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POK Foot Controller

Review by James Lumb

The Pok foot controller was designed as a wireless foot controller for digital audio workstations, but I think it's a great addition to any computer setup. Designed with music in mind, this tough machine features 8 stomp box-style pedals that can be used to control almost any software program. Pok is wireless and runs on batteries. The unit includes a USB dongle that plugs into your computer for wireless connectivity.

Pok is about the size of a computer keyboard, and constructed out of sturdy silver and black metal with tough black plastic pedals. Each one of the pedals has two small clear plastic label windows, which cover changeable paper labels. Pok was designed for musicians so they can turn on and off effects and control sequencers, but I found it useful for a variety of other applications including Photoshop and iTunes. Each of the 8 pedals can mimic a key on the computer's keyboard, so I immediately programmed it to

run iTunes with pedals assigned to volume up, volume down, and track advance so that when I'm working I don't have to stop what I'm doing to change the volume of the music, I just tap the pedal with my feet.

The central idea of Pok is to free your hands for other things—like playing guitar,

the computer keyboard, clicking ctrl, alt, and shift to modify the drawing tools. With Pok, you can do this with your feet, which can really take a lot of repetitive stress off of your body. I used the Pok with a Wacom Cintiq tablet, which allows you to abandon the mouse completely and use a pen to control the tools and the

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drums, or DJing. One frustrating thing that musicians encounter while recording is simply starting and stopping computers with an instrument in your hands. It's maddening to turn on the recorder, jump to your instrument, tripping over cables, all while listening and counting in to catch the first bar. Yikes! Pok can be placed up to 30 feet away from the dongle, eliminating long wires and buried cables.

Pok can mimic the control, alt, delete, and function keys used by most software. If you're working on Photoshop and you've got one hand on the mouse and the other hand on

Pok instead of the computer function keys. Nuendo, Photoshop, and iTunes were more productive. It's amazing because when you eliminate the mouse and control keys, the work flows faster and more comfortably.

Although Pok has eight foot pedals, each pedal can represent three different functions with a maximum 21 unique commands per set. Seven of the pedals contain commands, while the eighth pedal is used like a shift key. A single foot click recalls one setting, while double footclicks recall another. Using the eighth pedal as a function key enables the third set of commands, which are activated by pressing the FN foot pedal, followed by any other pedal. A software app is included for customizing the foot controller with pre-programmed setups for Pro Tools, Cubase, Sonar, and Ableton Live. Making your own setups is easy, and you can save and recall your foot pedal settings.

This is a terrific new gadget aimed at the music community that may find its way into the arts, publishing, and gaming quickly. It seems too good for just music.

