

Small, portable, and iPad-friendly, the Simmons Stryke6 puts six pads and two pedals under your hands and feet at a budget price.



SIMMONS

Stryke6

A LOW-COST IPAD CONTROLLER YOU HIT WITH STICKS

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STRENGTHS

Low price. Includes 30-pin and Lightning cables. Long battery life. General MIDI compatibility.

LIMITATIONS

Unreliable iPad app connectivity with power cable attached. Short iPad cables. The casing can trigger pads when hit. False triggering when a pad is hit too hard.

Simmons Stryke6: \$299.99 MSRP, \$129.99 street
simmonsdrums.net

The wealth of iPad music apps for musicians and producers has led to an influx of compatible music hardware. One such device is the Simmons Stryke6 drum pad, a plug-and-play iPad controller that also connects to computers via USB.

The Stryke6 includes cables with Lightning and 30-pin iPad connectors, a USB power cable for charging the internal battery, and a USB cable for sending MIDI to a computer as well as drawing USB bus power. Strangely, the controller had problems connecting to iPad apps when its power cable was also plugged in.

The Stryke6 supports the iPad 2 and later running iOS 6 or higher. The fully charged internal battery worked for more than six hours with an iPad connected. (Note that the Stryke6 does not supply power to the iPad, itself.)

The six rubberized, velocity-sensitive pads are meant for playing with sticks, and you're encouraged to use the small plastic one that come with the unit. If you use full-size drumsticks and hit the pads very hard, you might trigger neighboring pads. You can also play it with fingers and hands, though the pads are not as responsive as dedicated finger-pad controllers. Colored lights around the pads illuminate when you strike them, and LEDs indicate when you use the two included foot pedals.

The Stryke6 has four rubber feet for tabletop use and is about the size and weight of a 13-inch Macbook. The controller, pedals, and cables will easily fit inside most laptop cases along with a computer.

APPS AND MIDI

The free Stryke Drums app for the Stryke6 has three modes: Boot Camp, Groove Coach, and Free

Play. In the latter, you can play along to the 16 preset songs or freestyle it using one of the six drum kits—Standard, Rock, HipHop, Brush, Latin, and FX.

Boot Camp includes short lessons for beginners on every-

thing from how to hold the sticks to the fundamentals of reading music, such as time signatures and note values. There are nearly 50 lessons and tests for developing your ability to read music and play in time.

Groove Coach tests your ability to play along to the preset songs in either Game mode, which shows you a color-coded rolling timeline of notes (as you'd see in a game like *Rock Band*), or Pro Drummer mode, in which you play more complex parts along to the songs using sheet music. Stryke6 also worked great as a standard drum controller for MIDI-controllable iOS apps such as Alesis DMTouch (free).

As a MIDI controller over USB, Stryke6 worked equally well. It has no editor software or on-board hardware configuration, but the unit sends General MIDI info for a drum kit. For example, if you open a MIDI track in Ableton Live and put a Drum Rack on the track, the Stryke6's kick, snare, hi-hat, and other pads line up as they do with the Stryke Drums app. If your software has MIDI Learn, you can use the pads and switches to control other things.

BEAT IT!

Overall, the Stryke6 provides a low-cost alternative to more expensive e-drum gear, but without all of the high-end finish. While it is oriented towards beginners, the Stryke6 may appeal to experienced musicians as well, whether they use it onstage or in-studio with an iPad or a laptop. ■