



Quick Pick: X-Tempo Pok

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The X-Tempo Pok is a wireless footswitch controller that allows hands-free operation of your DAW. The unit supports up to 22 commands in a single profile and can operate within a range of approximately 30 feet.

The X-Tempo Pok (\$479) is a foot controller designed for controlling DAWs. Foot control for recording isn't a new idea—people have used footswitches to punch in and out while recording themselves for years. However, a product with the flexibility and great design of the Pok is indeed something new and exciting.

What makes the Pok especially unique is that rather than communicating with your computer via MIDI, it emulates a computer keyboard and sends keystrokes instead. It's fully programmable, so you can control any function that can be accessed via shortcut keys. Even better, it's wireless, so you're free to use it in your vocal booth or just about anywhere you choose.

Pok Petite

The main unit is small, measuring only 12 inches by 7 inches, and has eight switches, three LEDs, and nothing else; not even a power switch. The Pok runs on 3 AA batteries, and because it operates like a computer keyboard, draws no power unless a switch is being pressed. The Pok feels very well made, although I wouldn't recommend stomping on it like you would your guitar pedals. Communication with the computer is done via the USB module, which is about the size of a standard memory stick.

The Pok has been cleverly designed to pack a lot of functionality into a very small space. Each switch can send different commands for single and double presses, and switch 8 can be configured as a "function" switch, making a third set of commands available to the other seven switches. This makes a total of 22 commands available from a single profile.

Out of the box, the Pok is configured for Pro Tools, but profiles for additional applications are included, and more are available for download on the X-Tempo Web site. To load one of these profiles or program your own from scratch, you'll have to use the included Pok Editor software (Mac/Win). When my Pok arrived I was in the midst of preparing for a gig where I'd be using Ableton Live to record guitar loops on the fly, so I immediately set out to turn the Pok into a customized controller for Live.

Get to Work!

Working with the editor was easy. The main screen displays a graphical representation of the unit, each switch indicating the functions it's been programmed to perform. Double-clicking on a switch opens the Key Editor, which allows you to capture the keystrokes you want transmitted. Once you've programmed the switches, the profile is sent to the Pok by clicking on the Write button. My only gripe with the editor was that the Save function always prompts you to enter a name for the profile, so overwriting the current profile takes extra typing or mouse clicks.

On the gig, the Pok worked flawlessly. Because any key can be mapped to just about any function in Live, the Pok was a natural match for it. I used the bottom four switches to trigger loop recording in four different tracks, and configured the double-press for each of my loop switches to send the Backspace key to delete the loop I was currently recording.

In the studio, the small footprint and wireless communication made the Pok very convenient to use. The manufacturer specifies that the unit has a range of 30 feet, and in practice I found the connectivity to be excellent. There wasn't a single place in my one-bedroom apartment where the Pok couldn't communicate with the computer.

X-Tempo also offers the Pok Switcher application as a free download, which allows you to use a switch to transmit a new profile to the Pok and simultaneously switch to a different application on the computer. This can then be used to turn your Pok into a multi-application controller or to configure up to four banks of controls for a single application.

The only thing that may scare potential users away from the Pok is its list price of \$599 (\$479 MAP), which to some people is going to sound like an awful lot for a footswitch. As always, however, the value of a thing is very much relative to your need for it. If you're regularly recording yourself and need your hands free to play your instrument, the Pok could quickly become an invaluable tool, especially given that you can configure it to control the functions that you use most frequently.

Value (1 through 5): 4

X-Tempo Designs

www.x-tempozone.com