

M-Audio Code Series Controllers | from £135

M-Audio is no stranger to the keyboard controller market but is its latest model the best yet? **Jono Buchanan** cracks the Code

WHAT IS IT?

A new, comprehensively spec'd keyboard controller range featuring 25, 49 and 61 key models

CONTACT

Who: InMusic
Tel: +44 (0) 1252 896040
Web: <http://maudio.co.uk>

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Oodles of pads, sliders and rotary options onboard
- 2 The lights! MIDI controllers have rarely looked so vibrant
- 3 Configurable X-Y pad a real bonus

M-Audio's name is synonymous with keyboard controllers, with the company being one

of the first out of the blocks when it became apparent that computer-based musicians would need controller-packed surfaces from which to interact with and drive their host software. M-Audio's existing controller line-up contains instruments in several categories – including the long-serving Keystation, Oxygen and Axiom ranges – and to these, the Code series is now added. Across 25, 49 and 61 key models, these keyboards promise a range of features designed for greater playability and more flexible control.

Unlocking codes

All three Code models are bus-powered, using USB as their

communication protocol, though they offer traditional MIDI In and Out ports as well. The largest model, the Code 61, offers a five-octave playing surface and a predominantly white front panel. If this sounds like a slightly vanilla colour choice, don't worry, you'll soon discover that Code is awash with colour elsewhere.

To the left of the keyboard, you'll find a four-by-four pad array, with all 16 pads offering velocity sensitivity. The middle panel of the main surface offers a slider bank with illuminated buttons below, while the screen to the left offers yet more light and colour. The effect is reminiscent of other keyboard controllers including Native Instruments' light-tastic Komplete Kontrol S-Series range. The feature

line-up for the Code 61 is concluded by a pitch bend and assignable modulation wheel in the top left-hand corner and by an X-Y pad on the far right-hand side, which are equally configurable to the control parameters of your choice.

Special mention must go to the keyboard itself, which has been revised to produce a more 'playable' action. It certainly offers a much more expressive and responsive feel to that of my original Axiom Pro and, as it provides aftertouch as well as velocity sensitivity, it's a powerful control surface in its own right. The keyboard can be split into four independent zones, which is great if you want to access multiple plug-ins at once. Of course, with all of this potential, the burning question will be how well these options translate into practice. Is the Code series so bogged down in possibility that its learning curve is too steep to inspire creativity?

Code red, Code green

Well, there is certainly sufficient depth here to make reading the quick-start guide (and downloading the more extensive user guide) essential. To understand why, let's take the pads as an example section of the depth of capability Code provides. By default,



