

## **X-Tempo pok Wireless Foot Controller**

*Because sometimes, you just need to put your foot down*



by Craig Anderton

pok BLE's mission in life is to put keyboard shortcuts on a rugged, wireless floor device with 8 footswitches. If you're a guitar player who's struggled with playing while operating your DAW's commands at the same time, you can understand why this is useful. (I can remember when Cakewalk Sonar users would buy DigitTech's GNX4 just because it had a compatible driver, originally designed for Pro Tracks, that let you use it as a foot controller.)

The original, non-BLE (Bluetooth Low Energy) pok came with a USB receiver that worked with Mac and Windows. Now, by taking advantage of BLE, pok BLE (which is made in America) will work with Windows 10, Mac OS X 10.8+ computers, and tablets that incorporate Bluetooth LE (Low Energy). If your machine doesn't do BLE, x-tempo sells a BLE USB adapter for \$19.00. (I used the BLE adapter that comes with CME Xkey Air keyboards, and it worked fine.)

The pok "street price" is \$259, and Fig. 1 shows what you get for that.



*Fig. 1: The package comes with the footswitch unit, manual, USB stick with the pok Manager software, three AA batteries, and a USB to USB-C adapter if your computer can't accommodate a standard USB 2-type connector.*

Bear in mind, though, that Bluetooth can be picky. You need to do the pairing thing, make sure the two units are within at least 30 feet of each other, and that you've uncovered any peculiarities. For example, when I first hooked up the BLE adapter, it refused to recognize the pok. But the problem was connecting the adapter to a USB extension cable—as soon as I plugged directly into a computer port, all was well.

Note that because pok generates keyboard shortcuts, it can control pretty much *anything*. You can also store different profiles, so for example, you could load a word processor profile and do bold, Italic, line return, undo, all uppercase, insert page break, and other functions normally handled by keystrokes. With DAWs, although the first thought that comes to mind is transport control, you can use the footswitches to show/hide various aspects of the UI, zoom in or out, and the like. If your sheet music is on a PDF file, use the footswitches for page up and page down.

Given how compact the unit is, even someone with really big feet would have a hard time hitting the wrong button, and on a flat surface, the unit feels stable (Fig. 2).



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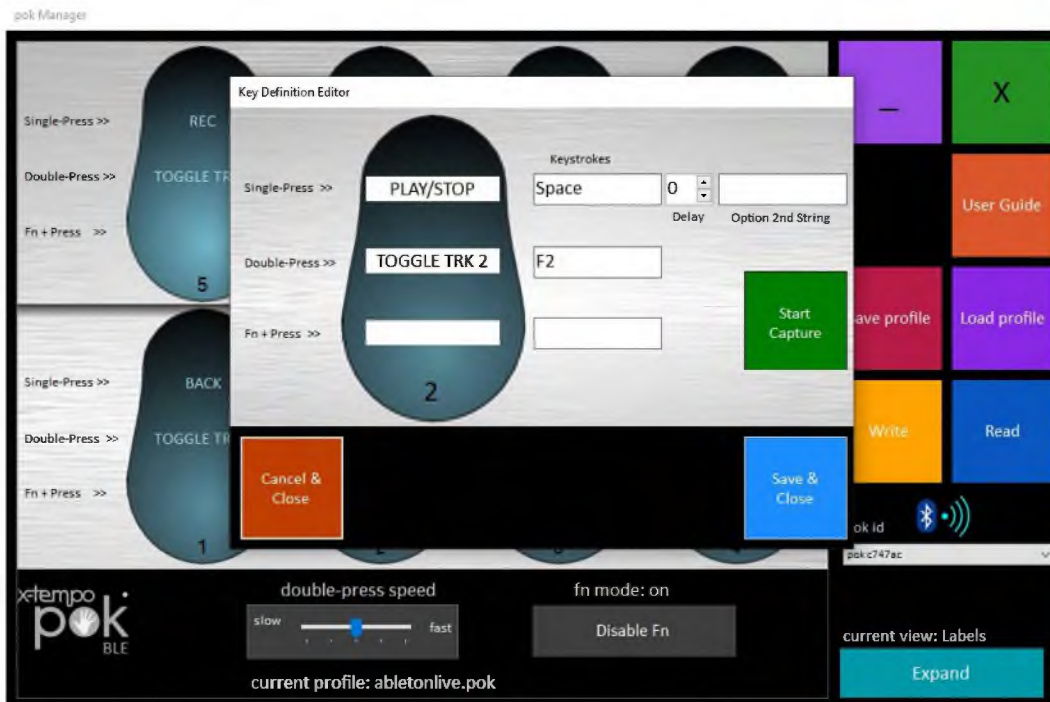


Fig. 3: pok BLE comes with templates for several popular DAWs, but it's not hard to make your own. This one is for Ableton Live.

## IT'S A WRAP

Pok runs off three AA cells; there's no AC adapter jack, although if you're a solderhead you could always attach some wires to the battery connectors, and use a 4.5V DC power adapter. But it's not really worth the hassle—the batteries last a *long* time. I must say I don't like disposable batteries, so if you're similarly oriented, you'll be happy to know rechargeables last a long time, too.

Note that you can accessorize your pok with a carrying case for \$30, but if the \$259 price is out of your range, check the web site for the occasional piece of B-stock. Given the rugged construction, you don't have much to fear if, for example, the unit was taken out to do demos at a music store.

Overall, once you get Bluetooth sorted out with your computer, pok BLE is a pretty much pain-free kind of device. Just remember a few basics: after programming with the pok Manager, saving isn't enough; you need to *write* the changes to the pok. Also, remember to click on the program you want to control before hitting the switches! But aside from that, you're ready to put your foot down...and control anything that responds to keyboard commands.

When I reviewed the original pok, the review concluded with "It's ultra-simple to use, reliable, and comes pretty darn close to being a robot engineer...it streamlines the recording process dramatically for solo performers and engineers (and for those using a computer in live performance, it's a dream come true). This is a creative, useful, hip accessory—two thumbs up." All that is still true, and now, you have BLE too.

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