

Test report: Hammond XK-1c

Firstclass portable organ





DATA

PRICE € 1.395

KEYS 61, Waterfall

DISPLAY LCD, 2 x 20 characters

POLYPHONIE 61 (organ), 63 (pipe organ),
8 (pedal)

SOUNDS 2 x VASE III (digital drawbar
organ), Vox and Farfisa simulations, digital
pipe organ (9 stops)

EFFECTS Vibrato/Chorus, Overdrive, Reverb
(11), multi effects (8), 3-band master EQ,
3-band EQ + Tone, Leslie simulation (8
preset + 8 user)

PATCHES 64 presets + 64 user

CONNECTIONS Headphones, Line Out (jack,
L/R), Leslie (8 pin), footswitch, expression
pedal, MIDI in/out, USB flash drive

DIMENSIONS/WEIGHT
37.5"(W) x 11"(D) x 3"(H), 16.5 lbs

INFO www.hammond.eu, www.hammond.de



Test summary: perfect sound.
In addition to the well-chosen
factory settings, users also have
the possibility of creating their
own sound..

HAMMOND XK-1C

Pure organ feeling

Hammond promises pure organ delight with the XK-1c. A classic look with wooden elements and modern digital technology coming together within the smallest of spaces. And the sophisticated sound generator that is expected to keep organists happy for many years to come is available for the surprisingly low price of 1,300 euros. So how does the instrument stack up in practice?



96 digital tonewheels operate in the two VASE III tone generators. They either create pure tones or more or less “roughen” these tones to emulate the sound pattern of legendary analogue organs.

Why buy a clone if you can have the original? That’s the question Hammond wants musicians to ask themselves, recently with the stage all-rounders of the SK series and now with the stage-only XK-1c organ. For a retail price of around 1,300 euros you get a compact and lightweight instrument which exudes the necessary retro charm with its wooden side panels to do this major brand name justice. We tested whether feel and sound match the looks.

■ Outfit

The Hammond XK-1c, also referred to as the “Rock Baby” by Michael Falkenstein, Managing Director of Hammond Germany, is not even 40 inches wide, but still has side panels made of genuine wood which have always been one of the key characteristics of Hammond stage organs. Classic and understated in its design, it doesn’t seem quite as heavy or old as its predecessor model, the XK-1, thanks to a more compact structure and a more modern surface design. The keyboard’s muted shade of white, reminiscent of ivory, and the drawbar provide a trendy vintage effect.

The design of the user interface, buttons and controls shows that the manufacturer has continued the development philosophy of the SK keyboards. On the left-hand side you’ll find everything you need for live sound sculpting: the nine drawbars along with the selection buttons, what part (upper, lower or pedal) the patch is for, the Vibrato/Chorus button, the Leslie button, a knob for Overdrive and the Volume control knob. A Tone knob would have been nice, but this function can only be found in the menu.

Menu pages are shown on the LC display in two rows with 20 characters each. Values are modified using the Value knob or Plus/Minus button. Arrow buttons which are set up as a second function of the Favorite buttons are used for navigation. In play mode the buttons can be used for quickly selecting preset patches. The usually more menu-oriented section of the user interface also contains the Percussion selection buttons. Not quite consistent from a content point of view, but certainly a good solution from a space point of view. **The back offers everything that can be expected from a stage organ.** Along with headphone, line in and line out jacks, there is also an 8-pin Leslie



output that can be used to connect an 8-pin Leslie cabinet or a Hammond adapter for other types of connector. In addition, there are jacks for an expression pedal and a footswitch. Alternatively, the Hammond CU-1 half-moon switch can be connected to it. MIDI in/out can be used for connecting other devices and the USB-to-device interface enables patches and device setups to be backed up to USB sticks. A USB-to-host interface would also be desirable which would allow the XK-1c to be connected straight to a desktop or tablet PC such as Apple's iPad. A USB recorder which saves the performances as audio files on USB sticks or which could serve as a play-along player would also be a good addition.

■ Sound

The Hammond XK-1c's sound generation system provides six different types of organ: tonewheel sound, two transistor organ sounds à la Vox and Farfisa as well as a pipe organ. The central tonewheel sound comes in three different types and, on top of that, a number of different settings that allow for various sound characteristics – from old and noisy to young and clean.

96 digital tonewheels operate in the two VASE III tone generators. They either create pure tones or more or less “roughen” these tones to emulate the sound pattern of legendary analogue organs. The key click which simulates the smacking noise of the nine electric key contacts of analogue instruments is among the characteristic sound elements. There is an attack click when each key is pressed and a release click. The volume can be adjusted.

But that's not all. If the Hammond BType1/2 and Mellow presets are not enough you can put together a custom tonewheel set which allows you to set the volume for each virtual tonewheel in relation to the other tonewheel volumes. In the analogue equivalent the distance between the tonewheel and the pickup would need to be taken into account. Leakage noise which can be defined as crosstalk between adjacent tonewheels can be set for each tonewheel using a low-pass filter. The high-pass filter settings control the amount of simulated motor noise. The resonance parameter controls the amplification of higher frequencies around the low-pass filter. That's how a tonewheel's tone colour can be varied from hard



The back offers what can be expected from a stage organ. Along with headphone, line in and line out jacks, there is also an 8-pin Leslie output that can be used to connect an 8-pin Leslie cabinet or a Hammond adapter for other types of connector.

to soft. There are a number of YouTube videos in which American organist Jim Alfredson shows the subtle changes needed to match the sound of modern Hammond organs to that of analogue models with finesse.

