

The CAVALCADE REVIEW

V-Console for Yamaha Tyros5, Tyros4 & CVP-709 £799.00
& Piano Shells for Digital Pianos from £750

by *Michael Wooldridge*

As Noddy Holder once shouted, "It's Chriistmaas!" Well, as I am writing this, it's nearly Christmas and today I'm looking at some extras that would make brilliant Christmas presents.

My first Christmas concert this year was a really special one, as the team at Llay Organ Society (near Wrexham) asked me to stage a proper Christmas Show for them. This was a joy, as I was able to recruit some of my showbiz friends to appear with me.

First of all there was Andante, a husband and wife multi-instrumental act who between them play something like 20 different instruments in their show and who have toured the world appearing on cruise ships for some 20 years before deciding it is good to be on dry land for a bit. They always bring the house down and, if you're a fan of Ken Dodd, you may have seen them with him, as he often books them for his tours.

Samara Stanton is what is known in the industry as a triple threat, as she can sing, dance and act, all to a wonderful standard. An experienced choreographer and producer herself, in recent years Samara has become my right-hand man on the production side of my theatre shows, so I really enjoyed this chance to feature her on stage again.

Last but not least was drummer Chaz McLeod, who is recently back from three years working on cruise ships, mostly sailing out of the USA, first as drummer and then, quite unusually for a percussionist, as Musical Director for the ship's band.

With all of this talent joining me on stage for the evening, I couldn't go wrong. We had a fabulous time and everyone in the audience seemed to love it, especially the segment I devised where Samara, Mark and Vee were dressed as a Christmas Tree, Christmas Pudding and Christmas Fairy to sing songs about their characters!

If you live anywhere near Wrexham, do pay a visit to Llay Organ Society. They have a good crowd, which makes for a nice atmosphere, and their numbers allow them to book the very best players. For details of their upcoming concert and members nights call Ron Jones on 01978 351 475.



The Llay Organ Society Christmas Show 2016 (photo Paul Crofts)

In fact, as we move into this New Year, do seek out any local organ and keyboard concert venues you have yet to visit and

go along to enjoy some good company and some live music. Also encourage friends to go along with you, as most of them will have no idea what they are missing!

I have recently become aware of a new firm called Steveway Pianos, who make piano shells, cases into which you can place the keyboard of your digital piano so that it looks smart. Pretty much any make of digital piano keyboard will fit in the opening provided. I can see a huge use for these for touring stage shows, where you want the grand or baby grand piano look on stage but it isn't practical to tour an acoustic instrument, and the good news is they aren't too heavy (20kg) but look lovely. I'm sure some people will also choose them for home use.



A Steveway Piano Shell

They come in white or black, with prices starting at £750, with only a slightly higher price for one with an opening lid section. For more information visit www.stevewaypianos.com



In October I was delighted to take my EL-700 up to the lovely Hellidon Lakes Hotel, near Daventry, to play a concert at the Yamaha Club Festival. Whilst there I met with fabulous organist John Beesley, who has recently launched his new V-Console for use with Yamaha's Tyros5 and Tyros4 keyboards and CVP-709 Clavinovas.

Going back many years now, alongside his stunning playing, John has always had a passion for finding out how the insides of the instruments work and then using his technical skills to do clever things with them.

The aim behind John's new V-Console was to create a true organ style instrument from a Yamaha Tyros5 and he really has achieved that aim. It allows us all to get more out of the leading Yamaha keyboards and, especially if you are an organist, you will really love how it makes setting up registrations both more flexible and easier.

I think we've probably all seen the excellent TRX Systems from Musicland, adding bass pedals and sometimes a second manual to Tyros so that it can be played more as an organ and be less reliant upon the automatic bass and backings. This system has proved hugely popular, especially as more and more preset registrations have become available to give us some really popular registrations.

The new V-Console gives us an easy to use way of creating our own registrations and also of getting more out of the Tyros or Clavinova, as it provides more traditional organ style tabs for turning sounds on and off whilst playing live.

When you purchase your V-Console, what you'll actually receive is a 10" touch-screen Tablet computer, loaded up

with all of the software you need, plus all of the connecting cables you'll need to join it to your Yamaha. It comes with a guide so you can set it up quickly and easily and, whilst we all do things at a different pace, it'll probably take you around a half an hour to get it all connected up the first time. You don't need any computer knowledge to set it up or to use it. It has been well designed to be straightforward and simple.

The result is staggering. If you have a TRX style set up, with two keyboards and bass pedals, the V-Console really does make it into an organ, like a Yamaha Electone, with much the same flexibility to select and mix sounds. It is quite remarkable. If you don't have that kind of setup, the extra voice parts and ease of use also make this a fabulous addition to those with just the main keyboard.

If you could see it first-hand I'm sure you would be able to use it in an instant but trying to describe things here may make it sound more complex than it is. I hope I can do some sort of justice here to explain just how easy it is.

The main page gives you eight different voices all available to you at the same time, with each voice clearly labelled, and these are in addition to the standard Tyros sounds, so using those as well you can have up to 12 voices playing at a time. Beneath the name of the voice there are boxes to select them to play on your Upper, Lower or Bass, just like turning tabs on or off on an older organ. To use a voice you simply touch the boxes under it for Upper, Lower or Bass. The box turns Orange to show it's now active. To deselect it you just touch it again and it goes back to being Blue.

