

C³ Equalz Tangerine V2 Switches Review

-ThereminGoat, 2/6/2020

Switch Background

While this has been a review that many of you that are currently reading this have been waiting for, this certainly has been one that I've been dreading writing a bit – and that's because of the nuanced history of the Tangerine switch line, as well as the relatively confusing naming convention surrounding them. That being said, though, the newest installment of TheKeyCompany's flagship switch line has certainly been stirring up some interest over the past month since their arrival. In order to help place everyone onto the same page as to the history of the Tangerine line, I'm going to defer to a list format as it will be much easier than writing it in paragraph form:



Figure 1: The Tangerine Family Tree. (Left to Right in the order of the list below.)

-C³ Tangerine V1 – The very first of the Tangerine line, these switches featured black bottoms, clear tops, and the iconic tangerine orange stems. Coming in 67g weightings only, these switches were manufactured by Gateron and sold exclusively to the Chinese market.

-C³ Tangerine V1.5 – After the success in the Chinese market, the C³ Tangerines made their appearance to the western world at large. Featuring the same black bottomed switch as before, this new round also featured a milky bottomed option with a 62g spring. (The designation of V1.5 is self-chosen due to a want for a distinction between the western and Chinese rounds but is not officially recognized by TKC.)

-C³ Tangerine V2 – While it may have escaped the memory of many enthusiasts within the hobby, these switches are not the first time that an orange-housed, green-stemmed linear tangerine switch was pitched to the community at large. Riding shortly after the success of the Linjar switches, and in my opinion strongly influenced by them, the first C³ Tangerine V2 was to be an opaque orange house with a green stem and was also to be produced by Gateron. However, due to (rumored) issues surrounding the Linjar groupbuy, Gateron no longer was willing to produce these pieces.

-Equalz C³ Tangerine V2s – These are the switches that these reviews are for. The two big differences between these switches and the ones that were originally planned are the translucent, rather than opaque, housings as well as these being produced by JWK rather than Gateron.



Figure 2: Picture of stickers they originally had printed for Gateron Tangerine V2s.

First being shipped to customers in mid to late January of 2020, these switches sold extremely well and have plans to be stocked on TKC to some regular extent. As of the writing time of this document, these

switches will be restocked on their website as of March of 2020. The earlier versions of Tangerine switches have all since been discontinued prior to the release of the Equalz C³ Tangerine V2 line and there will likely not ever be a restocking due to the switch in switch manufacturers by TKC.

C³ Equalz Tangerine V2 Switch Performances:

The C³ Equalz Tangerine V2 switches, which I will now short to Tangerine V2s for the rest of this document to save both my sanity and my stroke count on these switches, have certainly been among the most hyped linear switches rivaled only by Alpacas so far in 2020. Unlike PrimeKB's Alpacas, though, the Tangerine V2s come in two varieties – a light green-stemmed 62g variant, and a dark green-stemmed 67g variant. Both of the variants come lubed with a “very light application” of factory lube according to TKC's sales page and feature UHMWPE as the primary material in the housings – the same material that has been used in Invyr's new aftermarket stems that have made a stir earlier in 2020.

Appearance:

Both of the Tangerine V2 switches boast a bright orange, translucent housing, with differing green colored stems as mentioned above in the previous paragraph. Having the same opacity as the Gateron Ink line, these orange houses are pretty stunning and vibrant in person and I have no doubts that people will use these in low-profiled kits simply to show off the top housings when in use. Additionally, the stems for both variants are pleasing shades of green, though I wish the 62g, light-green stem was slightly darker in color as it gives off more of a mint-green type vibe the more I look at it. Overall, though, when compared to “what-could-have-been” with the opaque Gateron versions of these Tangerine V2s, these switches definitely were the better outcome in terms of pieces and do well for recognizability and furthering their ‘brand name’.

Push Feel:

They're great. I mean seriously, what was expected of me to say as a first liner for JWK's second self-made and branded production line of switches? I had rave reviews about ThicThock's Marshmallow switches, which were the first to get a standalone production line and branding from JWK, for exactly the same reason I do these switches. Both Tangerine V2s are incredibly linear coming out of the box and feature literally no scratch from what I can feel. The factory lubing for these pieces are incredible, plain and simple. In addition to the very smooth stroke, the linear springs in these switches are great as they feel consistent and even for both variants throughout the entire stroke and have no pretravel or light-weighted front end at all. While not to distract away from the review of the Tangerine V2 pieces, themselves, I truly think that JWK is on to something in the way of factory lubrication process as these are better than I even expected.

Sound:

Since a large part of the issues with sound come from poor lubing/stems and shitty springs, it suffices to say that without those issues these switches also sound pretty damn good. These switches feature a virtually silent stroke from start to bottom-out with a light, soft plastic sound. They sound smooth. They sound elegant. They sound exactly like you'd want from a linear switch. And as always, I tried activating them faster in an attempt to elicit more jarring sounds or issues with the spring and I simply was not able to get any.

Wobble:

Like all of the other boxes checked thus far along in the review, the wobble on these switches is also very high quality. The N/S direction wobble is within the range that I'd imagine its minimal in a full cap build with the E/W direction having virtually no wobble at all. The tolerances for the top housing molds for these pieces are without a doubt something that C3 spent a lot of time focusing on as this wobble, or lack thereof, is not an accident.

Other:

Much like the ThicThock Marshmallow switches, neither variant of the Tangerine V2 switches, unfortunately, tastes nor smells like Tangerines. On a side note, I may discontinue this practice in the future given the picture to the right, which I was made aware of in the last few days.