However, you won't have to do anything of the sort because the XK-1c already sounds fantastic straight from the box. Something that deserves a fair amount of praise is that small stage organs have all the same setting options as large ones. The two transistor sounds Vx and Farf are important additions for stage keyboarders and are also patched via the nine drawbars. That's how the whole pop and rock portfolio can be handled with one stage organ. Pipe organs have a very pleasing sound too, although they obviously go in a completely different direction. But apparently there are musicians who play both in clubs and at church.

■ Effects

The effects section is also a decisive factor so the Hammond sounds like a Hammond. It not only includes Vibrato, Chorus and the obligatory Leslie simulation but also Overdrive, Reverb and several multi effects. 3-band EQ and the 3-band master EQ are also provided.

The digital Scanner Vibrato and Chorus effects can be applied in three typical stages and can be allocated separately to the upper and lower manuals (or the upper/lower split zones). A new mix parameter can be found in the menu which allows for mixing Chorus and Vibrato at variable ratios and creating an interesting sound effect as a result.

Hammond developers have taken a whole lot of trouble particularly with the Leslie effect. The result is simulations of a type 122 and a type 147 vintage model. In fact, the sound of these simulations has once more been improved a great deal so external equipment is hardly missed. However, even the best of simulations doesn't get close to the physical experience of a genuine Leslie speaker. Instead, the XK-1c has the necessary connections so everyone can get what they're looking for. If a Leslie is connected to the 8-pin socket the internal simulation is automatically switched off. Sound hobbyists will certainly also look forward to the possibility of experimenting with various parameters of the Leslie simulation.

With the help of the Overdrive control the organ sound can be "roughened" to create a warm to edgy sound. When applying harsh distortion slight corrections using the equalizer are recommended. It's not only here that the Tone control in the menu proves to be valuable, and many a user will miss the predecessor model's separate Tone knob. **Multi effects, ranging from standards such as delay effects to exotic sounds such as ring modulators, round off the various possibilities** and keep all options from classic to space sounds open.

■ Practice

You can unpack the Hammond XK-1c, plug it in and start playing straight away. As far as the tone-wheel sound is concerned, the whole repertoire is immediately available. The drawbars run smoothly and the buttons for the most important functions such as Percussion, Vibrato/Chorus and Leslie control are large enough and offer pleasant tactile feedback. Menus can be accessed easily and parameters can be changed quickly by means of button shortcuts. An organ model can be selected by simultaneously pressing the buttons for the upper, pedal and lower parts. The drawbar configurations are printed above and below the faders.

The Hammond XK-1c offers two times 64 patches so that settings don't have to be entered again and again. 64 are factory presets which provide a very good overview of the variety of the instrument's sounds. There is also space for 64 customised settings. Eight patches – either factory or customised settings – can be saved to the Favorite buttons underneath the display.

You shouldn't be confused by the Play and Record buttons. They're not allocated to a player, but are menu and saving options. The Play button is used to navigate from the menu pages to the main display where for example the current drawbar positions for the upper and lower manuals and the pedal are shown. So Play simply means play mode. The Record button can be used to save settings as a patch.

■ Conclusion

Buying a Hammond XK-1c can definitely be recommended. While a stage piano or the average workstation needs to be replaced after around five years because the sonic possibilities have chan-

ged and you know all the peculiarities of your own piano samples all too well, investing in a Hammond XK-1c is the route to longer lasting satisfaction. Once you have found your Hammond sound – either out-of-the-box or with your own custom settings – you just need to let your own playing style unlock the organ’s secrets. In any case, the instrument’s abilities are outstanding and they’re ready to be explored from the second week of October 2013.

