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Review: Line 6 Variax 700 acoustic

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Versatility is an understatement! There are so many *variations* to the Variax – you are able to completely tailor your sound with this guitar!

I received the Variax Acoustic 700 on a Wednesday and was able to get familiar with it and use it at our worship band practice Thursday night. I plugged straight into the board through the D.I. box that comes with the guitar (bonus!). I guess I should cover that first... The Variax comes in a very sturdy gig bag and includes a stereo (TRS) 1/4" guitar cable and a D.I. foot switch to change between 1/4 and XLR outputs. It requires power for the onboard "magic" and you can get power through the D.I. (which sends power through the TRS cable) or through batteries in the back of the guitar.

It's important to note that you can't hear the guitar acoustically any more than you can hear an electric guitar. It has a spruce top and a chambered mahogany body. The neck feels like an acoustic and is set up to use acoustic strings. The 700 model contains 16 (sixteen!) different acoustic instruments controlled by a dial selector that is lighted by a green LED so you can always see what you need to see. You can select from acoustic guitars like... dreadnaught, jumbo, parlor, triple 0, and a nylon string. Other guitars and "exotic oddities" (as Line 6 puts it) include 12-string, banjo, dobro, and sitar. The Variax contains all these plus *seven* more.

After you dial in your choice of guitar, your next adjustment would be the three sliders which control compression, volume, and (virtual) mic position. Just these possibilities seem endless!

The guitars have a rich and full sound. Sunday, I lead worship using the jumbo, the dreadnaught, and the triple 0 depending on how big I wanted the guitar to sound. It was really wonderful being able to switch guitars simply with a turn of the dial. As a worship leader, there are a few of the 16 guitars (the more exotic ones) that I would not utilize, however if I were playing back in the band, I would be able to give more attention to the guitar and could use some of those other sounds to play some fills in the songs. They could really add some cool dynamics to the worship band!

Finally, I have to say, I was most impressed with this – with a push on the dial selector, the LED turns red and you are instantly in an alternate tuning that YOU can preset. Wow! There are presets already that include: Drop D, DADGAD, open G, etc. Each string can be "tuned" UP 7 (1/2 steps) or DOWN 12 (1/2 steps). I'll give you an example. Say you're going to play a song in the middle of your set in the key of "D" and it would be real effective if you were able to play it in Drop D. But in a worship set, to tune down to Drop D or change guitars would be distracting. With the Variax programmed, within two seconds you can have the guitar sounding just as you want it to and the folks in the congregation have no idea you did *anything* at all. Think about it, you could have one guitar with a setting in DADGAD, another with DADGAD in the key of "G" (GDGCDG), and another in standard tuning but simulating a capon on the 7<sup>th</sup> fret ("A" position), and still another with strings 1, 2, 3, and 4 in standard tuning and strings 5 and 6 tuned down an entire octave! I *thought* the possibilities were endless even before all *this*!!