Figure 3: 27 bathing in Invyr V1 switches before mailing them out.

Comparison Notes to Other Notable Linear Switches:

Note – These are not aimed at being comprehensive comparisons between all factors of these switches as this would simply be too long for this writeup. These are little notes of interest I generated when comparing these pieces to Tangerine V2s side by side.

Alpacas:

- Currently among the biggest S tier linear switch competition on the market as of writing of this document.
- Bottoming out sound of Alpacas is slightly louder than the UHMWPE housings of the Tangerine V2s.
- Slightly more E/W wobble than the Tangerine V2s, but marginal difference overall.

Tealios V2:

- These definitely have a deeper and slightly more scratchy sound than the Tangerine V2 switches.
- The spring quality definitely doesn't feel nearly as good as in the Tangerine V2s, and the stroke doesn't feel nearly as consistent or clean.
- Very similar amounts of N/S wobble as the Tangerine V2s.

Gateron Inks V1 (Wobbly Leaf Stock):

- Gateron Inks have a substantially greater N/S and E/W wobble than the Tangerine V2 switches.
- With recent speculation around that Gateron Inks may also feature UHMWPE housings, I wanted to comment and say that the sound of these switches is pretty similar and help support, in my mind, that this rumor may be true.

Novelkeys Creams:

- The inherent scratch that comes with the Novelkeys' Cream switches doesn't even put these on the same level as the Tangerine V2s.
- The scratch, as well as the housing appear to make the switch much louder than the sound of either of the Tangerine V2 pieces.
- These also feature a slight spring ping on heavier/faster activation.

Black Bottom V1.5 Tangerines:

- These switches feature markedly more scratch – both in feel and sound – than their JWK V2 family members.
- While there is some more wobble in the V1.5s than the V2s, I still want to mention that the wobble on the V1.5 Tangerines, on an absolute scale has always been fantastic for any generation.
- Overall, an example of a predecessor being outclassed by the future. (Though not at all a bad linear switch in its own right.)

FFFs:

- Another JWK switch featuring a factory pre-lube, these feel remarkably similar in feeling to the Tangerine V2s. (JWK must be paying their lubrication fairies extra well this time of year.)
- Feature the tiniest bit more wobble in the N/S direction, but again, a marginal difference at best.
- The top housings on these pieces are slightly loose – which is a bit out of character for JWK in my experience. While it may be my limited batch, these might be one of the first JWK pieces I've strongly considered filming before use.
- Don't look anywhere nearly as *cool* as the Tangerine V2 switches. (Fight me if you want.)

Final Conclusions:

My final conclusions about these pieces are simultaneously great on an individual scale as well as grander scale. With respect to the Tangerine V2 pieces themselves – are they fantastic? Absolutely. Do they feel amazing? Absolutely. Do I have any doubts that they will sell well enough to (convince Jason that he needs to buy a new house so badly that he will) run a V3 of them? None – These are a smash hit and I hope to see a further continuation of both TKC's fruit themed pieces as, which I've mentioned in my Novelkeys Sherbet Review, and the Tangerine switch line.

Now on a bigger scope, these pieces have me excited for the future. While these certainly aren't the first unique and eye catching color scheme to come out in a switch, the vibrancy mixed with the new housing material certainly makes me realize that these switches being produced by JWK are starting to consistently check the three most important boxes with new switches – Affordable, Eye-Catching, and Quality. While this of course leaves room for them to sweep house and win the market over in 2020, I'm excited to see if companies like Gateron or Kailh will be able to respond with solid options to try and compete with whatever magic dust JWK is sprinkling over its production line. While I don't think that Gateron magnetic KS20's or Cherry's Viola switch will be the immediate big competition to JWK – I really think that this company is going to push its competitors – and by extension our products – to much higher quality and standards.

Further Reading:

Original C3 Tangerine Sticker Design Post to Reddit by u/TheKeyCompany:

Link: https://www.reddit.com/r/MechanicalKeyboards/comments/be81yb/juicy_af/

Wayback:

https://web.archive.org/save/https://www.reddit.com/r/MechanicalKeyboards/comments/be81yb/juicy_af/

TheKeyCompany Sales Page:

Link: <https://thekey.company/products/c3-tangerine-switches-r2>

Wayback: <https://web.archive.org/save/https://thekey.company/products/c3-tangerine-switches-r2>

Wonderful GeekHack Review done by tex_live_utility:

Link: <https://geekhack.org/index.php?topic=104225.0>

Wayback: <https://web.archive.org/save/https://geekhack.org/index.php?topic=104225.0>

ILUMKB Sales Page:

Link: <https://ilumkb.com/collections/switches/products/pre-order-c3-tangerine-switch>

Wayback: <https://web.archive.org/save/https://ilumkb.com/collections/switches/products/pre-order-c3-tangerine-switch>

Reddit Discussion Post by u/Cahuib:

Link: https://www.reddit.com/r/MechanicalKeyboards/comments/ekna29/new_c3_tangerine_switches/

Wayback:

https://web.archive.org/save/https://www.reddit.com/r/MechanicalKeyboards/comments/ekna29/new_c3_tangerine_switches/

Reddit Picture Post by u/MrJahoolious:

Link:

https://www.reddit.com/r/MechanicalKeyboards/comments/eobwc8/oh_boy_they_are_here_uhmwpe_c3_tangerines/

Wayback:

https://web.archive.org/save/https://www.reddit.com/r/MechanicalKeyboards/comments/eobwc8/oh_boy_they_are_here_uhmwpe_c3_tangerines/