

# Alesis Performance Pad Pro | £229

Performance Pad goes pro with Alesis' latest percussion pad/drum machine. **Dan 'JD73' Goldman** gives it a thorough beating



## WHAT IS IT?

A pad controlled drum machine and sampler

## CONTACT

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Versatile sounds
- 2 Alesis SR18 drum machine features
- 3 Tough and portable

## SPECS

**Audio outputs:** 2x jack outs, 1x headphone jack  
**Audio input:** 1x stereo mini jack, 1/4" Kick input, 1/4" Hi-Hat control input  
**Pads:** 8 velocity sensitive  
**Sounds:** 500 with dynamic articulation  
**Polyphony:** 32 voice  
MIDI Out  
**Panning:** 7 position  
**Velocity response:** 8 velocity levels  
**Sequencer resolution:** 96ppq  
**Notes/Patterns/Songs:** 150,000/110 user, 100 preset/200 user, 100 preset  
**Kits:** 100 user/100 preset  
**Editing features:** step edit, realtime overdub, pad pattern trigger, song mode  
**Dimensions:** 437 x 356 x 64mm  
**Weight:** 3.2kg

**W**hen we reviewed the original Performance Pad in 2008, its dated sound engine based on the 20-year-old Alesis SR16, stunted MIDI features and basic feature set just couldn't compete with a pad controller plus DAW software such as BFD. But has this new model quashed those issues?

## Pro performance?

For starters, the redesigned hardware looks and feels much better. The bright blue screen is clear, the tough rubber pads feel nice to play (though some included sticks would have been nice) and navigating the interface is simple. However, only eight levels of velocity is limiting and though Alesis make a lot of the 'dynamic articulation' feature, the sounds aren't that expressive across the velocity or tonal range.

The sounds (taken from the SR18) is versatile and sounds good.

There are now 500 sounds onboard compared to 120 on the old Performance Pad and polyphony has been doubled to 32 notes to accommodate the three types of sound available (drumset, percussion and bass) plus there are now 100 preset and 100 user drum machine patterns onboard, though it's a shame they can't all be overwritten especially as most people don't just want to use preset beats, as good as they are here.

## Head strong

Thankfully the samples are punchy, cover a lot of stylistic bases and the effects – reverb, EQ, compression – while not the greatest, are useful enough. There are basic controls for amp envelopes – though attack and release only work on the bass sounds – plus tuning, filter and panning but it's still very limited compared to what's achievable with a laptop plus drum/percussion sample library and a

USB/MIDI controller pad. The addition of bass sounds is welcome and there's a small range of acoustic, electric and synth tones onboard. Unfortunately, as there are only eight pads, each bass kit can access only eight pitches at a time and the sounds within a kit can't be individually pitched to form custom user scales, limiting its usefulness. This is compounded by the lack of a MIDI input or USB, so there's no way to access the onboard sounds externally, though the Performance Pad Pro works well as a very basic MIDI controller. There's also an audio input for practicing along with your beats.

## Pad times

As a drum machine its feature set is good, though still quite basic for a 'pro' model. There's straightforward pattern/loop recording with real-time overdubbing, quantising, step editing and pattern chaining and the sequencer swings nicely and is super-tight, so no complaints there. Each pattern also has A and B parts plus two fill parts too, though I was expecting multiple sequencer tracks like on the Akai MPC, yet there's only three tracks per pattern-drums, percussion and bass.

In the end, the Performance Pad Pro still has one too many deficiencies for it to wear the 'pro' badge. Yes it sounds good, it's portable, self-contained and easy to use as a basic drum machine or for live percussion/drums but the lack of a MIDI in, no USB and no sample loading ability, plus the limited number of sequencer tracks and limited bass notes available via the pads is frustrating.

Perhaps the redeeming thing is that it's fairly cheap compared to other percussion pads with drum machines, but that shows in its feature set. In general, it's not well spec'd enough as a drum machine or as a percussion controller to really impress. **FM**



FutureMusic VERDICT	
BUILD	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
VALUE	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
EASE OF USE	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
VERSATILITY	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
RESULTS	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
It sounds OK and the drum machine is a bonus but it's too basic to wear the 'pro' badge.	