

KETRON MIDJAY

ARRANGER SOUND MODULE

A metronome click comes from a dedicated 1/4" output on the side panel, so you can put it in your or a fellow musician's headphones, but leave it out of the audience's mix.

A video (VGA) connection on rear panel is for sending lyrics to external monitor.

Ample 192 x 80 backlit LCD display is bright enough for dimly-lit clubs.

Rotary dial for quickly scrolling through menus is well-placed and big enough to operate with one hand while jotting down song requests with the other.

The arranger section layout is efficient, and allows for quick recall of songs from stored playlists. Playlists can combine MP3, WAV, and MIDI files.

Lead mute feature can remove lead vocals from recordings and parts of MIDI files — an interesting addition to the Midjay's karaoke abilities.

Easy to use mixer section has a separate slider control for each audio source.

Play and record section allows user to play, pause, and stop file playback, and record performances instantly while playing (including vocals if a microphone is connected).

Live audio and MIDI player/arranger module with karaoke functions and audio file handling.

PROS ▲
Onboard audio recording and playback. Arranger functions and voices are excellent. Comes loaded with hundreds of song styles and files.

CONS ▼
After file transfer from computer, USB cable must be unplugged for Midjay to play files. On the pricey side.

\$2,167
 Ketrone
www.ketrone.com

Keyboard Magazine

By Ed Coury | September, 2007

KETRON MiDJay Arranger Sound Module

If band members are the infantry in the battle to survive the live music scene, then solo performers are the special forces. Without a squad of fellow players to keep the beat and provide the necessary instrumental firepower, these so-called “power singles” work alone — achieving their objectives armed only with the equipment they haul to a club or wedding. In the past, their arsenal has been diverse: arranger keyboards, devices that play MIDI or even CDs, tapes, or iPods to provide the backup necessary for a single performer to please the crowd. Ketron, an Italian company known for its arranger keyboards, is entering the U.S market with the Midjay, a module that strives to be the solo performer’s secret weapon. Our mission: to see if it’s up to the task.files,

OVERVIEW

The Midjay is actually several devices in one. It offers all of the features of a top-notch arranger keyboard, with a wide variety of intros, fills, breaks, and endings, all of which you can cue and control with an optional multi-switch foot pedal. The Midjay comes with hundreds of sounds stored as presets, and additional voices pre-loaded on the internal 20GB hard drive can be loaded into preset memory as well. It even has the ability to play Arabic scales. Make a connection to a keyboard controller or MIDI-equipped guitar, and you’re good to go for solo performance. Need a device to play MIDI, WAV, or MP3 files? The Midjay can get the job done, and it comes with a plethora of files. It can also record your performances, including vocals. The Midjay also functions as a karaoke machine, with the ability to display lyrics embedded in MIDI files on a video monitor — a “lead mute” function is designed to remove lead vocals from most audio files. Plug in a mic, and you can utilize a 3-band equalizer, reverb, and delay effects. An optional vocalizer board provides up to three voices of vocal harmony, which you can play from a keyboard, or control with a MIDI vocalist track.

IN USE

One of the Midjay’s best features is its intuitive layout. Anyone who has used a CD player should be able to plug it into an amp and play its pre-loaded files. Dedicated sliders set volume levels for each type of audio or MIDI file the Midjay can play, as well as the external mic and line inputs. Pressing the button at the top of each slider generates a menu on the display — for example, the one above the MP3 slider shows a list of all available MP3 files. Use the selection knob or cursor buttons to choose a file, hit the enter button, and the file plays instantly. There is virtually no delay when going from one file to another, regardless of format. A cool feature for smooth transitions between songs is the crossfade function. While one file is playing, select another and hit the crossfade button. When you’re ready for the next selection, pressing play activates an automated fade-out of the file that’s running, and fades in the new one. Two files of different types can play at once, and there’s a dedicated output for a metronome click. Loading files from a computer is a drop-and-drag delight. After establishing a USB connection, both my MacBook Pro and desktop Windows PC recognized the Midjay as an external storage device,

displaying a folder listing files stored on the module. Playing newly-loaded files from the module requires a manual disconnect of the USB cable — not a huge problem, but a minor annoyance if you want to load and audition several files in one sitting.

