Numark NS7 | £1,279

Two motorised platters set this controller aside from the competition. ***Chris Barker*** gets a bit scratchy

WHAT IS IT?

DJ controller with motorised vinyl-style platters and a built in audio interface

CONTACT

Who: Numark
Tel: +44 (0)1252 341400
Web: numark.com

HIGHLIGHTS

1 Motorised seven-inch jog wheels
2 Simple learning curve
3 Rock-solid build quality

SPECS

Inputs:
Mic (1/4" balanced)
Stereo line (RCA)
Outputs:
Master (XLR, RCA)
Booth (RCA)
Headphone (1/4" and 1/8")

System Requirements:

PC: 32-bit Win 7, Vista or XP, 1.8GHz, 2GB RAM.
64-bit: Windows Vista, 2.2GHz processor, 4GB RAM

Mac: OS 10.4.11 or higher.
32-bit: 1.8GHz, 1GB RAM.
64-bit: 2.4GHz, 4GB RAM

Dimensions
758 x 377 x 95mm

Weight:
15.7 kg

Dragging this controller out of its box was possibly the hardest part of this review. Weighing in at nearly 16kg, this is one hell of a solid unit. Based around two seven-inch vinyl-style motorised platters and a simple scratch style two-channel mixer, the NS7 is clearly aimed at scratch DJs looking for an alternative and more advanced solution to timecoded vinyl.

It's all based around Serato's ITCH software, the NS7s controls and built-in audio interface and, as a solution, it does the job well. But, after lifting it from the box, I was dubious to whether I'd want to transport this beast from gig to gig, especially as a flight case would add even more weight.

Wimpery aside, the NS7 is decent solution for anyone looking to upgrade their scratching with the addition of software versatility. There's looping, hotcues, keylock and an instant reverse play that you'd expect from a virtual system, but the feel of the platters is much closer to vinyl than any other controller I've used. The mixer section is very simple, with the track selection controls at the top which makes browsing you collection nice and easy. Using a simple rotary push-button encoder you can quickly browse folders or tracks from your iTunes library very quickly. A comically-titled 'Strip Search' function also makes jumping through these tracks a breeze once they are loaded to a deck, with ribbon-controller style needle drops possible at the touch of a finger. Looping control is a tad confusing at first but once you get to grips with it, you can actually pull off some pretty neat tricks, cutting loops in half for stutters and build ups.

A layer of advanced shift functions was added in a recent update and this allowed for more looping and sync controls, but adding a layer of shift functions to the already sparse controls means that the formerly simple surface can become confusing. The 'old school' layout of the NS7 is great but you're not getting fast access to the complex beat-repeating options that today's DJ's require and enjoy in software.

Motor way

The biggest benefit to the NS7 is the motorised jog wheels and the crossfader curve control, as this allows for very real emulation of scratching and vinyl control. Yes, it feels exactly like spinning two records. Another welcome feature is the balanced XLR outputs, making it ready to jack straight into a club system.

The NS7 does do everything that it promises and is a very capable DJ solution, especially for scratch DJs. It's easy to set up and there's practically no learning curve if you simply want to play one record into the next. But, you have to question the price when you the NS7 itself doesn't make a sound without a laptop on board too. You could just buy a decent pair of decks and timecoded vinyl, saving yourself the massive hassle of moving this around from venue to venue. The NS7 is undoubtedly more robust (it really is bombproof in build) but, the whopping price means that these features aren't enough.

NoFX

There are also no effects on the NS7 or in the Serato ITCH software and to add them you'll have to fork out more cash for the NSFX rack effects unit. Overall, once that instant, tactile fun wears off, you'll be left with a big hole in your wallet and possible back pains from lugging this around while other DJs roll up with a USB key and a CD wallet. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT

STABILITY
VALUE
EASE OF USE
VERSATILITY
RESULTS

Does exactly what it promises, but costs far too much when compared to the alternatives on the market.

FMU227.rev_numark 86 30/4/10 1:12:13 pm