

Stanton DaScratch SCS.3d | £199 each

Stanton are back, post Final Scratch, with a new DJ system and an innovative touch surface MIDI controller. **Marc '01'** sticks his fingers in...

WHAT IS IT?

A unique touch sensitive MIDI controller designed for DJs

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Scratch digital tracks with your fingers
- 2 LED lighting gives you accurate feedback
- 3 Very light and compact

On first encountering DaScratch (aka the SCS.3d – rolls off the tongue much easier), I was pleasantly

surprised by how compact and lightweight it actually is. It's around the same size as an old VHS tape, and tips the scales at just over a kilo. It should have no trouble squeezing a ride in your backpack or finding itself a space in the DJ booth.

Its plastic case features a detachable bottom half, which is used as a cable tidy/storage space. Two finger twist screws keep it in place, and this must be removed to access the USB port to plug it in. There are several slots to feed the cable through before locking the plate back into place and ensuring

that the cable won't be accidentally yanked out.

Best friends for life

The SCS.3d's main area of expertise resides with Traktor, where it has custom preset loaded and ready to go. Currently it's compatible with Traktor DJ Studio 3.4 and above, but not the new Traktor Scratch Pro. All the hard work of mapping the controllers has been done by Stanton so aside from a couple of bits, you can dive straight in to the mix and use it as expected.

The five mode buttons at the top are designed to control EQ, FX, Loop, trigger functions and the highlight - vinyl style scratching. The sixth button allows you to swap the focus between

the two virtual decks, so that it's possible to use a single SCS.3d for two deck mixing. If you prefer to use a pair of DaScratches (see how daft that sounds!), then these can be locked together by way of the magnetic strip that runs up the side of the unit.

Each mode changes the way in which the central 'Stantouch' area works with your fingers. For example, in vinyl mode it divides the area in two, with the central strip being a vertical scratch pad, and the outer ring offering circular motion scrubbing and scratching. Each mode has been perfectly geared up to get the best from the touch surface, and it doubles up as a trigger pad for loops as well as the expected fader tasks. Special mention goes out to the pitch slider. This offers an 'incremental mode' for more precise adjustments – very useful.

Not just scratch

Serato Scratch Live users can also join in on the action, and there is a preset included for them. Since everyone buys SSL for its time-code vinyl control, it may come as no surprise to find out that you can't actually scratch it with DaScratch. The main advantages seem to be found in the looping and cueing departments, where all those trigger buttons come in rather handy.

As for the rotary motion of the touch pad, well that can be used to scroll through the crates for tracks at great



speed, while tapping gets you in and out of folders and loads and doubles tracks onto either deck.

Life after the DJ

Aside from DJ software, the SCS.3d can be used with any MIDI software that understands CC's and Note On messages. For this purpose, it's not necessary to have DaRouter running in the background unless you especially need the set of control mappings and special scaling tricks as one of the presets. The two tricks that could be especially useful include the way in which the pitch slider is scaled to respond more precisely, and the way in which the rotary shuttle can turn continuously in either direction.

If you forgo the benefits of DaRouter then you do have to select SCS.3d as the MIDI interface in the host application. As might be expected, DaScratch kicks out Note On messages for trigger operations and MIDI CC data for the slider/fader motions. The six mode buttons and transport section also send out Note On messages, but most



concentration to remember how the different modes divided up the Stantouch surface area differently each time. Once I got used to it, I was away and happily tapping to trigger clips,

launching clips, I found that the SCS.3d layout was a bit too different from Ableton Live's grid arrangement to be easy enough to follow.

DaScratch is a real pleasure to use and really makes it hard to justify using anything else at this price

importantly, they change the function and MIDI mappings of the central Stantouch area. So, effectively, this gives us five different sets of messages, each with its own array of trigger pads and fader strips.

Setting this up with Ableton Live was fairly easy using the MIDI learn function, but it did require a bit of

switch effects on and off and sliding their parameters in the mix. It does excel as an effects controller, and the ability to send multiple messages on the touch surface simultaneously is very cool and allows you to get creative in different ways to a regular knobby box.

Even though the trigger buttons might suggest that they are ideal for

specialised for it to be an all rounder, but since it's so light and compact it's the perfect addition to a live setup and will compliment a square box of knobs like chaos or order. It's a real pleasure to use and really makes it hard to justify using anything else at this price range.

The only thing it doesn't offer is a crossfader. If it had a dedicated strip for this, it would be a complete solution for in-the-box DJs, as all other mixer functions such as EQ, effects, gains etc are well taken care of. **FM**

Final Scratchiness

DaScratch is undeniably a great deal of fun compared to regular MIDI controllers. Its layout is a bit too

Route Master

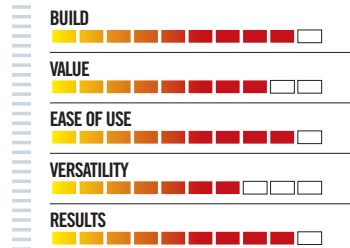
DaScratch has a little software sidekick helping the cause, aka DaRouter. It (or he?) must be installed and run alongside Traktor etc, and when it boots up, it allows you to select the software preset and also one of the single/dual deck templates. DaRouter acts like a bridge between hardware and software. It scales and converts the incoming signals before sending them on, and this

means that you will need to select 'DaRouter' as the MIDI interface in your host application for it to



do its job properly. The communication is also two-way, and can use feedback from the host software to intelligently control the numerous LEDs - providing accurate readouts and feedback. I have been told by Stanton that DaRouter is based on Bome's MIDI Translator, and we can expect to see more templates and presets for other audio software in the very near future.

FutureMusic VERDICT



This is one MIDI controller that is too cool to overlook. But if you are a DJ, it's an essential check.

SPECS

- USB 1.0/2.0 compatible MIDI Controller
- Touch sensitive continuous rotary control
- Three touch sensitive sliders
- Nine backlight touch sensitive buttons
- Four trigger Buttons
- Four backlight transport buttons
- Five control modes
- Intelligent LED lighting
- DaRouter software application
- PC: XP or Vista
- Mac: OSX 10.4 and above
- UB compatible
- Dimensions : 216 x 120 x 35mm
- Weight: 1.2 Kg

ALTERNATIVES



Jazz Mutant Lemur
£1,800

You could build a complete virtual DJ console with this high end multi-touch screen MIDI controller - for a lot more cash. jazzmutant.com



Pioneer CDJ-400
£499

This CDJ also functions as a MIDI controller and USB audio interface and has a bunch of BPM effects too. pioneerprodi.com



Allen & Heath Xone1D Controller
£219

Twelve knobs, eight faders and over a dozen buttons of MIDI control, plus a jog dial/shuttle wheel to scratch. allen-heath.com