

Novation Launchpad Mini Mk3 £100

Launcher control surfaces continue their rise. **Jon Musgrave** asks if small is beautiful with this latest offering

CONTACT WHO: Novation **WEB:** novationmusic.com **KEY FEATURES** 64 pads, 18 buttons, 81 RGB LEDs, customisable MIDI functionality using the Components app, USB C socket, USB C to USB A lead included, Kensington MiniSaver security slot, extensive software bundle including Ableton Live 10

Novation's Ableton Live Launchpad grid controllers have been massively popular and that success has spawned a number of updates and variants with differing price-tags. At £100 the latest 'mini' incarnation (Mk3) is very affordable and continues the tradition of the Session View-ready 8x8 backlit launcher.

Out of the box it's surprisingly compact (a few mm smaller than the Mk2) and visually at least looks like a scaled-down Launchpad X. Construction is solid and the rubberised base keeps it stable. Connectivity is via a USB C socket and alongside this there's also a Kensington MiniSaver security slot.

The Mini Mk3 is USB bus-powered and there's no low-power mode like there is on the Mini Mk2, so older iPad users need the latest Apple Camera Connection Kit, which incorporates pass-through power. There is also a programmer mode for those who want to control the pad colours remotely via MIDI. To get you started, Mini Mk3 ships with Ableton Live 10 Lite, a two-month trial for Splice, and add-on software from Softube, Klevgrand, XLN Audio and Sound Collective.

InNovations

In terms of new features, two things stand out. Firstly, the Mk3 now includes RGB colour matching pads, so you have a really accurate representation of what you see in your Live Session. Secondly, and in addition to the Live Session layout, there are three Custom layouts. Two of these (Drums and Keys) are preconfigured as drum grids and a chromatic keyboard respectively, and the third (User) is blank. However, all three can be edited using Novation's Components app. Designed to support a range of Novation devices and act as a settings librarian, the app works either in a browser (Chrome or Opera) or in standalone form. If you opt for the browser mode you can also launch it from the mass storage device folder that appears on your computer desktop when you plug up the Launchpad – a nice touch.

Components has a number of widgets including unipolar and bipolar faders (horizontal and



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vertical), chromatic and scale specific keyboards, 4x4 drum grid, MIDI note button, MIDI CC button and MIDI Program Change. Each has selectable MIDI channel, CC, value and colour settings, and widgets can be freely combined as long as they fit within the 8x8 grid.

The Mini Mk3 has some further changes, most notably the reworked right-hand side perimeter buttons. The top seven are dedicated Scene launchers, while the bottom one activates Stop/Solo/Mute functionality across the bottom grid row, for instant solo and mute.

Missing the Mk

What you won't find is a mixer option or a way to record arm tracks (features that are available on the Mini Mk2 and the Launchpad X) and, although you can create some of these functions via MIDI in Custom mode, it's not quite the same thing. These aspects, alongside the lack of pad velocity and

aftertouch, are important in differentiating Launchpad Mini Mk3 from the Launchpad X, and although I understand this need, there's no way to disguise the fact the Mk3 has lost some of the Mk2's functionality.

Even so, on the upside, the Mini Mk3 is a much more customisable MIDI controller, and in many ways offers an overall slicker user experience than its predecessor. **FM**

FM VERDICT

8.8

It'd be easy to criticise this for what it doesn't do, but this super-compact, tactile entry-level launcher still has plenty to offer

THE PROS & CONS



Incredibly compact

RGB backlit pads for clear visual integration with Ableton Live's Session View

Customisable MIDI functionality



No dedicated Ableton Live mixer option

Pads aren't velocity sensitive or aftertouch capable

Older iPads will need an additional power source to provide enough bus power