

Yamaha MM6 | £429

Newbies can cut their teeth on the low-fat version of Yamaha's flagship workstation. **Karl Foster** reports



ON THE DVD

WHAT IS IT?

Entry-level, 61-key synth workstation with a selection of Motif-type AWM2 sounds, internal sequencer, pattern and arpeggio generators and real-time controllers

CONTACT

Who: Yamaha
Tel: +44 (0)870 444 5575
Web: yamahasynth.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Sounds culled from the Motif stable
- 2 Control surface functionality and USB connectivity
- 3 418 voices, 22 drum kits and three FX blocks

The Yamaha Motif was brought to the masses back in 2001, the initial trio of workstations inspiring a fan-base

enamoured of the lush AWM2 timbres, sample-mangling facilities, powerful on-board sequencers and (in the case of the Motif 8) Clavinova-style balanced-hammer keys.

There was stiff competition from the mighty Korg Triton and Roland's Fantom-X. But sound quality, flexibility, performance and sheer charm (a near-impenetrable manual, peculiar operating system and the slightly mad decision to use ill-fated SmartMedia for memory expansion all contributing) garnered the machines many a high-profile devotee.

Two years later and (more being more) the Motif ES range saw daylight, bringing roughly twice the waveform capacity, memory and polyphony, while still offering the mLAN connectivity and expansion potential via PLG plug-in boards of the originals.

The XS version – launched at this year's NAMM show – yet again near doubles the number of onboard

waveforms (now 2,670 in 355MB of wave ROM), but at a price. We're not all well-heeled enough to keep up or buy in from scratch even, and while 'lite' Motifs in the shape of the MO6 and MO8 surfaced in 2005, Yamaha still perceives an entry-level market seeking the tone of the full-fat workstations.

Hence the new MM6 (code-named 'Mini-MO'). It's a 61-key budget synth with 418 voices and 22 drum kits

based on the sound libraries of its maxi-sized brethren, a selection of tweakables for real-time sound-warping, and a smattering of auto-accompaniment features.

While expansion isn't an option, the MM sports USB ports for hooking up to a computer or other storage device, so that songs, pattern files, performance settings and more can be backed up as SMF, ready for replay on any compatible device.

Physically, it's a lightweight lump and clearly built to a price – its 5kg feels a bit plasticky, although the top-panel buttons seem positive enough. The synth-style keyboard isn't quite up there with the one on the original Motif, and the range of controller knobs are none too grippy, but the blue, backlit LCD is clear, and more user-friendly in terms of layout and iconography than its predecessors' green screens.

The thin controller

The rear panel hosts limited controller connectivity – just a foot controller and

Realtime control with knobs on

The original Motif sported four knobs and four sliders, enabling you to shape its output in a variety of ways and balance elements of composite patches to stunning effect.

The new, all-singing XS has eight knobs and sliders as well as a Triton-style ribbon for even greater control-surface flexibility. The humble

MM6 has four knobs and their assignments (Cutoff, Resonance, Attack and Release) are fixed as far as the internal voices go. So, no EQ shaping, panning, velocity tweaks and so forth on the fly.

But Cutoff and Resonance used in conjunction with the Arpeggiator offer enough to give you useful, evolving grooves with little

effort. And the knobs can be used to control other devices, such as software synths, via MIDI.

Factor in the pitch and mod wheels, plus the optional foot control and sustain pedals, and the MM6 becomes both a useful tone source and keyboard and a limited MIDI controller surface. Just mind you don't boot its budget build too hard!



