

Grand tour

Colin Clarke revels in the responsiveness of Yamaha's new Clavinova 700 Series

Yamaha recently launched their CLP-700 Series of Clavinovas, an extension of their already successful line of digital pianos. Describing the 700 Series as 'exquisite', Yamaha's marketing materials claim that the instruments offer 'a maximum of natural playability'.

There are six new models in the 700 Series, including four uprights (CLP-735, 745, 775 and 785) and two grand piano style instruments (CLP-765GP and 795GP). All boast new fortepiano sounds as well as several piano 'voices'. Mozart and Chopin fortepianos have been created by sampling Walther and Pleyel fortepianos, while the CLP-785

apparently adds a Scarlatti (sampled from a Cristofori) and a Beethoven (Broadwood). Voice selection, along with much else, is controlled via a keypad in the piano cheek. Modern grand piano settings familiar from previous Clavinova models are present too: the Yamaha CFX and Bösendorfer Imperial.

Testing took place at Yamaha's flagship showroom in central London, using both high-end headphones and the natural acoustic of the shop floor. The models available were the CLP-735, 745, 775 and 765GP. All models include Yamaha's GrandTouch action, replicating the feel of a real grand piano with subtle variations across the range.

Nuances of finger touch are converted into sound via the Real Grand Expression 2 (RGE2) system, while Virtual Resonance Modeling (VRM) imitates damper, string and Aliquot resonances. Binaural sampling has also been used to create a satisfying experience with headphones.

In line with Yamaha's high-tech credentials, a sleek app for smartphones (Smart Pianist) offers extended functionality,

including the ability to stream music: 50 Popular items (featuring music from ABBA to Eric Clapton and Michael Jackson) and 50 Classics, subdivided into Original Compositions, Duets and Arrangements plus User Songs of your choice. Selected tracks can be heard through the piano's speakers for you to play along.

Trying these instruments in the Yamaha showroom was a joy. My repertoire list ran the gamut from Bach's *Italian Concerto* through Beethoven variations, Chopin miniatures and Debussy *Préludes* to pieces from Editions Musica Ferrum's *250 Piano Pieces*

for Beethoven and Sadie Harrison's *Par-feshanyi-ye 'eshq* (*Six Pieces after Bidel*) – the last of which is a fine test of tremolos and resonance. Prices given are those at the

A joy to play: Yamaha's CLP-765GP Clavinova

