Introducing the Zero SL Mk II

ZeRO SL Mk II is a full DAW and plug-in control surface (for live and studio use) that visually feeds back all control information to the user. A giant 144-character display, back lit LED buttons and LED ringed encoders show the status of all controls. Ultra-quick mapping of all 56 knobs, faders and buttons is managed by the groundbreaking Automap 3 PRO software.

Overview

The ZeRO SL Mk II has been designed both for the studio and the stage. It equips the modern DAW user with every dimension of hardware control, enabling a hands-on approach to navigating software, mixing and controlling plug-ins. It represents extraordinary value as a controller, integrating a DAW control surface with the most intuitive plug-in mapping capabilities available - presided over by Automap 3 PRO; the most advanced control software on the market.

ZeRO SL Mk II upholds Novation's reputation for building quality hardware. It can be mounted in a 19" rack, or used as a desk-top controller, or angled for performance using legs that are included with the unit. Quality is not just reflected in their robustness, but more importantly in the way the ZeRO SL Mk II has been designed with every detail calculated to maximise workflow. The ZeRO SL Mk II's visually feeds back all controller information to the user with back lit buttons and encoder LED rings, making it absolutely ideal for live performances where parameters need to be identified instantly.

The difficulty with other control surfaces is knowing what is assigned to what. ZeRO SL Mk II has a giant 144-character ultra-bright LCD screen that displays all the parameter names and values for the currently selected row of controllers. All 8 faders and 16 knobs are touch sensitive, so the moment one is touched, the display shows the names and values on that row and puts brackets around the controller that is currently being touched. This enables the user to see which parameter is assigned to the controller without having to change the value, or refer to their software. ZeRO SL Mk II also has a dedicated 'Speed Dial' knob, which can be used to change the value of any parameter the cursor is positioned over without making any assignments whatsoever.

The 8 continuous rotary encoders have 11 segment LED rings around each of them, allowing encoders to behave like pots so the user can see the value before moving them. All the buttons have LEDs underneath them so users can instantly see their status without having to press them.

There are 8 soft-feel drum pads which are fully assignable to any parameter with the Automap software

ZeRO SL Mk II has been designed to draw minimum current so it can be used as a USB buss-powered device, although an optional 9V DC power supply can be added for stand-alone use. As well as USB interfacing, ZeRO SL Mk II has 1 MIDI in, 1 MIDI thru and 2 MIDI outs.

The power behind the ZeRO's unique ability to map controllers at the touch of a button, is contained within the included Automap software. Automap 3 PRO enables users to map controllers with incredible speed and ease - no more digging through MIDI continuous controller numbers, the Automap server takes care of it all. Automap's GUI gives the user a visual representation of all the current mappings on screen, as well as the ability to save and manage mappings across different projects. There is also an option to only bring up the GUI when a controller on the ZeRO has been touched!

Key features

Illuminated controls provide instant visual feedback
Brightly lit LED rings around the eight smooth encoders, and backlit buttons throughout provide instant visual feedback for every physical control, further reducing reliance on the computer screen.

Giant 144-character LCD screen
Frees the artist from being chained to the computer screen, placing all the essential data right alongside the relevant controls.

Huge array of touch-sensitive controls
Full control surface supporting ultra flexible DAW control and Auto-mappable plug-in controls, 16 knobs, 8 faders and 32 assignable backlit LED buttons.

Automap 3 PRO Control Software
SL Mk II comes with Automap software which enables you to instantly map software parameters to faders, buttons, encoders and pots and other controllers.

MIDI control interface.

Built in MIDI I/O Interface and comprehensive MIDI implementation provide complete control over all external hardware synths and other external MIDI devices.

Novation's unique 'speed dial'

A touch-sensitive rotary encoder that instantly takes control of whatever your mouse is focused on, providing real time access for composers and performers alike.

Crossfader

ZeRO SL Mk II has a fully assignable crossfader making it ideal for Live performance with programmes such as Ableton.

Programmable 'soft-feel' drumpads

Eradicates the need for a separate set of drumpad triggers, providing the ideal platform for sketching out beats or triggering samples

Dedicated, yet fully-assignable transport buttons.

