both battery power (AA & PP3) and can be phantom powered via an outboard mains-adapted XPS A/B box (included in the price) which also acts as a 'Y' selector so you can switch the output to different amps to utilise the 'electric' (via jack) and 'acoustic' (via XLR) sounds.

Whereas the VG has four modelled tone banks (Strat, Tele, Humbucking and Acoustic), Variax has 10, accessed from the rotary model selector: T-Model (Tele), Spank (Stratocaster), Lester (Les Paul), Special (Specials, etc), R-Billy (Gretsch), Chime (Rickenbacker – inc 12-string),

Semi (ES-335), Jazzbox (ES-175), Acoustic (inc 12-string), and Reso (resonators, banjo and sitar) – each has five sounds selected via the five-way lever switch. Each is modelled from a specific, mainly vintage, instrument. Also Variax has two 'custom' banks where you can load your favourite sounds and select them quickly from the five-way, for example Les Paul P-90 bridge pickup, Strat bridge and neck, Gretsch bridge pickup, acoustic 12-string, Les Paul neck humbucker.

Variax also has a digital I/O jack for connectivity to, for example, PODxt Live and Vetta II. This means as you change amp sounds your pre-selected guitar sounds will change too. Also it enables you to connect to Line 6's Workbench software and USB interface. In short this allows you to retune each string of ANY model down an octave and up a fifth and also allows you to customise the models – like an ES-335 with three single-coils

tuned to low B. It also allows Variax's software to be upgraded, and for modern trends like sound sharing.

The VG Strat's five tuning modes can be applied to any sound – the Variax has only certain 12-string models, and to apply open tunings you have to use Workbench to apply them to a specific sound.

Variax costs considerably less money. The electrics use the same digital 'engine' and the hard-tail 300 costs £386, the 600 is £533 and the 700 starts at £1,091. Both the 600 and 700 have vibratos. There are three Variax Acoustics: the 300, in both nylon- (£445) and steel-string (£386) versions, and the 700 (£997) that allows you to retune its models onboard and also has compression.

In short, the digital-only Variax has many more models than the VG Strat and you can upgrade it. VG is simpler and doesn't suffer latency with its selection of altered tunings. Oh, and it's a pukka American Strat, of course.