

Novation Impulse 49 | £250

Novation's latest aims to take the headache out of controlling your favourite software. **Dan 'JD73' Goldman** acts on Impulse

WHAT IS IT?

Novation's latest USB MIDI controller with Automap 4 DAW integration

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1** Generally well built
- 2** Integrates well with most DAWs
- 3** Arpeggiator and Ableton 'clip' launching features

SPECS

I/Os: MIDI In/Out, USB, expression socket, sustain socket

Controls: Eight rotary encoders, transport controls, nine assignable buttons and nine faders, Eight drum pads with multi-colour LED backlights and multi-mode operation

Dimensions
846 x 332 x 100mm
Weight
5kg

Novation have a wide range of controllers in their range, from the diminutive and simple Nocturn, through to

the flagship Remote SL. The new mid-range Impulse comes in 25, 49 and 61-key models to suit both studio tweekers and live players.

The Impulse is a USB bus-powered MIDI controller that can fully integrate with your DAW using the included Automap 4 software. You can also use your own custom controller assignments if you don't want to use Automap.

Excessive impulsive

Kicking things off, the hardware on the review model (Impulse 49) is well featured and nicely laid out. There are eight knobs, nine faders (one fader only on the Impulse 25) eight back-lit drum pads (which can all be freely assigned) plus mod/pitch wheels DAW transport controls and nine assignable solo/mute switches. The overall feel is good quality and there's no flimsiness with the faders, pads, dials, wheels or

switchgear. It should stand up well live and in the studio.

The keyboard is one of the highlights. It's not your usual flimsy affair but is instead a really playable semi-weighted keybed that feels good for more serious playing or simple triggering of notes. As a bonus at this price point, aftertouch is included and the keyboard can be zoned into up to four areas. Flipping to the rear, you'll find connections for MIDI in and out, a USB connector, which is used to send and receive MIDI, plus expression and sustain pedal sockets. Visual feedback on the unit comes from the blue backlit screen that constantly updates to reflect controller assignments or what parameters are being tweaked.

Arping on

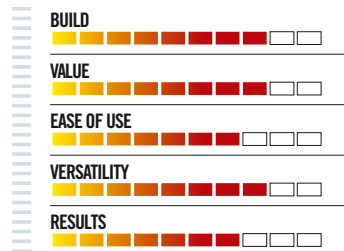
Feature-wise, there's a handy six-mode arpeggiator on board that syncs to the host DAWs tempo. The pads can be used to omit or add notes into an arpeggiated sequence, plus there's a roll function much like note repeat on an Akai MPC. This is a neat addition as it's not always straightforward to add an arpeggiator to a DAW. The Ableton 'clip' trigger mode is also a godsend for those using Live, negates the need for a separate Ableton controller and the pads change colour to reflect Ableton's

various trigger modes. Ableton Live Lite 8 is also bundled with the Impulse.

The Automap 4 software is easy to install and the dials mapped instantly to Logic's native plug-ins straight out of the box, though the mixer/pans didn't instantly work with the faders (on Logic 9.1.5) and I had to assign them manually, though this is simple enough – click on a parameter and turn any dial. I couldn't find a template for Logic, but there are templates for Live, GarageBand, Kontakt and Mainstage.

Control freak

It's easy to flip between plug-ins, your DAW's mixer or general MIDI control duties once set up. Your own user templates can also be made containing custom assignments, velocity curves, zones and more. Automap 4 is largely stable, though once installed, my third party plug-ins were no longer accessible from Logic's insert effects menu plus the Audio Unit manager also wouldn't open! This bug soured an otherwise happy experience, though hopefully it's a Logic-only scenario and will be soon solved. All things considered, this is a great controller that generally integrates well with most DAWs straight out of the box, though some tweaking is required with Logic at least. Once the third-party plug-in bug is fixed and a Logic template included, I would have no hesitation in recommending it. **FM**

FutureMusic **VERDICT**

The Impulse is well featured, though Automap 4.1 has a bug with third-party plugs using Logic.

