



Tech 21

PL1 PAUL LANDERS SIGNATURE FLY RIG



TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

THE LATEST SIGNATURE Fly Rig from Tech 21 was exclusively designed for Rammstein guitarist Paul Landers. It's the only one in the series to offer two SansAmp channels, Wasser (clean) and Feuer (dirty), as well as a selectable vibrato effect with tap tempo. Other features include an ambiance control with choice of size ("atmosphere"), two post-SansAmp boost modes (up to +6dB of positive boost and -10dB of "negative boost") and a punch switch that revoices the midrange when activated. To facilitate DI applications, the XLR out has a ground-connect switch to isolate your stage setup from the ground of the mixing console.

The PL1 can provide all-analog clean and overdriven sounds direct to the front-of-house mixer (and that's how Landers, who is a strictly no-amp guy, deploys it), or it can also be used as a stompbox with your standard amplifier. It can even function as a re-amp box to alter the sounds of previously recorded tracks.

For silent practice, you can plug your phones into the main output (which is low impedance) and press the headphone button to provide a higher output level and drive both sides of the phones. Pressing and holding the tap/tuner footswitch for just a couple of seconds activates a chromatic tuner and mutes the output.

Tested in live and studio situations, the PL1 proved versatile and sounded excellent across the board. I dug how natural the tones were in the Wasser (German for *water*) channel — clean, smooth and warm, like a

good tube amp, which is often how I used it on gigs, driving the PL1 with a Tele and running it straight into a Fender Deluxe Reverb. I could turn it on for extra drive, and the boost function was handy for giving a little kick in volume when needed. Activating the punch button also enhanced presence to make everything cut through more clearly. The delay and vibrato effects stand out better with boost on too (even with the SansAmp channels off), which is handy when you're just using those effects. The delays are smooth and tactile, and there's range enough to cover everything from reflective and slap-back sounds to long echoes with infinite repeats, if you so desire.

The ambiance control is active when either SansAmp channel is on, and it adds a nice reverb-like airiness that increases in depth when the size button is pushed. It sounds cool on delay sounds and adds dimension to the vibrato, which is adjustable for depth and speed via the level and time knobs respectively. The vibrato cops a good rotary-speaker emulation when turned up, and it isn't overly pitch-shifted either, which makes it more useable overall.

With Paul Landers in the name, it's no surprise the PL1 becomes a furious metal machine when you plug into its Feuer (*fire*) channel, delivering brutal OD tones with gobs of sustain, ripping highs and chunking low-end. The mid control in tandem with the mid-shift button (which emphasizes the lower mids) allows you to dial those frequencies for precisely the thrash sound

you want with single-coils or humbuckers. An excellent choice for metal players who need to occasionally switch off the monster and revert to Dr. Jekyll, the PL1 is a superbly configured preamp for setups with no amps in the backline. Considering it also has the flexibility to function as a two-stage stompbox with built-in effects, you've got to hand it to Tech 21 — this is one impressive little floor rig! **D**

SPECIFICATIONS

PL1 Paul Landers Signature Fly Rig

CONTACT tech21nyc.com

PRICE \$329 street

CONTROLS Wasser channel: level, high, low, comp, bite switch. Feuer channel: drive, low, mid, high, level, mid-shift switch. Boost section: boost, punch switch. DLA section: time, level, repeats, ambiance w/size switch, vibrato switch

FOOTSWITCHES Wasser, Feuer, boost, delay, tap-tempo/tuner

I/O ¼" input and output jacks, XLR direct out with ground-connect switch, DC adapter jack (9-volt adapter included)

EXTRAS Headphone switch (phones plug into main output)

WEIGHT 1.2 lbs

BUILT USA

KUDOS Two SansAmp channels. Lethal metal tones. Vibrato on demand. Excellent for DI applications.

CONCERNS Feuer channel's voicing may be a little too extreme for non-metal players.