



Keith McMillen Instruments

# QuNeo

The most anticipated controller of the year is finally here. **Liam O'Mullane** explores going from 2D to 3D control...

## QuNeo

Manufacturer **Keith McMillen**

Instruments

Price **£200**

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**K**eith McMillen Instruments is a company with some very interesting products on the market. Before the QuNeo arrived, the SoftStep pedal had already caught our attention. This provides the regular options of selecting banks, programs and the usual other output data you'd expect from a MIDI floorboard. The unique aspect is the pressure sensitivity on each button. This enables creative control by keeping your foot on the pedal and pushing up and down for control over MIDI CCs.

It's this unique approach to design that's responsible for the highly anticipated QuNeo. First announced on Kickstarter, the funding required for production was \$15,000 – it finished at \$165,914, so we think it's not just ourselves interested here. Let's find out why this vibrant MIDI controller has so much interest buzzing around it.

## The third dimension

At first glance the QuNeo looks are unique in terms of lighting, but it could be overlooked as a regular drum pad controller. However, this is where the comparisons end, as pads, sliders, buttons and rotary encoders can all



output note, velocity and pressure sensitivity, truly earning it its name as a 3D Multi-Touch Pad Controller.

Each drum pad has four main zones which can be used in two modes. The first will divide a pad into four equal zones. This is called Grid Mode and transforms 16 pads into 64, like a Monome 64. This allows you to trigger

– great for those who might be ditching an older controller to use the QuNeo. Along with pressure sensitivity, the pads' X and Y location is also detected. We explored this by triggering a loop in Drum mode and set the X and Y location to latch. This prevents parameters jumping to a default value when you take your finger off. We explored this by triggering a loop in the QuNeo's Drum mode and set the X/Y detection on the pads to latch-on. This means the X/Y values last used when you remove your finger will stay in place, avoiding issues where values may snap back to a default number and cause a change in sound. We set X/Y control for resonance and cutoff on a filter. Pressure was set to control the amount of distortion being added, so the harder we pressed, the heavier and more aggressive the sound became. This is an epiphany moment as ideas start to flood through your mind – think of all the favourite effects you can control to make a sound live and breath through a performance.

## Sliding around

The larger fader at the bottom lends itself to work as a crossfader in a DJ context, but an added width control makes it unique from the eight smaller faders. By placing two fingers on the

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many more sounds but still offers velocity and pressure for each quartered section of the pad.

Drum mode sets a classic pad behaviour, with the whole area triggering one note and velocity. The response on these feel good and there's custom response and positional feel to emulate MPC machines, among others

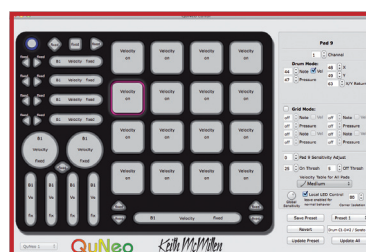
slider and using a pinch or expand gesture (as on a touch device), you can change another MIDI CC, which also latches in position when you start using one finger on the slider again. This lends itself to controlling parameters that can stay static for a while but be easily changed for another section in a performance as needed.

The two rotary controls are interesting as they can be used as jog dials. They repeatedly output highest and lowest CC values as you circle the pad and the repeat rate of this data increases with speed, giving you a dynamic rotary control. The rotary dials can be set to regular position detection as well if preferred.

Finally, rotary controls and sliders have four banks of preset output configuration to move between if you want to stay within one of the 16

## Key Features

- Great feel and response
- USB class-compliant for Windows and OSX
- Dimensions of an iPad
- Optional MIDI Expander offers hardware MIDI connectivity
- Lights can be triggered by MIDI sequences



Editing of parameters is done via the QuNeo Editor, which is simple to understand for customising your 16 stored presets. More can be stored on your computer if needed.

presets stored on the QuNeo. If you prefer, you can spread assignments across presets instead. The choice of either really depends on how much you want to work between different configurations of Drum and Grid Modes on the main pads.

### Templates and assignments

The included templates include Serato Scratch Live, Traktor, Battery, Logic, Reason and BeatMaker on the iPad, but we are using Ableton Live so we naturally jumped straight for the Clip Launching preset. This acts much like the dedicated APC40 or Launchpad Live controllers, letting you navigate around Live with a focus window for launching clips and scenes. Sends, channel volume, crossfader and transport controls are all here, and after a little practice the QuNeo feels quite natural to use for this purpose. A

second mode turns the QuNeo into a 16-step sequencer for triggering a Drum Rack or Impulse device. The bonus is that the notes are input directly into MIDI clips, letting you input drum programming without needing your computer screen – an excellent tool for jamming live or in the studio. A third mode allows for a musical step input as well for those who like to program melodies this way.

### The belly of the beast

We must admit that with the QuNeo it took us a while to start getting our heads around its huge amount of MIDI output per control – we just aren't used to planning how a single control can manipulate so many parameters, and it takes a moment to plan things. The QuNeo editor makes customising the device very easy, and assigning one parameter at a time to your software is

### Measuring Up

As this is a first of its kind there's no direct comparison. There are plenty of drum controllers around and the Korg PadKONTROL (£179) offers pads, a few dials and a single X/Y pad. The other option could be to go for any drum pad controller and bring an Apple iPad (£399) into the equation along with a MIDI controlling app. This hikes up the price, though, takes more setting up and requires a lot more space both on tabletop and in a bag.



assisted by the Controller Mapping Assistant (CoMA). The only element that may not be included here is the user's ability. There's a new level of control available through this device which we feel is the start of a new era in digital music control. We're interested to see how users decide to wield it. **MTM**

### MTM Verdict

#### WHY BUY

- + A new level of control
- + Easy to program and understand

#### WALK ON BY

- Not for those who don't want to get stuck in with MIDI control

*It's nice to find something that's so revolutionary, powerful and unique at an affordable price. We can heartily recommend it.*



/// A new era in **digital music control**. We're interested to see how **users decide to wield it** ///

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