



# Akai SynthStation25 £75 IPHONE

The company behind music technology legends like the MPC series and S-range samplers tap into a whole new market

> Consider the enormous success of Korg's nano series of ultracompact MIDI controllers and the Akai LPK and LPD alternatives that followed. Now, take into account the widespread adoptance of Apple's iDevices. Music software developers embraced them, with innovative new apps continuing to trickle into the App Store. Portable music solutions are very much in, then, but they're not without drawbacks: the iPhone - and even iPad - is not designed for playing keyboard on, and despite the availability of tiny MIDI controllers, you still need a laptop to plug them into. It's perhaps a no-brainer, then, to combine a compact controller and an iPhone app - and that's precisely what Akai have done. The SynthStation25 hardware reviewed here is designed to work with Akai's SynthStation app (reviewed on p109), a comprehensive synth and drum sequencing tool.

## Case dismissed

The first issue you'll run into with the SynthStation25 is a fundamental one. The majority of iPhone 4 owners have a fetching

case or bumper wrapped around their pride-and-joy. Unfortunately, in its protected state, the iPhone 4 doesn't fit in the dock. It fits with the case off, of course.

The eight buttons on the front-panel correspond to functions in the SynthStation app (see boxout). The keyboard is the same as on the LPK25 - nothing mindblowing, but pleasantly playable. On the left, there are the pitch and mod wheels and round the back you've got a phono output, a 3.5mm headphone socket, volume knob and a 6V power socket. It will also run on three AAA batteries. Round the side there's a mini USB port - the device functions as a standard USB MIDI controller too, you see. And that's about it. There's not much to it, but that's presumably helped in terms of keeping the price - and weight - down. Built-in speakers would've been nice, though.

As for use with apps other than Akai's own, at the time of writing, the only one we know of that supports it is the superb NanoStudio (9/10, [cm156](#)). However, audio from any app will be pumped out of the SynthStation's outs, and

developers can grab the SDK at the dedicated site [www.synthstationapp.com](http://www.synthstationapp.com).

With the SynthStation25, Akai have hit the ground running. It looks good, feels solid enough for the money and is very light and portable. If you're enamoured of iOS' musical capabilities, you need this in your iLife. **cm**

Web [www.akaipro.com](http://www.akaipro.com)

Contact Akai UK, 01252 896000

## System requirements

**iOS** iPhone/iPod touch

## Alternatively

**Line 6 MIDI Mobilizer cm153 >> 7/10 >> £59**

A MIDI interface for iPhone, with a fair few apps now supporting it

## Verdict

**For** Light and very portable  
Keenly priced

Battery- or mains-powered  
Completely self-contained solution

**Against** No speakers  
iPhone 4 only fits without a case  
Limited app compatibility

SynthStation25 quashes our initial scepticism by proving to be a neat, well thought-out concept. Simple but effective

**9/10**

## Integration station

**The SynthStation 25 is designed to work with Akai's SynthStation iPhone app (p109). The eight buttons are labelled with the app in mind, so the top four are Drums, Synth 1, Synth 2 and Synth 3, corresponding to the app's premise of three synth sounds and drum sequencing. Press any of the buttons and the keyboard now plays the synth preset or drum kit without changing what's shown on the screen. This is really useful as you can, say, twiddle the X/Y pad with one**

**hand while cycling through and playing synth sounds using the keyboard.**

**The bottom four buttons are more generic and are Prev and Next (for presets) and Up and Down (for octaves). The integration works perfectly well, and offers enough control to be useful without being overly app-specific, which we think is important considering that the SynthStation 25 will only become more useful as more developers support it.**