

Korg microKEY

25 & 37 | from £49

Two mini keyboards from Korg. **Greg Scarth** finds out if the best things really do come in small packages

WHAT IS IT?

Miniature-keyed USB MIDI controller keyboards

CONTACT

Who: Korg UK
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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 'Natural Touch' mini keys
- 2 Two-way USB port on 37
- 3 Arpeggiator on 25

PRICING

microKEY 25
£49

microKEY 37
£69

SPECS

Controllers:
microKEY 25 Joystick, arpeggiator button, sustain/TAP button
microKEY 37 Pitchbend wheel, modulation wheel

Octave shift: -4~+4

Connections:
microKEY 25 USB Type B (x1)
microKEY 37 USB Type A (x2), Type B (x1)

Power: USB buss

Dimensions:
microKEY 25
395 x 131 x 53mm
microKEY 37
565 x 139 x 54mm

Weight:
microKEY 25
650g
microKEY 37
1kg

The product designers over at Korg seem to enjoy the challenge of making everything smaller. Over the past few years we've seen the Monotron and microKorg synths, the miniKP 2 effects unit and the nanoSERIES of controllers. Korg seem intent on building the world's biggest range of little products, so the arrival of another diminutive addition should come as no surprise.

Little brother

The latest offerings are two new versions of the microKEY series, which fall somewhere between full-size MIDI controller keyboards and the ultra-portable nanoSERIES. They aim to give you slightly more control than laptop keyboard options, while still offering a small desktop footprint.

Until now, the only model in the range was the 37-key version released in late 2010. It's now been joined by a smaller 25-key option, which isn't much longer or deeper than the tiny nanoKey, but slightly thicker and significantly heavier. Both models are USB-powered

and send MIDI over USB only (there are no five-pin DIN sockets).

The microKEY models are based on Korg's 'Natural Touch' mini keys, as found on the likes of the microKorg XL. I criticised the light, plasticky action of the Natural Touch keybed when I reviewed the £300 XL+ a few months ago, I'm more forgiving when it comes to a £50 controller. The velocity curve can be edited using the Mac or PC-based Korg Kontrol Editor but, as you'd expect at this price, there isn't a great deal of feel to the keys.

Both units were recognised instantly by both my Mac and PC and worked without fault. One of the major selling points of the microKEY 25 is its compatibility with the iPad. Again, connection to my iPad (via the Apple Camera Connection Kit, not supplied) was instant and the unit worked flawlessly with every app I tried. Unfortunately, the 25 draws too much power for the iPhone or iPod Touch, as does the 37 with all iOS devices.

The newly designed 25-key version differs slightly from its older, bigger

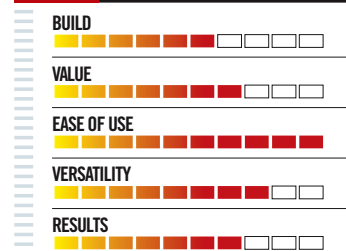
brother. There's a new arpeggiator, and the 25 also highlights a significant weakness of the 37: its pitch bend and modulation joystick is tactile and responsive, easily beating the disappointingly cheap-feeling mod wheels on the 37.

The microKEY 25 is a valuable addition to this line-up (there's also a new 61-key version). Other than the extended range, the only significant advantage of the 37-key version is the inclusion of a two-way USB hub.

Both units come bundled with a small selection of software including Toontrack's EZDrummer Lite and Applied Acoustics' Lounge Lizard Session electric piano plug-in. Whether the extra octave and USB ports on the 37 are enough to make it a better option, we're not sure.

Chances are, if you're buying a two or three-octave miniature-keyed controller you're not expecting to play two-handed. The improved portability, better pitch/mod control and useful arp on the 25 will probably give it the edge for most buyers. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT



Plug-and-play simplicity at a reasonable price. The 25 has the edge over the 37, though.

