

# NI Komplete Kontrol A25 £119

Si Truss asks if NI's budget board can compete in a crowded sector...

**CONTACT WHO:** Native Instruments **WEB:** [native-instruments.com](http://native-instruments.com) **KEY FEATURES INCLUDED SOFTWARE:** Maschine, Maschine Essentials Factory Library (1.6GB), Monark, Reaktor Prism, The Gentleman, Scarbee Mark 1. **PRICING:** A25 £119, A49 £159, A61 £199







## THE PROS & CONS



Look and feel that punches above the 'budget' price point

**Excellent package of included software**

Tight integration with NI's NKS system



**No aftertouch**

Lacks the Light Guide and Smart Strip of its bigger siblings

**N**I have never exactly been known as a 'budget' brand. That's not to say their products are overpriced, but – for hardware at least – they're rarely the most affordable option around. That changes with the launch of the A-Series, a range of wallet-friendly controller keyboards available in 61, 49 or 25 key form.

At just shy of £120, the A25 isn't the cheapest MIDI keyboard out there, but it's certainly well within reach of entry-level and cash-strapped producers. The price drop, however, isn't matched by a drop in quality, and in terms of build and capabilities these controllers punch well above their weight. Hardware-wise, the matt black look and sturdy controls match the design of the higher-end Maschine and S-Series hardware, and for an affordable keyboard this looks and feels great.

The keys themselves are a synth-action semi-weighted design, and while the feel isn't up there with NI's more expensive S-Series – and lacks aftertouch – it doesn't feel too lightweight or cheap. The same can be said for the sturdy-feeling pitch and mod wheels.

Feature-wise, the A-Series controllers offer a stripped down version of the S-Series' capabilities. As with those bigger controllers, the hardware is designed to take advantage of NI's Komplete Kontrol plugin and NKS system, which offers tight, pre-mapped control over NI's own software tools and a growing library of third party instruments and effects. Control here is primarily handled by the eight touch-sensitive rotaries that line the top of the interface, used to adjust plugin parameters and macro assignments. These are joined by a multi-directional rotary/button which handles navigation along with a small LED screen and selection of transport/function buttons.

Naturally, many of the more advanced S-Series features have been jettisoned. The two screens are gone, putting emphasis back on your laptop. The keyboard Light Guide is lost here too, as is the touch-sensitive Smart Strip. The A-Series can still make full use of Komplete Kontrol's chord, scale and arp modes though, and on the whole the level of control doesn't feel lacking. There's still decent DAW interaction, with Logic and Garageband mappings supplied at launch and Live, Cubase and others due in the coming weeks.

What makes the A-Series really stand out at this price, however, is the bundled software and sounds. As with the latest Maschine Mikro reviewed over the page, the A-Series ships with the full Maschine application, plus a stripped-down but still high-quality Factory Library of samples and presets. The controllers also come with the full versions of the Prism and Monark synth, as well as The Gentleman and Scarbee Mk 1 Kontakt libraries, offering piano and electric piano sounds respectively. Alongside the well-built and tightly integrated controller, you'd be pushed to find a more fully-rounded entry-level package at this price point. **FM**

## FM VERDICT

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**A quality controller combined with a well-rounded software bundle. Maybe the best value entry-level package on the market**