

Nord C2 Combo Organ *Worthy Upgrade*

When Nord released the C1 organ in 2007, it garnered a lot of attention as a lightweight, good-sounding alternative to breaking your back moving a B-3. Not only that, but Nord went head-to-head with the established leaders in this market

and came out smelling like a rose. The C1 instantly became a favorite of many live players, and with the C2, Nord is extending its appeal into the more traditional worship and classical markets—and the results are good.

The build quality of the C2 is solid. This model introduces a new stiffer action that does feel pretty close to my old Hammond A100—still a little lighter, but I think you would be hard-pressed to notice the difference without having them right next to each other to test. The C2 sports the traditional Nord styling, bright-red chassis with black and gray accents, and it definitely is eye-catching. The most amazing thing about it is its weight (or lack of it). At 34 pounds, it is almost startling the first time you pick it up—but definitely welcome when it's time to load in. Nord also offers a collapsible aluminum stand specifically designed for the C2, with room to accommodate a pedalboard.

The most controversial element of the Nord organ models is still here—the virtual drawbars. Rather than physical bars that you push and pull to set the levels of the different harmonics, you have two buttons for in and out, and LED lights that represent the stops. This system was on the C1 and is present on the Nord Stage pianos as well. Speaking as a traditional Hammond player, this takes a little getting used to, and there are some limitations for real drawbar players. The time to push and pull is slower, so it will take some adjustments to your style of changing tones in real time. I have heard varying reactions to this, but I found them pretty easy to settle into, and after a while, I hardly noticed them at all. Not the same, but completely useable. One distinct advantage introduced on the C2 is the ability to set your drawbars in preview mode without affecting the sound you're playing,



and then to switch instantly to the new settings—pretty cool.

The “classic tonewheel” (aka Hammond) sounds of the C2 are great. They have enough beef to feel like you’re driving something mechanical, and enough variance to not sound digitally sterile. These are not samples—all of the sounds are modeled, and the result is a lot more faithful to the original than any sample library. I thought the overtones produced were pretty close to what I get from my Hammond, though not exactly. This is not a criticism—in fact, it felt more like the variations you might find between different individual B, C and A series organs than something synthetic.

Nord moved the percussion and vibrato controls (both of which sound fantastic) on the C2 to a position more closely mirroring the traditional placement on the Hammond—this seems like a small thing, but it will make a huge difference to a Hammond player. There are also pedal drawbars included, which can be used with the “Pedal Keys 27” accessory, or can be placed on a lower split of the lower manual—this is a really nice touch, and I found myself using it a lot. The playing experience was thoroughly enjoyable.

Nord also includes modeled reproductions of Vox and Farfisa compact organs. These were a ton of fun to play with, and sounded very good to my ear. The drawbar system and other controls get re-purposed to mimic the controls on each of these when you select these models. That can be a little disorienting at first because the controls do not map exactly, but once you understand it and use it for a while, it’s easy enough. This really opens up a new sound palette for live playing that many players will find hard to resist.

The most notable and newest feature of the C2 is the inclusion of a baroque pipe organ.

This is a multisampled instrument, not a model, and it sounds amazing. There are 21 stops represented—nine Swell, nine Great and three Bass. There are also seven couplers, which allow for a very complete range of pipe organ tones. The sound ranges from delicate to thunderous, so much so that I had to dial back the volume a little to protect my speakers when I went to full-out on the bass stops. I thought it sounded authentic, and would be useable in any traditional pipe organ scenario. This feature will make the C2 extremely attractive to churches.

The other new feature on the C2 that caught my attention is the flexible output routing. Included on the back are traditional stereo outs, as well as a high output 1/4-inch jack and an 11-pin Leslie jack. All of the different organs can be routed to any of the outputs, either globally or per program—this means you can send your B-3 out to the Leslie, but when you switch to the Vox, it’ll go to your Fender Twin (awesome!). If you’re not carrying all that extra amplification, not to worry: The Leslie simulator sounds really good, and there is also an amp simulator on board. Nord also has included separate delay, EQ and reverb sections, so there is a lot of versatility available for sound sculpting here.

The Nord C2 is a worthy upgrade to the C1. It has retained all of its strengths, and added significant functionality, all at a very competitive price. This is not a budget piece of gear, but it is less expensive than any other double manual solution on the market. Nord has built its reputation on producing really good unique instruments, and the C2 fits into its philosophy nicely. If you are an organ player, the C2 deserves a good look—you may not look back.

—Chris Neville

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