Exclusive details about Akai’s MPC Sample Key

Akai teased its new MPC Sample Key on Instagram earlier this week, and said it plans to open-source its software so the modding community can hack it to their hearts’ delight. While there’s no word yet on when the device will launch or how much it will cost, *The Verge* has received exclusive images of the upcoming instrument that offer some details about its feature set.

While the Sample Key shares many of the same controls as the MPC Sample – including the three context-sensitive encoders, a large main encoder – it seems designed for pitched sample playback, rather than chopping up drums. In fact, the “chop” button from the MPC Sample is missing entirely from the Sample Key.

The dedicated pitch and mod wheels are another clue there. But there are also buttons for changing the octave range of the 25-key keyboard, as well as ones labeled “chord” and “arp.” Presumably, those enable a chord playback mode and an arpeggiator. While using an arpeggiator to play back drum samples can be a fun way to create rhythms, it’s more commonly used for melodic and bass parts. And a chord mode would be basically useless for drums. Those options also appear to replace the chop function from the standard MPC Sample.

There also appears to be a dedicated looper that could be useful for live performance and layering sounds. And, instead of the Flex Beat effects from the original MPC Sample, there’s something called “Swarm.” Though what that is isn’t exactly clear at the moment.

Like the first entry in the Sample series, the Key has a built-in mic and speaker for all-in-one music production. While we haven’t gotten a glimpse at the back panel yet, the config options on the front suggest that, in addition to MIDI, the Sample Key will have CV outs for integrating with modular synths.

Correction October 30th: *The MPC Sample Key is 25 keys, not 37.*

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