Connecting a MIDI controller to the Midjay results in a setup that rivals the best arranger keyboards available today. The sound set is more than adequate: 280 voices are stored in the Midjay's internal memory, and another 20 are on its hard drive. Woodwind and organ tones are standouts. Using the arranger features (intros, fills, endings, selecting song styles, and so on) is as easy as it gets. The Midjay's groove feature allows you to swap the rhythm selected for a particular song with another, e.g. something with a Latin groove for a hip-hop beat, and yes, there is a tap tempo feature. The "lead mute" function reduced lead vocal levels by about 90 percent on the WAV files I used to test it, which is more than enough for a sing-along. In fact, for karaoke, it's desirable to leave a faint amount of original vocal in the song as a guide for nervous singers.

I put the Midjay in the hands of hardworking power single Ron Devon. He's in demand nationwide as a solo entertainer for restaurant chains like Cheeseburger in Paradise and Bahama Breeze. Ron found a couple of the Midjay's features to be especially useful. First, he creates MIDI files in Apple Logic Pro 7, and notes that the MIDI players he's used can't play Logic's proprietary files. But, by re-recording those files as MP3 audio and storing them on the Midjay, he now has all the live accompaniment he needs, and it sounds exactly the way he recorded it, with no substitution of sounds. He also liked the way the Midjay automatically detects and displays any lyrics that are embedded in his MIDI files.

CONCLUSIONS

For solo performers playing a variety of musical styles, the Midjay is the bomb. It provides a full set of arranger keyboard features which, when connected to a keyboard controller or MIDI guitar, serves up some of the best one-man band sounds on the market. The music a solo entertainer's audience wants to hear in 2007 involves much more than drums, piano, strings, and bass backing a vocal melody. Hip-hop, nu metal, emo, and other styles utilize sounds and techniques that old-school "power single" machines can't provide, but thanks to its ability to load MP3 and WAV files, that's where the Midjay shines. The drum loops and grooves, mixing and mashing of audio files, and the ability to host a karaoke show all combine to give solo artists more than they've ever had in one device, in a very portable package.

CLAIM CHECK

Ketron tells us, "The Midjay is a high-quality live and studio music player with an amazing wide range of features: WAV recording, realistic voices, an arranger section, a drum machine, and more. The intuitive layout of the Midjay — with eight sliders, 40 buttons, and a scroll wheel — ensures quick access to all features and stored media. A 20GB hard drive stores 500 stereo WAV files, 5,000 MP3 files, or 200,000 MIDI files. A powerful search engine and USB connection make transferring and finding files a breeze. The Midjay also has a wide variety of General MIDI sounds, preset voices, sound effects, drum sets, and live drum loops. Arranger functions can be assigned and controlled using an optional footswitch or MIDI keyboard, accordion, or guitar controller. The Midjay also offers excellent connectivity, and it's compact and rugged for a lifetime of pro usage."

JARGON JOCKEY

Arranger:

A keyboard or sound module with automatic accompaniment, including drums, bass, and various instrument parts. These styles follow your playing and can respond to full or simplified chord fingerings

Styles:

Types of accompaniment created for particular genres of music, such as rock, country, swing, polka, etc.

Loop:

A small audio sample that's repeated continuously.

SMF:

A MIDI file format that will play back consistently on devices that support SMF playback. Type 0 contains one track with different parts delineated by MIDI channel number. Type 1 contains separate tracks for each part.

VITAL STATS

INTERNAL SOUNDS 300.

INTERNAL STYLES 206.

MIDI CONNECTORS In, out, thru.

STORAGE 20GB hard drive, 3.5" floppy drive.

USB CONNECTOR For file transfer and MIDI communication.

AUDIO OUTPUTS 1/4" unbal. L/Mono and R, 1/4" mic out, 1/4" stereo headphone out, 1/4" click track out.

AUDIO INPUTS 1/4" microphone, RCA L and R line in.

CONTROL PEDAL IN 15-pin connector for optional arranger function pedal.

VIDEO OUTPUT VGA connector for monitor.

POWER SUPPLY External, 5 VDC.

OPTIONAL ACCES Vocalizer board, \$225; 13-pedal footswitch, \$230; 6-pedal footswitch, \$145.

DIMENS/WEIGHT 12.5" W x 8.7" D x 4.5" H; 7 lbs.