

Akai MPK mini mk3 £109

The third version of Akai's mini keyboard adds new keys, knobs and a display. Martin Delaney gets hands on

CONTACT WHO: Akai Professional **WEB:** akaipro.com **KEY FEATURES** USB bus-powered MIDI controller, with keys, pads, knobs, joystick, OLED display, Onboard arpeggiator, note repeat, scale, and chord modes. Excellent software bundle, with plug-in instruments, software editor, and presets for popular DAWs **DIMENSIONS:** 318 x 181 x 44 mm **WEIGHT:** 0.75kg





THE PROS & CONS



A do-it-all package; just add an audio interface, and you're ready to play

Decent selection of controls. Joysticks are fun: they work very well as synth controllers

Nice keys, especially for a small device

OLED display is a step up from LCD displays of the past



Doesn't readily work standalone with hardware, but can achieve this with a USB host device

A mini MIDI keyboard is always useful – sometimes it's all we need to produce or perform music.

A popular example is the Akai MPK mini, which is now up to mark 3.

The box contains a printed quick start guide, and a USB cable. The MPK mini has some substance to it, which is reassuring. Overall, everything looks and feels functional and like it's making good use of the surface area. There are 10 buttons, a joystick (excellent, we love these), eight backlit velocity sensitive pads, an OLED display, eight full rotation knobs, and of course, the two-octave keyboard. Round the back, there's only a USB port and a 1/4" sustain pedal switch. It must also be mentioned that the MPK mini mk 3 is also available in grey, red, white, and black, so you can coordinate or clash with your other gear, depending on your inclination.

The keyboard is updated with the new Gen 2 dynamic keybed – you won't get the full-size keys experience, but they're impressively playable and they can be used with the onboard arpeggiator, as well. The pads are also updated, including

pressure- as well as velocity-sensitivity. The knobs rotate over 360°, making it easier to pick up the current positions in whatever software you're using. There are changes to button functionality and layout, and the case itself has had a style refresh.

There's a hefty software bundle included. If you don't already use one, the MPC Beats software makes for a good starter DAW, and the AIR Instruments plugins, including Hybrid, Mini Grand, and Velvet, function inside any DAW you may have, or indeed as standalone soft instruments. There are also other instruments and effects built into MPC Beats. Also included are a set of MPC expansion packs, and, crucially, a software editor, allowing creation of custom programs and assignment of specific MIDI functions like notes, CCs, and PCs, toggling aftertouch on/off, and more, expanding the range of possibility.

That OLED display is kind of weeny, but crisp and bright. It does a good job of conveying relevant information, starting with using the Prog Selection button and the pads to choose different presets, which include chord and scale modes, and programs available to integrate with DAWs, including FL Studio, GarageBand, Ableton Live, Logic Pro,

and of course MPC Beats. This is actually a tidy little controller for a laptop music setup.

We powered the MPK with the Kenton USB MIDI Host, and got it going with hardware including the Behringer TD-3 synth – this makes the MPK mini mk3 a more attractive offering for musicians with hardware.

The MPK mini mk3 is a well-built, versatile, controller/keyboard. Whether it's worth upgrading from the previous version(s) is debatable, but it's definitely a going proposition for a newcomer, or for a professional who needs something compact to take to the studio or hotel or stage. **FM**

FM VERDICT

9.0

A nifty keyboard that can find a place in any situation, and with virtually any music gear. The software bundle makes it a compelling all-in-one solution