Mac PC **What is it?** Budget control surface **PRICE: £39**

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BEHRINGER

computer music VALUE FOR MONEY

B-Control Nano BCN44

The Nano certainly sports an attractive price-tag, but is it false economy to spend so little on your MIDI hardware?

The Behringer name is synonymous with decent quality and low prices, with a range of products that runs right across the music technology spectrum – from mics and mixers to amps and effects. The company has established a strong foothold in the computer music market with its B-Control range, and the Nano is the latest addition to it. It's a simple, no-nonsense control surface that comes in at a rock-bottom price.

The Nano looks quite chunky, but it isn't the most solid controller we've seen. In fact, it's made completely of plastic. That said, although it's light, the unit does feel reasonably sturdy, and the controls are solidly mounted.

Power for the Nano comes via the supplied mains adapter or, if you're taking it on the road, three AA batteries that slot into a compartment on the underside.

One of the most noteworthy things about the Nano is that it uses MIDI In and Out ports to communicate with the device it's controlling – there's no USB port. You should bear this in mind if you don't have a MIDI interface, as the Nano can't be used without one.

On to the controls. Four well-spaced dual-function rotaries sit at the centre of the console. Each of these can be used to control two parameters – one continuous value and one on/off value. Pressing a rotary switches the on/off

parameter, while a button underneath activates its continuous value. Parameter values appear on the four-digit LED display when you make adjustments. A wide range of MIDI control messages can be transmitted, including note, CC, program change, NRPN, MMC, GS, pitchbend and aftertouch.

That'll learn ya

The MIDI learn function is very useful. Once activated, you can select one of the Nano's controls and choose the MIDI command you want it to adjust in your software. This is then sent to the Nano and you're up and running.

Various utilitarian MIDI tasks can be performed. Snapshot Send transmits all current controller values to a connected device – good when you want to sync everything up before you start. The Single Preset dump enables you to send all of the current preset's settings and is useful when you want to save them on your computer.

At the moment, there's no editing software for the Nano (see boxout), so beginners may struggle to get to grips with it. The MIDI-savvy shouldn't have any problems at all, however.

The Nano is one of the cheapest MIDI controllers around, and this is reflected in its lightweight build quality. However, its basic features have been well implemented. We certainly think there's a market for a controller like this; it's perfect if you're short on cash and want to get hands-on with your tweaking. **cm**

Setting up

There are 99 user preset locations for storing your control setups. These are selected by scrolling with the preset arrow buttons, and you can search through them faster by holding down one of the preset buttons and then turning any of the rotary controls.

Behringer are currently working on a software editor/librarian, and this will be available as a free download in the near future. We're told that it will enable you to create and store presets using your computer.

Fortunately, configuring the Nano's controllers 'by hand' isn't particularly difficult. Each rotary control is edited individually and can be assigned to a different MIDI channel and parameter. You can also set the range of control (using low and high values). Values are assigned by turning the corresponding rotary control. It's a similar story for the push functions, though there are no range settings for these, obviously.

The type of MIDI data being transmitted, the controller mode and the display functions are all edited using the buttons beneath the first three controls.
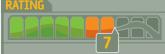
▲ The Nano is easy to configure, so the lack of editing software isn't a disaster

▶ **SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**
MIDI controllable device with MIDI-IN port

▶ **TEST MACHINE**
PC: P4 1.8GHz, 512MB RAM, Windows XP Service Pack 1

▶ **ALTERNATIVELY**
Evolution UC-16
cm51 ≫ **9/10** ≫ £80
Edirol's popular unit offers more control but at a higher price

Behringer BCR2000
cm78 ≫ **9/10** ≫ £140
The Nano's big brother, this one features 32 rotaries

⏻ VERDICT

FOR
+ Inexpensive
+ Simple, spacious layout
+ Learn function
+ Software editor in the pipeline

AGAINST
– Plasticky
– No USB option

A no-frills controller that does the business but won't break the bank

RATING
7