Control the sequencer's start/stop/loop/record/forward/rewind actions, direct from the MIDI controller, reducing reliance on mouse and screen, or switch them out to allow use of more assignable buttons. SL Mk II recalls how these buttons were previously assigned.

USB buss powering

Provides the artist with a mobile MIDI control solution, freeing them from the confines of the studio

Includes the Xcite+ bundle

Featuring a host of royalty-free loops and samples, a full-fledged soft-synth and Ableton Live 7 Lite, providing an affordable upgrade path to Ableton Live.

What is Automap3?

Put simply, Automap is a bit of software that enables you to assign parameters in your sequencer and plug-ins with incredible speed and ease, to the buttons, knobs, faders and other controllers on your Novation SL or Nocturn.

Anyone who has used a hardware controller can testify to how time consuming and awkward this can be - searching through hundreds of MIDI continuous controller numbers and trying to match them with numbers assigned to knobs on the hardware.

For many plug-ins, Automap enables you to simply touch the controller, click on the parameter and its assigned! Novation controllers also provide instant and comprehensive control over all major sequencers - Automap even allows you to instantly assign almost any QWERTY or ASCII keyboard shortcut to buttons and other controllers on the hardware: So you can open and close windows, jump to locators in your DAW and make edits without touching the mouse or keyboard!

Remembering which parameters are assigned to which controllers is a problem of the past. As soon as a controller is touched, all your mappings are shown on the computer screen via Automap's GUI, as well as the LCD screen of the SL. You can also manage all your mappings from the on-screen GUI; rename them, swap them around by dragging and dropping, or even change the resolution of each control. If the GUI starts to clutter up your screen, you can turn on the "Autoview" function which only brings it up on the cressn when a controller is touched, then hides it again after the controller is released.

This is a very broad introduction to what Automap3 can do. If you want to read in more detail about Automap's features, click here.

Key Features - Automap 3

Automap 3 PRO software comes bundled free with SL Mk II, and boasts the following features:

Intelligent control over all sequencers and VST/AU/RTAS/TDM plug-ins.
Automap 3 removes the pain and time involved in assigning MIDI parameters, and all layouts are fully customisable.

Heads-up transparent control GUI
Places a transparent control map across your computer screen - see at a glance how the parameters are automatically assigned to each of SL Mk II's controls.

Instant 'learn' function

Simply click on the software parameter and touch a touch-sensitive control to assign it. Now you can re-assign every control in seconds.

Keystroke Assignments

Automap 3 can assign almost any computer keyboard shortcuts to hardware controls. For example arrow key functions can now be assigned to hardware controls, allowing you to flick between tracks using buttons on your SL/Nocturn. You could also zoom in and out, open windows or create and jump to markers in your DAW.

Innovative MIDI support within Automap

Name your parameters and store mappings for later use. The same heads-up display provides quick and simple assigning of regular MIDI parameters. This ensures SL Mk II can also turn its hand to controlling the few software application that still rely solely on the MIDI protocol.

Plug-in and Mixer Browser

Lets you review all open plug-ins, then quickly switch to control and one of them. Mixer 'MIDI maps' can be created, saved and recalled via the same map browsing facility.

Autoview Mode

Optional Autoview mode means that the GUI only becomes visible when a controller is touched, then it disappears again allowing you to get back to your DAW.

Ableton and ZeRO SL Mk II

When we launched the ReMOTE 0SL, it quickly became clear that it was a favourite amongst Ableton users. Professionals who use Ableton (from performers to Ableton Certified Trainers) were keen to tell us how well matched they were. So, when designing the ZeRO SL Mk II, our developers thought carefully about how they could optimise it for use with "Live", whilst maintaining its versatility across other DAW's (such as Logic, Pro Tools, Cubase etc).

The result is that despite its multi-DAW compatibility, ZeRO's hardware features and software integration make it an ideal control surface for writing and performing with Ableton Live:

Hardware

• We've stretched the Faders from 45mm to 60mm for more precise mixer control.

• It now has a crossfader, ideal live performance situations.

• 32 bright user LED buttons which can easily be assigned to trigger clips.

• New "soft touch" velocity sensitive drum pads for sketching out drum patterns

• Large LCD screen displays the names and values of all parameters on the currently selected row.

