



# K Multimedia iRig Keys 2 Mini €122

IK Multimedia deliver one of their dinkiest computer music-making keyboards, and it might be just what your mobile production needs

> The mini keyboard controller has been with us for many a year, but nowadays there seem to be more reasons than ever to own one. There's the rise of mobile music-making through your phone, iPad and laptop, of course. Or there's the lack of space after so much great hardware has infested your desktop. Or, mostly, it's the seemingly constant falling in price of most computer music accessories. The new iRig Keys 2 Mini is the latest in the iRig Keys range and seems to offer a low-cost solution no matter what reason you have ticked above.

## Rigging it

First, though, let's have a quick recap of the iRig Keys range as it can be a little confusing. iRig Keys 2 is the second range of IK's compact keyboard controller range. Keys 2 Mini is the smallest and cheapest, with 25 mini keys. Above it sits iRig Keys 2 (37 mini keys, €159) and iRig Keys 2 Pro (essentially the same as Keys 2 with proper keys and a €183 price tag). Two further iRig Keys models, I/O 25 (€244) and I/O 49 (€366) offer up the full-sized keys option plus full hi-res audio interface functionality. Keys 2 Mini then is very much the smallest of all options, but no slouch in functionality.

At 580g and just 324 x 139 x 54mm it's light and small enough to carry around, but not so light you'll end up pushing it around a desktop. It also features direct connection to iOS devices –

no connection kit needed – another mobile plus.

Controls include a headphone Volume dial (to control volume from your apps), plus Octave Up and Down buttons that also enter Edit Mode when held together. Here you can assign MIDI CCs to the controls, change MIDI channel, velocity sensitivity and much more using the actual keyboard keys to select parameters. There are also Prog Up Down buttons plus four assignable knobs over two banks (switchable with the 5-8 button), a Set button (to call up one of four Sets for different instruments or live sets) plus a useful assignable push-button Data knob.

## In use

The keyboard is not exactly a player's dream but nor is it the almost push-button affair that other companies have produced – it's solid and well sprung. There are no dedicated pitchbend and modulation dials and again 'proper' players might find this unforgivable, but if this is important there are workarounds when you dig deeper. And you do this with the Edit Mode, in which you'll have to get used to a certain set of key presses and data entries to make assignments. To change the MIDI CC per dial for example, enter Edit Mode, press the keyboard Knob button, then the number of the Knob you want to assign, Enter and the value. That's a lot of key presses, but it is easier than it sounds once you get used to it.

## Conclusion

We criticised the bigger iRig Keys 2 for being a tad expensive but this more compact version offers much of the functionality of that keyboard, over a smaller footprint, with the same sized keys. If you can live with less of them – and what's an octave versus portability – Keys 2 Mini represents a well-spec'd keyboard controller for less cash. So if you have any of those limitations we opened this review with, it checks all the boxes, and there's a decent software bundle (see box) too. **cm**

**Web** [ikmultimedia.com](http://ikmultimedia.com)

## Alternatively

### Novation Launchkey Mini £93

More of a DAW controller and excellent with Live. We looked at the bigger version last month

### Native Instruments M32 cm270 » 10/10 » £93

Gets you into the Komplete Kontrol arena for a minimal outlay. A spectacular package for the price

## Verdict

**For** Lots of features for the cash  
Decent build quality and playability  
Good software bundle  
MIDI I/O and audio output  
Editing becomes second nature...

**Against** ... but takes a little learning  
No pitch and mod wheels

Many of the features of its big sister – bar some keys and two dials – and for less cash. A very good control package

**8/10**

## Software please

**A controller purchase can be made or lost depending on the girth of the software bundle that comes with it. Novation and Native Instruments have the software pedigree to throw in a lot and IK Multimedia, of course, have that background too, so Keys 2 Mini comes with a good bundle. It's also one which straddles the formats that the keyboard can control. For iOS users you get SampleTank for iPhone/iPad – a cutdown version of IK's amazing ROMpler – plus some**

**fine piano sounds care of iGrand Piano and iLectric Piano. There's also another cutdown version of a great in the form of Steinberg's Cubasis LE. Desktop Mac and PC owners have the most, though. On top of their versions of SampleTank they get The Grid and five free sound libraries for it, plus 25 credits to spend at the IK shop. Android owners only get iGrand Piano and iLectric Piano. We'd have liked more third-party titles but it's a decent spread for the various formats.**