



# Novation Impulse 49 £249

PC MAC

This mid-range USB controller keyboard comes with the latest Automap, offering deep, hands-on DAW control

> Available in 25-, 49- and 61-key models (we're looking at the 49-key version here), Novation's new Impulse range of controller keyboards represents a moderately cheaper option than their top-end Remote SL series.

Design-wise, the Impulse 49 looks the business, with red end-cheeks and trim nicely offsetting the black bodywork and white decals. A big blue LED screen and eight tri-colour, backlit drum pads all add to the visual appeal.

The Impulse boasts eight rotary encoders and nine faders, each with a dual-function mute/solo button underneath. The rubber buttons feel like they would stand up well to regular abuse. We're nit-picking here, but the Learn and Shift functions are on the same key, which can be a tad confusing when you're in the thick of it.

The semiweighted keyboard with full polyphonic aftertouch can be split into four contiguous or overlapping zones, each on its own MIDI channel. The keys themselves are a touch on the clunky side, with the black notes in particular seeming very squared-off and sharp-edged. This is probably something you'd get used to over time, though, after which the impressive aftertouch and velocity sensitivity would hopefully take focus.

The velocity- and pressure-sensitive drum pads light up when hit, and their grippy surface texture feels suitably responsive and playable. The Roll button will be applauded by MPC fans,

and there's also a special 'clip launch' mode for Ableton Live users.

## Trust your impulses

The Impulse works fine as a standard MIDI controller, but it really comes into its own when used with Novation's Automap 4 software, which comes bundled with it (and every other Novation controller). This enables you to control your DAW's transport, mixer and plug-ins directly from the Impulse. Already compatible with Pro Tools, Logic Pro, GarageBand, Cubase, Reason and Ableton Live, this latest version adds support for Logic Express, Studio One, Digital Performer and Reaper. It also brings with it a redesigned GUI and VST3 compatibility.

Automap also enables the Impulse to take full command of any third-party plug-in without host-based manual assignment, a feat it achieves by making Automap-compatible 'wrapped' copies of every plug-in it finds on your system during the setup process. This could be an issue for those with huge instrument and effect libraries, but plug-ins can also be converted individually. When a wrapped plug-in is loaded, its most useful parameters are automatically mapped to the Impulse's controls, which can be instantly reassigned via Automap if required. The software focuses on whichever plug-in is currently active in your DAW, and - new in version 4 - every time a control is touched, a notification box pops up

at the bottom of the computer screen to let you know what's going on. Clicking this box opens the Automap GUI, replacing the previous Hide and Resize functionality.

In conclusion, the Impulse 49 and its 25-/61-key siblings ably fill the gap between the Remote SL series and the keyboard-less Nocturn, presenting a great mid-range feature-set at a competitive price. Automap, meanwhile, is as fantastic a control system as it's always been, with v4's notification system and extended DAW compatibility qualifying as evolutionary rather than revolutionary improvements. **cm**

Web [www.novationmusic.com](http://www.novationmusic.com)  
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## Alternatively

**M-Audio Axiom 49**

N/A » N/A » £270

Matches the Impulse hardware almost feature-for-feature

**Akai MPK49**

cm126 » 9/10 » £299

Well laid-out, feature-packed, highly playable and with a great pedigree

## Verdict

**For** Plug-in/DAW control with Automap  
Built-in arpeggiator  
Generous selection of controls  
Drum pads  
Follow focus feature

**Against** Somewhat 'boxy' keyboard  
Automap must wrap third-party plug-ins

Semiweighted keys, drum pads, a decent array of controls and the excellent Automap 4 make the Impulse a complete solution

8/10

## Seal of arp-roval

Beneath the Impulse's set of drum pads lurks a button labelled simply **Arp**. Herein lies a cool six-mode arpeggiator that tempo-syncs to the host DAW. At the press of said button, the drum pads turn green. Each pad now represents a step in an arpeggiated sequence - if you hold down a chord, you get an arpeggio, the current note lighting up yellow as the sequence progresses. Tapping any of the pads removes that step from the sequence,

enabling the creation of multiple rhythmic variations.

Pressing the **Arp** button with the **Shift** key held down accesses the settings page, wherein you can set the note value and length parameters, as well as the swing, direction (up, down, etc), octave and pattern length settings. A quick press of the **Record** button in the transport section delivers your sequence as MIDI data straight to your DAW. It's great stuff.