

Native Instruments Traktor Kontrol S2 Mk3 £249

NI's entry-level controller is now more portable than ever, says **Si Truss**

CONTACT WHO: Native Instruments **WEB:** native-instruments.com **KEY FEATURES** Controller for Traktor Pro 3 and Traktor DJ 2. **I/O:** 2x Stereo output, RCA & 3.5mm jack, 1X 3.5mm headphone out, 1/4-inch mic in, 2x USB: host computer + bus power/iOS. **Dimensions:** 486 x 265 x 59mm





THE PROS & CONS



Works seamlessly with either a laptop or iPad

Well laid out and easy to use

Mix directly from SoundCloud with Traktor DJ



Mixer FX sacrifices depth for simplicity

Not enough compatibility between Traktor Pro 3 and Traktor DJ 2

Seeing as it's lacking the fascinating 'haptic' technology of the Kontrol S4, it's easy to dismiss the latest version of NI's entry-level

Traktor controller as just another budget DJ device. However, taken alongside two updated versions of the Traktor software, there's actually a lot to like about this latest mixing tool.

The core feature set of the S2 Mk3 is similar to that of Mk2; as before, it features two jogwheels flanking two mixer channel strips. As is standard for modern controllers, below each jogwheel sits a bank of performance pads used for working with cue points, samples and Traktor's Remix decks. There are updates from the previous hardware though: the jogwheels themselves are bigger (though not motorised), and the deck layouts are now identical, like a set of CDs, as opposed to the mirrored layout of the previous incarnation.

The bank of effect rotaries has been removed from the controller's top edge too, replaced with a pair of Mixer FX controls. This is a noticeable step down in complexity terms – the Mixer FX lack any real customisation, instead offering simple 'one knob' tools designed to be used in any situation. While more experienced users will find this limiting, beginners and those looking for a quick tool to play house parties and small events will appreciate the simplicity.

Beginners will appreciate the simplicity

It's this latter category of user that the S2 is clearly aimed at. Mk3 is smaller and significantly lighter than its predecessor. It's also designed specifically to work cross platform, and is fully compatible with both the full version of the recently-updated Traktor 3 (a licence for which is included in the price) and the new free Traktor DJ app that runs across PC, Mac and iPad (with an Android version in the pipeline).

Use with both versions is seamless. One nice touch is the USB input for iOS devices, so you can connect an iPad via its standard cable, rather than requiring a specialised lead from NI. Traktor DJ also boasts integration with SoundCloud Go+, meaning users can mix streamed tracks on the fly, which works pleasingly smoothly. Traktor DJ adds a track recommendation feature that will, again, appeal to beginners and casual users.

The main drawback to the S2, however, is that it's currently caught between these two applications. Traktor DJ works great with an iPad but it is a free app and, as you'd expect, lacks many of the advanced features of Traktor Pro 3. While

Traktor DJ can be used cross-platform, is seems pretty silly to use it on PC/Mac when a licence to the Pro software comes bundled.

Unfortunately, there's not quite enough compatibility between these two versions right now – but the option to seamlessly sync libraries, metadata and cue points across both versions would resolve this. Failing that, it feels like NI should fully commit the S2 to Traktor DJ by adding an expanded pro version for hardware owners.

This quibble aside though, as a highly portable, seamlessly usable controller for casual DJs, the S2 is a great option at a keen price. **FM**

FM VERDICT

7.9

A well-designed and easy-to-use DJ controller with a lot to offer casual users