What's better still is you can have them all on at the same time if you want! I realise this is unlikely to be useful but my point is that you can make some big sounds, bigger than on your original instrument, with far greater capacity to layer sounds.

I love that there are Sub-Octave and Octave Couplers, so,

for instance, you could take a String and using both couplers at once, when you play one note you will hear three notes at sound, where you play, the octave above and the octave below; this makes a very powerful and impressive sound.

It must be noted that these sound layers are on top of those you can already have on your keyboard. You can even have eight sets of drawbars going at one time, storing up to 128 preset drawbar combinations.

If you want to change one of the eight voices available to you, touch the Voices tab on screen and you will instantly arrive at a page displaying the main sound family headings, Pianos, Electric Pianos, Strings and so on. Touch the one you want and the screen changes to show a wide selection of voices to choose from. This saves you going through pages and pages of voices in the keyboard's main screen. To speed this process up even more, you can pop sounds into your own personal Favourites category, which is very handy.

The Tablet gives you access to all of the sounds in your Yamaha plus there are extra voices provided with it and you can also create and save your own from it.

This system is quick and easy to use in a live situation but it goes a step further because you can then save your sound combinations into a strip of Registration Memories at the bottom of the screen. These can either be numbered 1 to 8 or you can give them names. You can store up to 128 presets at one time, but then you can have a limitless number of presets through storing more and more sets of them, either on the Tablet or on a USB memory stick.

The V-Console works in tandem with your Yamaha, so when you change your V-Console presets, the

keyboard presets also change the panel settings.

You don't have to stick with the original sounds from your



Tyros, as the V-Console provides really simple but effective voice editing facilities. The touch screen makes it really easy to control Master Volume, Pan, Attack and Release, Brightness, Reverb and so on. You can also select the Key Range for each voice, the area of your keyboard on which it is active, so you can easily split up your keyboard to give many different sounds in different regions, or just let them all play all over, or mix and match, perhaps to suit a specific arrangement.



You can also set the Key Range for the Styles, the automatic accompaniment, which is really useful, as it means you can set perhaps just one octave of your lower manual to control the Style and use the rest of it just as a standard keyboard.



Another screen allows you to choose if sounds are Mono or Polyphonic, to set their Touch Sensitivity, useful for having some voices only play when you play more heavily, and also to adjust the Vibrato and quantity of DSP.

To help with setting things up, the V-Console comes complete with John's 'V-Console Showcase'. This is a collection of 120 registrations, which are intended to show off the capabilities of the V-Console and give users some good sounds to use instantly. These preset registrations are truly wonderful.

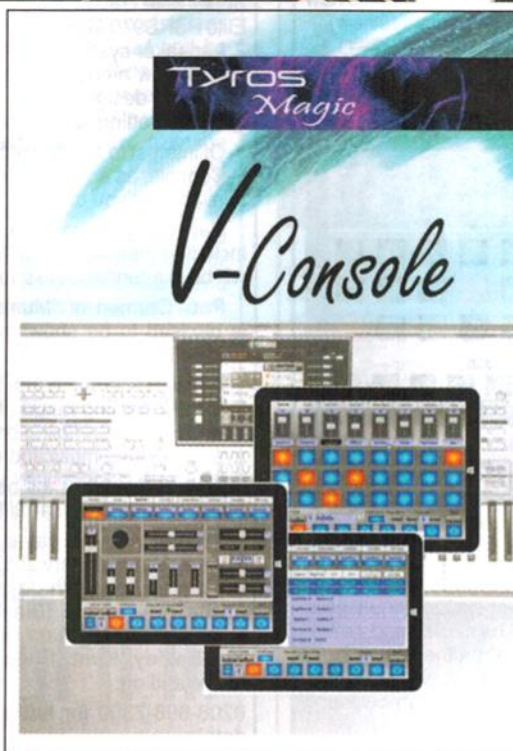
The banks vary slightly depending upon what you are using as your main keyboard. For example, the 'Theatre Organ' bank is only available on the Tyros5, and the Classical Organ bank is only available on the Tyros5 and CVP709. This is only because the Tyros4 doesn't have the right samples for these two. The rest include Big Band, Jazz, Classical Orchestra, Pops Orchestra, Famous Names 1 and Famous Names 2.

John has really thought things through, with the Registration

Banks duplicated so you have the option to have the Automatic Bass turned on if you don't have a pedalboard or, indeed, just want to let the keyboard Style do the work.

For people without the lower keyboard and/or pedals there is a separate file with the same settings that has been customised to work on one manual. For the Theatre Organ, Classical Organ, and Classical Orchestral banks John has used a 'Lowest Note' bass voice, which adds a pedal bass effect that isn't possible on the main keyboard as it stands and allows you to control the bass yourself and better facilitates playing without styles.

I heard many of the V-Console Showcase sounds and they are magnificent, perhaps most especially the organ sounds but also the other sounds, where they have been very carefully crafted to produce the very best sound possible.



I loved the V-Console when I saw it at the Yamaha Club Festival and I know John took a great many orders from those who also saw it there. It really seemed to turn the Tyros5 into an Electone in terms of depth of sound and the way of using it and playing that resulted from it. I think it's great.

One thing I must mention is that John himself had a stand that brought the V-Console Tablet up right alongside the keyboards and this seemed ideal. The standard package you will get doesn't include this but if I were you I would ask him to add one on for you, as it brings the Tablet to where it is easy to see and to use the Touch Screen.

For more information & to place your order visit www.TyrosMagic.com