Yamaha Reface YC E347

It's red and specialises in organs... Dan 'JD73' Goldman sees if the YC is all cheese, or the bees knees!

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WHAT IS IT?

Reface series organ featuring several vintage organ emulations, 'drawbars' and effects

CONTACT

Who: Yamaha **Tel:** 0844 811 1116 Web: www.uk.yamaha.com

HIGHLIGHTS

Well built, with nicely playable mini-key action

- Wide range of organ tones plenty of hands-on control
- High-quality reverb onboard, plus distortion, vibrato and percussion

SPECS

37 mini-keys 128-note polyphony Engine: AWM 2 x 2 Watt speakers Battery life approx 5 hours (6 x AAs) MIDI in/out via USB and breakout cable

5 Organ types: Rotary Speaker, Distortion, Reverb and Percussion

Pedal Volume Input

Dimensions:

530 x 175 x 60mm

Weight:

1.9kg

amaha made some interesting YC-badged transistor combo organs back in the '70s and the Reface

YC is a throwback to those heady times! This time round, however, despite the Reface YC being red like its older relations, the sound generation is based on Yamaha's well-respected AWM sample-based synthesis rather than using transistors and complex wiring. Using the marvels of modern technology, the tiny 2015 YC features not just Yamaha organs but all the classic organ types you could want including emulations of the legendary tonewheel Hammond (H) and transistor organs such as those from Vox (V), Farfisa (F), Yamaha YC-45D (Y) and the vaguely-named Japanese Transistor (Acetone) organ (J).

Build quality is solid and like the other Reface models, the YC features speakers, USB, MIDI, and an Aux input, plus a surprisingly playable 37-key mini keyboard (three octaves). The action feels like a miniaturised Motif-series synth-action keyboard (which is what it is!) and my sausage fingers had no problem playing it, though I would have preferred a four or five-octave mini-keyboard like those found on the DX100 or Portasound PSS-680. To keep things authentic, the keyboard isn't velocity sensitive when controlling the internal engine, but velocity is transmitted over MIDI which is great for

controlling external instruments. Also, while on the subject, the YC makes a decent mini MIDI-controller as all the front panel sliders and switches send and receive MIDI CC information - if you're looking for a compact MIDI controller with plenty of front panel control, the YC is therefore worth a serious look.

There's a versatile set of organ emulations onboard, however for this review I'm going to focus mainly on the Hammond Tonewheel emulation as I dare say for most folks, it's going to be the most-used model. First off, the basic sound (without the onboard rotary-speaker emulation engaged) is solid and nicely authentic, though definitely on the clean side as there's no options for adjusting key-click or tonewheel leakage. As you would expect, there are nine 'footage' sliders (like drawbars on a Hammond) enabling you to fade in harmonics to fill out or thin out the sound on the fly. These sliders all feel solid and the short throw helps you to make adjustments quickly, though unfortunately there's no way to store your sounds onboard once you hit upon a great sound (though you can connect an iPad or iPhone and use Yamaha's iOS Capture App).

The rotary-speaker emulation is very usable, reminding me a lot of the emulations onboard the Motif-series.

However, while the emulation sounds authentic at slower speeds (and it's great that there's a 'stop' function too which allows you to have the dry rotary sound without the spinning of the rotors), the fast speed sounds a little too fast/wobbly for my liking and also the acceleration from slow to fast is quite abrupt, with no way to adjust the ramp-up time.

Effects-wise, the percussion sounds very authentic (and it's great to have a variable length slider for the decay) and the reverb sounds very nice too, adding some welcome musical ambience and atmosphere to the dry sound. The distortion sounds fine and does a nice job of grittying things up, though unlike a real Leslie the grit does tend to sit on top of the sound rather than blend with it naturally. Finally, the vibrato/chorus sounds nicely authentic on the vibrato setting but on my review unit, the chorus setting sounded virtually indistinguishable from the vibrato! Hopefully this can be addressed as soon as possible via an update, as chorus is an integral part of the Hammond sound and it's sorely missed here.

To sum up, the YC is very handy if you need a decent portable organ for touring/gigging and for travelling light. It's battery-powerable and not too pricey at a street price of £289. Currently, the chorus emulation lets it down but for solid, staple organ sounds, it does a very respectable job indeed.

FutureMusic VERDICT BUILD EASE OF USE VERSATILITY A solid organ emulator with handy effects; works well as a general MIDI controller and for travelling.

