

# Akai MPK mini mk3 £90

If you need a backpack-ready controller keyboard, there's almost too much choice.  
**Jon Musgrave** sizes up Akai's new release

**CONTACT WHO:** Akai Professional **WEB:** [akaipro.com](http://akaipro.com) **KEY FEATURES** 25 velocity sensitive keys with 10 octave range, 8 velocity and pressure sensitive MPC pads with aftertouch, 8 continuous rotary knobs, Thumb stick pitchbend and modulation with assignable CC options, USB bus-powered, Sustain pedal input **DIMENSIONS:** 318 x 181 x 44mm **WEIGHT:** 0.75kg







## THE PROS & CONS



New and improved keybed

Excellent MPC velocity and pressure sensitive pads with aftertouch

Continuous rotary controls

New OLED screen for instant parameter feedback

Excellent software bundle



Thumb stick won't appeal to everyone

**A**t a decade old, MPK mini is still a very popular choice for both beginners and on-the-go users. At first, the latest mk3 iteration looks quite similar to its predecessor, with 25 mini keys, eight chunky pads, eight rotary controls and the thumb stick style pitchbend/modulation. However, there are actually some significant differences.

First, the keybed is new (Akai's Dynamic Gen 2 design) and although I'm not a massive fan of mini keys in general, this is solid, responsive and mechanically quiet. Next up, the controller knobs are now a continuous rotary design and include both absolute and relative options. If your DAW supports relative controller assignments, kiss goodbye to values jumping when you switch plugins. Excellent stuff.

The MPK mini mk2 had good velocity and pressure sensitive pads, but the ones in the mk3 are the same super tactile design found in the MPC series hardware. You haven't got the RGB function (the MPK minis are always red), but the core functionality is the same. So, the velocity response is excellent when playing beats, but you've also got great pressure

performance when playing sustained sounds. They also have aftertouch (either channel and polyphonic can be selected), which is great for eliciting more organic performances from suitably equipped synth patches. One visually obvious addition is the OLED display. This tiny screen provides handy real-time feedback on controller data, MIDI channels, arpeggiator settings and beyond, although it doesn't seem to display the data generated by the keyboard. I'm sure additional functionality could be added.

Physically, the MPK mini mk3 has a new streamlined case, and they've moved the USB socket from the side to the back and the button layout has also changed. The features are otherwise similar to the mk2 including options to control MIDI CCs and Program Changes from the pads, an A/B selector to switch between two pad banks, eight onboard preassigned presets, pad options for full velocity and note repeat, and an extensive onboard arpeggiator. mk3 retains the joystick style pitchbend/modulation and this still requires some skill to elicit just modulation – I'm sure some would prefer touch strips. That said, if you'd rather use it to control MIDI CCs, you can assign four (one in each direction on each axis).

Further settings and behaviours including MIDI channel, specific CC assignments, knob behaviour and aftertouch are set in the desktop editor app (MPK mini 3 Program Editor). Meanwhile Akai's MPK mini Software Manager handles installation of the excellent Complete Music Production Starter Kit software bundle. This includes Air instruments Hybrid 3, Mini Grand and Velvet plus Akai's own MPC Beats DAW and five MPC sound packs. Finally, MPK mini mk3 is available in three colourways, including the slick all black edition I have on the test bench.

The MPK mini mk3 successfully improves on the previous model and it's not bad for under £100. **FM**

## FM VERDICT

# 9.0

**A very decent upgrade with genuinely pro features, that cements its position in the top handful of mini keyboard controllers available**