

Special features of the harpsichord keyboard

There is no standard keyboard for acoustic harpsichords. For different instruments, touch varies and so does the key shape and layout. The lack of formalization even goes as far as reversing the color of the keys, so that the ebony keys white and vice versa.

When Roland set about creating the right keyboard for the C-30, we investigated as many historic instruments as we could. Starting off by considering the various problems that makers were trying to solve, we were able to work out what the best harpsichords have most in common.



Our main concern was to find out what characteristics were considered best for touch and expression, and to come up with the means of providing these in a keyboard for a digital instrument. While the priority was given to studying the peculiarities of the mechanisms of original harpsichords, this was not an exercise in reproduction. Using all the know-how of today, we proceeded to develop an eminently playable keyboard that gives the player an authentic harpsichord experience.

Out of this process the C-30 keyboard was born. Very much the product of modern sensibilities and skills, it has an amenable but distinctively classic harpsichord touch, and is highly playable. Now musicians who have only experienced piano or ordinary electronic keyboard playing can, without hesitation or reserve, enjoy the special experience of playing the harpsichord. The C-30 makes it possible for more people to become intimately familiar with the enticing charms of the harpsichord.

Points in common with acoustic harpsichords

- Depth of key dip (stroke)
- Click feel (the feel of the string being plucked)
- Initial weight (resistance when you start to press the key)
- The size and shape of the sharp (black) keys. The visible part of each key is 70.2 mm (2-13/16 inch) long by 11.2 mm (1/2 inch) wide.

Special player comfort and playability features

Octave pitch: same range as piano. The harpsichord keyboard is somewhat narrower.

- Length of the natural (white) keys. Similar to piano and organ keys, the visible part of each key is 120 mm (4-3/4 inch) long by 22.2 mm (7/8 inch) wide. This is longer than on most acoustic harpsichords.
- When playing multiple plucked strings, the weight remains the same. On large acoustic harpsichords, when multiple strings are plucked the resistance is greater and the touch is heavier. The C-30 is easier to play because, whether
- single or multiple strings are played, the key weight is the same.