

KAWAI

Less is
more

*Model of discretion:
connectivity ports on
the K-300 AURES*

Murray McLachlan is bowled over by Kawai's new AURES hybrid piano range

The Kawai K-300 AURES upright piano is an extremely elegant instrument. Its discreet control screen panel blends in with the shiny black finish on the left side of the keyboard, only becoming visible when activated. The silent device is operated from the middle pedal.

There is a strong sense of 'less is more' about the K-300's sleek appearance, but it is a remarkable fusion of excellent acoustic upright, hybrid and silent piano. Retailing at just over £7k it offers great value for money for a wide and contrasting range of customer needs.

I was perfectly content to play through Chopin studies and fragments of Beethoven with the instrument functioning solely as an upright piano. The action is firm – some may say a little too firm – but as a teacher I feel this is a great asset in a piano, making students cope with articulation and develop reliable co-ordination in their fingerwork. The instrument makes use of Kawai's 'Millennium III' action, which features carbon parts and has been adopted for most of Kawai's newest grand piano models.

Kawai's Millennium III action includes the addition of surface texture on the jack at the point where it meets the hammer. Kawai claims this has significant benefits in terms of the control it gives players at the quietest

dynamic levels. Certainly, I felt that the action had more in common with a grand piano than with what one might expect from a medium-sized upright.

In terms of tone quality, the K-300 is very impressive, making it is easy to achieve a wide variety of sound. The pedal action feels as comfortable as any top-of-the-range upright – with the sole exception of Steinway uprights, which are typically the most impressive, as well as the most expensive.

With the flick of a lever the AURES changes into a practice instrument. I felt very comfortable playing in silent mode with headphones and could imagine spending many happy hours doing so if I were lucky enough to own a K-300. The AURES is similar to other Kawai instruments in that it uses an optical hammer sensing system with the latest digital piano sound engine.

More interesting still is the huge range of sounds available when the K-300 changes into its third mode – that of hybrid piano. There are 380 varied settings to choose from, including 10 different pianos labelled 'Classic', 'Romantic', 'Full', 'Jazz', 'Brilliant', 'Rich', 'Ballade', 'Pop', 'Vintage' and Boogie!

When using the middle pedal shift device to put the instrument into digital mode, there is a bar inside the piano that literally stops the hammers from striking