

# Vestax VCM-600 | £649

As the performance controller market begins to heat up, Vestax go all-out with their new Ableton Live dominator. *Declan McGlynn* explores the VCM-600...

## WHAT IS IT?

A solidly-built Live-based MIDI controller

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Immaculately built
- 2 Filter control on every channel
- 3 USB powered

**R**ecently, things have started to sway in the MIDI performance controller market as software

companies and hardware manufacturers have combined their knowledge and brandings to create controllers aimed to master that software and nothing more – Akai's APC40 being the best example – and it's no surprise that they've been highly-anticipated among performers and producers alike.

Enter the VCM-600, Vestax's DJ-specific Live controller with a huge footprint and a hefty weight. The VCM offers six channels and each of these channels are broken down into six 'sections'. Starting at the top, there's a three-band EQ with knob control and kill options for each band.

Next are the standard mute, solo and pan controls per track followed by two send knobs labelled A and B and

resonance and frequency knobs for filter control.

## Lots of options

For me, that type of filter control per channel really puts the VCM in its own league – not only is it incredibly useful to have that kind of filter separation over six tracks, it also feels more like a hardware mixer and is a lot of fun to use. Below that is the section that makes the VCM lean towards Ableton users – three buttons labelled CF Assign, Clip and Track. CF Assign allocates each track to A, B or neither side of the crossfader, while the Clip and Track buttons toggle between the waveform and device panel view in Live. Pressing Track twice will collapse the device panel view completely.

Next are the Transport controls for the channels clips, which is a simple Play and Stop affair. Finally, a 60mm fader completes the layout. All of the

knobs and sliders feel robust and Vestax have done a fantastic job at squeezing in so much channel-specific DJ control. The straight-forward and clearly-labelled layout makes the VCM instantly apparent and useable and there are no double functions or Shift options. When you plug the VCM in, after setting it as a control surface in Live, everything is automatically mapped, but things like the filter and EQ controls only come alive when you drag in their relevant plug-ins to each channel i.e. Auto Filter and EQ Three.

The right side of the unit makes up the Effects (see the *Scale Effectrix* box on the next page for more), Return track control, Tempo and Master controls as well as the all important crossfader. Return control offers you faders, pans and mutes for two return tracks, while the Tempo section offers nudge buttons, a tempo control slider for drastic BPM changes and a Fine knob, for more subtle drops and rises in tempo. It would be nice if you could set a Min and Max for the Tempo slider – as the VCM is set as a control surface in Live, you can't give individual parameters a scale. I don't think I'll ever drop to 60BPM or rise to 200BPM in my DJ set and a smaller scale would allow for more accurate changes. It's perfectly useable the way it is, though.

## Master section

The Master section offers you a velocity fader, cue level and pan knobs, plus two freely assignable buttons. I had one set up as Record and one set up as Stop All Clips and it worked as



