Behringer U-Control UMA25S | €80

Budget deities Behringer deliver the ultimate beginner package. ***Declan McGlynn*** gains control

WHAT IS IT?

An all-in-one beginner/ intermediate solution

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

1 Incredibly cheap
2 Strap-on keyboard
3 Gig bag included

SPECS

25 velocity-sensitive half-action keys

Built-in USB audio interface

21 assignable controllers storable in user presets

MIDI Out

Soft gig bag and strap included

Dimensions
460 x 220 x 46mm

Weight
2.2kg

FutureMusic Value Award

Behringer are by no means strangers to the budget market. They've consistently released low-priced studio goodies at a high quality. You don't have to look very far across the professional world to see their dominance enforced, be it in the form of their BCF and BCR controllers or their obligatory DI boxes. If we've learned anything from them over the years it's never be put off by the price: the U-Control UMA25S proves that more than ever before.

On opening the box for the UMA25S (which I'll call the U-Control for the rest of this review to keep any pesky RSI at bay), it's literally alarming how much you get for the price. The U-Control (which I'll now call the UC…) sleeps inside a multi-pocket, padded gig bag, which in itself is at least worth twenty quid. Unzip it from it's home and the first thing you'll notice is how light it is. The second thing you'll notice is just how thin the UC is. You'd be forgiven for assuming that, with such light weight and thin body, build quality must be compromised somewhere along the line – but you'd be wrong. It feels sturdy despite it's slender exterior. One USB lead is all it takes to give this little guy life, and a quick press and twiddle of the buttons and knobs impresses. Each button clicks authoritatively and the knobs turn with a sturdy stiffness and their rubber grip feels confident.

Out of control

The one area where the UC really struggles is the keyboard. There's a real on/off feel to the keys which is confirmed when you use them in software. There's no subtlety here at all – on/off or in-between are the only real differences so experienced players might struggle there. All that being said, for the price and the target market, it's not something that's going to make or break the sale.

To complete the quirky package, you also get strap buckles at the sides of the keyboard so you can strap that bad-boy on and jump on your bed (although you're going to need the mother of all USB leads to go striding front of stage). But before you reach for your wallet, there's still plenty more in this bundle – how about an audio interface too?

Round the back of the UC is where it's real value shines. From left to right, the UC boasts Direct Monitor volume control with on/off switch, phone output with volume control, mic in with volume, RCA Line In and RCA Line Out, MIDI Out, Expression and Sustain Pedal In, USB socket and the DC input. That's a lot of versatility. RCA might not be the ideal I/O system but with so many options, you can take the hit here and still have plenty of goodies for the price.

And there's more. There's even a headset in the bag with mic which makes sense of the mic and phones input – perfect if you want to vocode while strutting around with the included strap. Yes! A strap too! The quality of the headset and mic combo is pretty dire, but come on. This is a bargain.

The premise here is completeness. The U-Control packs everything you need for on-stage performance and studio use. It's light weight and included gig bag make it easy to carry around while its small footprint and USB power make it the perfect starting point for beginners. A great all-in-one solution at an even better price. Behringer have done it again. FM

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD
VALUE
EASE OF USE
VERSATILITY
RESULTS

A bargain all-in-one package. Behringer great features at high-quality at a great price.

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