Ulrich Simon 

RATING

HAMMOND XK-1C Stage organ

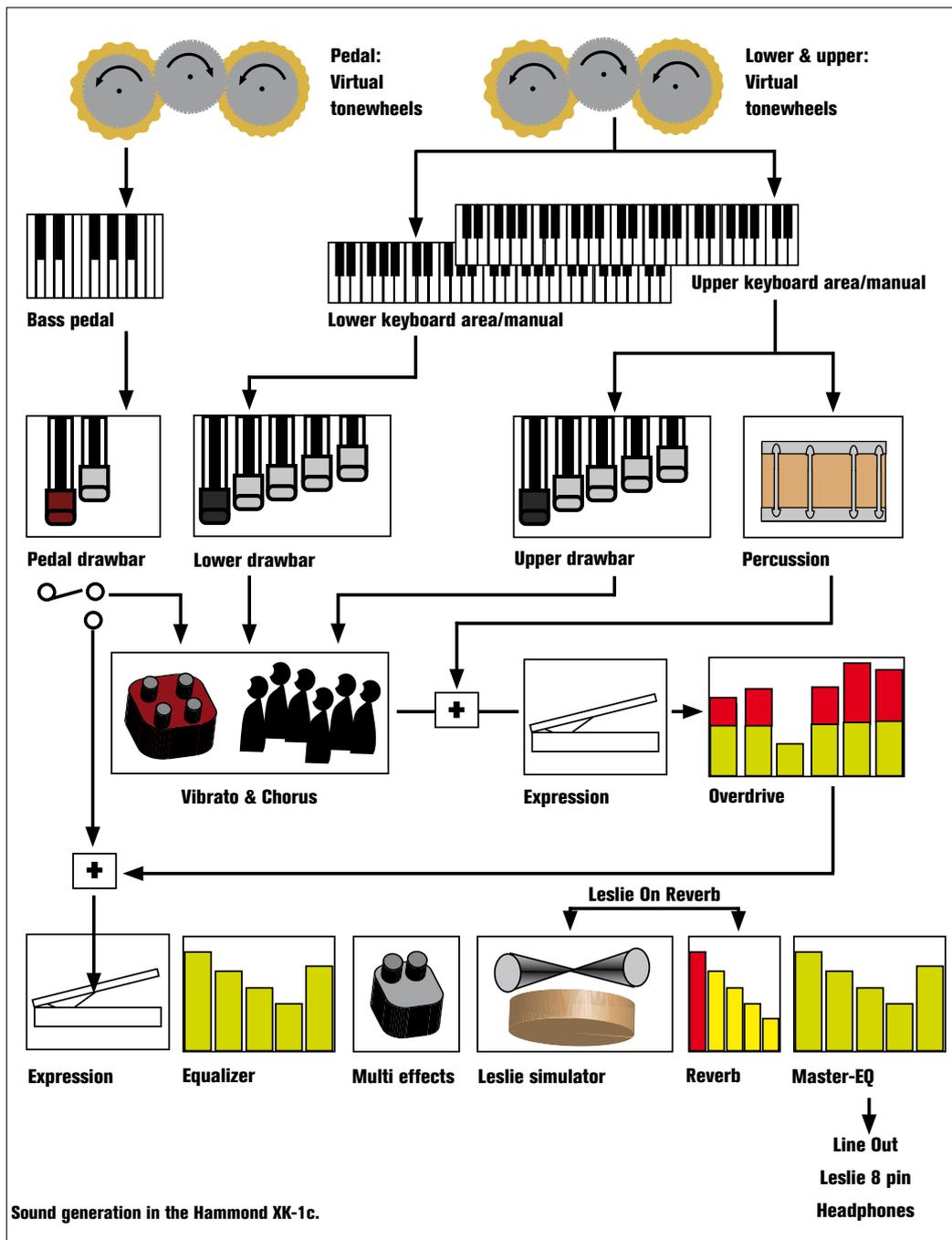
- ⊕ Compact dimensions, light weight

- ⊕ First-class organ sound

- ⊕ Various sound-editing possibilities

- ⊕ Enhanced Leslie simulation

- ⊖ No USB MIDI



HAMMOND

THE SOUND THE SOUL THE ONE



Das neue Hammond 'Rock-Baby' ersetzt das Vorgänger Modell Hammond XK-I



Hammond Orgel pur

The Sound, The Soul, The One, für nur € 1.395,- (UVP inklusive MwSt.)

Die neue Hammond XK-1c (compact)

Highlights:

- Neue Gestaltung der Bedienoberfläche
- Gehäuse innerhalb verstärkt durch neue Aluminium-Struktur
- Retro Look Seitenteile aus Holz
- Sehr solide Verarbeitung
- Extrem kompakt
- Geringes Gewicht (nur 7,5 Kg !!)
- 61 'Waterfall' Tasten für die beste 'Hammond Touch Response' - hochwertiges Spielgefühl, gute Ansprache
- Echte mechanische Zugriegel
- 64 Preset-Patches enthalten eine einzigartige Sammlung der bekanntesten und meist verwendeten Hammond Orgel Einstellungen
- 64 Benutzer-Patches
- Custom Tonewheel Set: Hier lässt sich für jedes virtuelle Tonrad einstellen wie laut es im Verhältnis zu den anderen sein soll
- Umfangreiche Anpassungsmöglichkeiten für jeden Musik Stil
- Digital Scanner Vibrato: Ein neuer Mix-Parameter, der es erlaubt, Chorus und Vibrato in variablen Verhältnissen zu mischen und so einen interessanten Klangeffekt zu erzielen
- Ausserordentliche Leslie Simulation einschliesslich Vintage-Modelle vom Typ 122 und 147
- Transistor Sounds wie Vox- & Farfisa-Orgeln sowie hochwertige Pfeiffenorgel-Einzelsamples runden das Sound-Set ab

Hammond XK-1c, warum eine Kopie kaufen wenn man das Original haben kann?!

HAMMOND SUZUKI EUROPE B.V. Ir. D. S. Tuynmanweg 4A, 4131 PN Vianen, The Netherlands
Tel. (0031) 347-370594 - Fax. (0031) 347-370621 - info@hammond.eu - www.hammond.eu