

Roger Linn Design LinnStrument | £1,011

LinnStrument offers a unique approach to MIDI control, with a three-dimensional touch panel at its heart. **Dan 'JD73' Goldman** explores...

WHAT IS IT?

Innovative, MIDI performance instrument, featuring 3D touch panel

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Built to a very high standard, and wear it like a guitar or play it on your lap/desktop
- 2 Three-dimensional touch really brings sampled/virtual/MIDI instrument sounds to life
- 3 Inspiring and addictive to play with – a very well thought out, open source OS

Roger Linn's influence upon the electronic music world and beyond is nothing short of legendary. I've always been

a big fan of his designs and I currently own an MPC3000 and Tempest. Roger's latest instrument, the aptly named LinnStrument, is a 'three-dimensional' MIDI control instrument, built with expressive performance in mind. It's very sturdily built with a metal chassis, 200 3D-sensing RGB-backlit pads, eight RGB-backlit switches (two of which are assignable) and it's topped off with lovely cherrywood side panels. The feeling of high quality pervades throughout and the all-important three-axis, multi-touch surface is made from translucent silicone rubber, which is inviting to play and feels great under the fingers. It's grippy enough so you can play accurately but smooth enough so you can perform slides easily.

All the connections are found on the right-hand side. From left to right you have a multi-voltage power connection for an external supply, standard MIDI In/Out connectors, USB for receiving power from your computer (and for

simultaneously transmitting/receiving MIDI data) and a footswitch jack that can work with standard single/dual footswitches and which is assignable as a sustain pedal or to other functions. There are also four strap connectors included, so you can wear the LinnStrument on stage – it's always nice to have instruments you can wear and, with all the glowing multi-coloured lights on the panel, it will certainly turn

heads on stage too! LinnStrument feels nicely balanced when wearing it but it'll sit atop your studio desk comfortably too, though it does have a fairly large footprint. I found it was best placed on my knees, at an angle on a sturdy music stand, or strapped on.

The LinnStrument is eminently configurable using the provided OS/firmware, which is open-source and based on the Arduino platform – great for folks that enjoy getting their programming hands dirty! It also means the LinnStrument should stay very relevant well into the future. As a rule, LinnStrument's functions are selected and changed by simply choosing a parameter from the printed panel lists and selecting the pad/column that corresponds to the chosen parameter/function. Across the panels' top you'll find 'per-split' settings (the touch panel can be split at a user-definable point) and at the bottom are global settings.

Applications For LinnStrument

LinnStrument is particularly versatile as a controller. You can use it as a standard controller with one or two hands on deck to perform duties such as playing melodies/chords and inputting data into your DAW, but it's a superb drum controller too. Loading up a kit in Logic and using the touch surface/pads for timbre, velocity and pitch changes added a

new dimension of realism to kits I've used for years.

The Strum and Restrike modes are great for authentic guitar-like performances (strum one side of the split while playing the other) and the bottom row of pads can also perform its own functions including sustain, MIDI CC, Strum and Restrike. Using Split works great for playing a bass on one side and a

piano on the other, or for dual-device control.

Further, you could use LinnStrument as a clip launcher for Ableton and there's a handy MIDI CC fader mode, where eight virtual faders pop up on the display for controlling virtually any MIDI gear/parameters. Finally, there's a useful onboard arpeggiator and its note data can be transposed easily via the pads.



