

Roland Lucina AX-09 | from £549

Following on from the launch of the AX-Synth comes its slimmed down sibling the Lucina. *Dan 'JD73' Goldman* straps it on. Again!

ON THE DVD

WHAT IS IT?

Compact keytar with a wide range of sounds and USB connectivity, plus WAV/AIFF/MP3 playback

CONTACT

Who: Roland
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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Compact and easy to use
- 2 A good range of useable sounds onboard
- 3 USB sound file playback

PRICING

White Version
£549

Black Version
£599

SPECS

Maximum Polyphony: 128 Voices
Tones: 150
Controllers: D-Beam Controller, Modulation Bar, Ribbon Controller
Connectors: Output Jacks (L (MONO), R) (¼-inch phone type), Phones Jack, EXT In Jack (stereo mini type), Foot pedal Jack (assignable)

Dimensions
832 x 245 x 95mm

Weight
3.7 kg

Roland has been busy lately and their latest is a slimmed down version of their AX-Synth. The Lucina can be run on mains or battery power and has plenty onboard in terms of sounds and features. Nice work.

One thing's for sure, this is a unique looking keyboard. It's space age and is toy-like but professional at the same time, with a good measure of home keyboard feel thrown in too. Not since the Jupiter-4 have I seen controls below the keyboard either!

Build-quality is similar to its more expensive brother (though still pretty plasticky) and the off-white case looks a little uninspiring, though for a little more outlay, there is a black version available that looks more serious. Yes, you have to pay £50 for that 'black sparkle' privilege.

Mod problems

The Lucina (also named the AX-09) is nicely balanced once strapped on, though accessing some performance controls involves a big readjustment of hand position. For example, if you have

your hand clasped around the modulation bar/handle and want to use the D-beam, or any of its selectors (for filter/pitch/assignable duties), you'll need to let go and move your hand into a completely different position.

Another issue with the Lucina (and that I also had with the AX-synth) is the height of the mod bar. It really gets in the way of the ribbon controller below it (used for pitch-bending) which is a pain for those with smaller hands. It's workable, but still not ideal.

To the right of the mod bar are octave/transpose switches, while underneath the keyboard lie all the patch selection buttons (six banks, 144 sounds and six special tones), covering pretty much every staple sound you might want for most styles of music. There's also a small red numeric display to denote which patch is selected within each bank and a facility to store favourite patches for quick recall.

The controls generally work well in this position and don't get in the way of the keyboard when playing, plus there's a lock button to prevent

accidental patch switching. More importantly, the 37-note keyboard itself has a nice feel, is fast to play standing and not too stiffly sprung.

Sound stage

Sound-wise, the quality is generally good, though some of the sounds are swamped in delay and reverb. Effect level (plus attack/release/cutoff and resonance parameters) can be adjusted using the shift+tone buttons. Standout sounds include the woodwind, brass samples, synth pads and strings, plus there are some good organs, pianos and electric pianos too and a good range of bread and butter leads, basses and guitar sounds, all with a very digital sound.

The Lucina is a suitable first and fun purchase for any aspiring keyboardist, though it's also professional enough to use on stage in a more serious capacity, either using its onboard sounds or MIDI'd to a sound source of choice. Also, the MP3/WAV/AIFF USB playback functionality, and MP3 player input are very slick.

All in all, the Lucina is a decent little board that covers a lot of bases in a portable and easy to use package. We can imagine newcomers and pros being equally enchanted but £549 for a fun keytar is pushing things a bit for both potential markets.

It works good, looks good and sounds good but it's no bargain. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD [Progress bar: 10/10]

VALUE [Progress bar: 8/10]

EASE OF USE [Progress bar: 7/10]

VERSATILITY [Progress bar: 9/10]

RESULTS [Progress bar: 8/10]

The Lucina sounds good, is compact but is expensive for a rather niche product.

