

# Novation Launchkey 37 Mk3 £180

The Live-centric MIDI keyboard gets the Mk3 treatment. **Si Truss** takes a test drive

**CONTACT WHO:** Novation **WEB:** [novationmusic.com](http://novationmusic.com) **KEY FEATURES** 37-note MIDI keyboard designed for Ableton Live, but also compatible with Logic Pro X as well as various other hardware and software uses via Custom mode. Includes onboard Scale, Arp and Chord modes. Bus powered. **I/O:** MIDI out, USB, sustain pedal in





## THE PROS & CONS



Tight control of Ableton Live, and decent compatibility with Logic Pro X

**37-key version is a nice compromise between size and functionality**

MIDI output and custom modes allow for use with external hardware



**Lacks the obvious USP of some of its 'Mk3' counterparts**

Novation have been gradually updating their controller line over the past couple of years, bringing each in line with the company's 'Mk3' generation. The Ableton Live-focussed Launchkey range is one of the last remaining corners of the product line to receive an update, so much of what's new here will be familiar to any users who've encountered the latest Launchpads or the pint-sized Launchkey Mini.

Common to all of Novation's 'Mk3' devices is a sleek, matte-black look and low-profile design, along with a series of new features designed to take advantage of updated elements of Ableton Live. These include a button to activate Live's Capture MIDI tool, along with Push-style device-control, which here makes use of eight rotaries sat along the top of each controller. As with several other 'Mk3' controllers, these latest Launchkeys also gain excellent standalone Chord, Scale and Arpeggiator modes, which can be used with or without a computer. All controllers in the Launchkey range gain a hardware MIDI out, so users can take advantage of these features to control hardware synths too.

New for the Mk3 Launchkeys is a 37-note version, on review here,

adding a fourth option to the range alongside the 25, 49 and 61-key variants. It's a smart move; the Launchkey 37 is compact and convenient but doesn't feel as limited as a 25-note keyboard. Here Novation have moved the pitch and mod wheels to sit above the keyboard, rather than beside it, cutting the overall length of the hardware itself. This might irritate some players, but overall it seems like a smart design concession.

Aside from the number of keys, the only difference between the 37 and 25 and their larger counterparts is the presence of eight channel faders on the top-end controllers. Other than that, all the Mk3 Launchkeys are similarly equipped with 16 backlit, velocity-sensitive pads, eight rotaries, a compact parameter screen and a decent crop of buttons for browsing and transport control. Both the pads and the keyboards themselves have been upgraded for this generation, and both feel great with decent velocity response (although no aftertouch).

The Launchkeys are primarily aimed at Ableton Live users, and it's hard to fault the seamless compatibility here, allowing for tight navigation and hands-on control of plenty of the DAW's features. Ableton's own Push controller is still only available in clip launcher/pad form, so the Launchkey is as close as

you're likely to get to a definitive keyboard controller for Live. There's a decent level of control offered here for Logic Pro X too, as well as access to Novation's flexible Custom modes, which can be set up through the company's Components software. As well as allowing custom MIDI mappings, this lets the Launchkeys send CC and program change messages for more advanced control of external hardware.

In all, this is a very well-designed and well-priced mid-level controller. While, perhaps, the Launchkey range doesn't have an instant USP like the Launchpad Pro with its multitrack sequencer, the CV-equipped SL range or the tiny, ultra-portable Launchkey Mini, you'll be hard-pushed to find a better Live-centric keyboard, and there's little here not to recommend. **FM**

## FM VERDICT

# 8.8

**A well-built, well-designed keyboard that's great with Ableton Live, but handy for hardware control too**