• As well as the LED ringed continuous rotary encoders, the ZeRO has eight touch sensitive pots - a must have in the eyes of many Ableton performers.

• Speed Dial allows you to quickly get hands on control of any parameter displayed on screen, just by hovering the cursor over it - for quick access during live performances.

• Small footprint which fits snugly behind a QWERTY/ASCII keyboard, with legs that raise and tilt it for live use.

• USB buss-powered, meaning no bulky wallwart PSUs taking up precious power sockets.

Software Integration

• All SL Mk II's come with a dedicated Ableton Mode which was designed in collaboration with Ableton

• Extensive control of Ableton's own devices as well as VSTand AU plug-ins.

• It only requires a very simple set-up in Ableton's preferences window.

• The ZeRO's Automap 3 PRO software can instantly map QWERTY/ASCII key-commands to controls on the ZeRO, as well as the other benefits of Automap3 (click here to see what else Automap can do)

• Full transport controls - which can be reassigned to other parameters (along with the other 26 buttons) in Automap mode if required.

ReMOTE ZeRO SL vs ZeRO SL Mk II

• Mk II ships with the latest Automap 3 PRO

• All dials and faders are now touch-sensitive

• All ZeRO SL Mk II's buttons are illuminated

• Mk II features a single LED screen (as it now features the Automap Heads-up GUI)

• ZeRO SL Mk II's top row of dials have 11-LED rings for instant feedback

• Top row of encoders are now smooth continuous rotary encoders, and the bottom row are pots with 270 rotation.

- ZeRO SL Mk II's transport control buttons can also be used as fully assignable buttons.

- There is now a crossfader on the ZeRO SL Mk II

- ZeRO SL Mk II features new 'soft-feel' drum pads.

- No longer features batteries

Xcite+

Xcite+ bundle ships free with SL Mk II and consists of the following:

Ableton Live 7 Lite software (DAW)

502MB of Mike the drummer drum loops - Quality live drum loops

Novation Bass-station synth

Loopmasters Samples library consisting of1GB of royalty free samples

Specifications

Physical controls

Assignable controls:

- 8 Encoders (Infinite Rotation) with touch-sensitivity and 11 segment Led rings

- 8 Pots (270 Rotation) with touch-sensitivity

- 8 60mm Sliders with touch-sensitivity

- 32 Buttons with integrated LEDs (37 in MIDI mode]

- 8 soft feel Trigger pads

- Touch sensitive Speed Dial (as on Nocturn)

- Crossfader

System buttons:

- General Automap Operation Buttons (Learn, View, Browser Groups etc.)

- Octave up/down buttons with LED indicator

The central system buttons from the SL have been simplified; there is now:

- 1 Automap button with LED to toggle Automap mode on and off (this replaces the PLAY button) – this way, manual MIDI mode is separate from Automap mode and can be avoided completely if preferred

• Template and Edit modes have been combined into one edit mode, for editing both individual controls and overall settings within one Template

Connectivity

Rear Panel connections are as follows:

• Data Port: 1 x USB (Win XP/Vista and Mac OSX – Not Class Compliant
• MIDI: MIDI ONE: IN, OUT and Thru, MIDI TWO: OUT
• Sustain Pedal: 1 x 1/4 Jack Input
• Expression pedal: 1 x 1/4 Jack Input
• Power switch: Ext DC/USB

Minimum Operational Requirements:

Mac OSX 10.4.0 or greater (Leopard also supported) or Windows XP with
Service Pack 2 or greater (Vista 32/64 also supported)

Minimum Computer spec: Mac - G4/1GHz, both with 256MB RAM or PC -
Pentium 3/1GHz/256MB RAM (machines running Vista will require a higher spec)

Dimensions

Size: Approx W=445mm, H=68mm, D=200mm

Weight: TBC

Audio Media - July 2009. Reviewer: Simon Tillbrook

"The whole setup around the ZeRO SL MkII feels more refined overall, and even though it is not a dedicated controller for the DAW I was using, it did not take long to feel fluent with use."

"The Novation ZeRO SL MkII is a very neat, solidly built little controller that, when coupled with the Novation Automap server, becomes an easy to use and intuitive working interface."