

Novelkeys Cream Tactile Switch Review

-ThereminGoat, 10/31/2021

I feel like now more than ever that these personal, social, and not switch related updates at the beginning of each review are starting to blur together in my head like the days and weeks of graduate school going by. While I recognize that the normal world out there is still spinning at the same rate as it always has, homework and classes really do have a way of incredibly compressing and expanding time into spaces I wouldn't quite think is possible. For those of you who may not have had this experience in classes or college before, imagine sitting through two different two-hour lectures that feel like a day long each while the entire day with homework afterwards feels like its an hour long, and then on top of that you've also noticed that its somehow already Wednesday and you can't quite remember whether or not Monday and Tuesday even existed. Trust me, it really is that absolutely contradictory and strange as I'm making it sound to be.

One of the nice aspects of this, though, is that it makes the long gaps of waiting for groupbuys, switch maildays, or any other delay in my gratification via the retail therapy that is keyboards feel incredibly short since the weeks go by in an instant. So, while it's been announced for well over a week at this point, one of the biggest things that still feels 'fresh' to me is my new affiliate deal with Divinikey! If you don't follow me on Instagram or Twitter (which you absolutely should be since this is where I announce my reviews), a bit over a week ago I announced that I am teaming up with the fast-shipping, awesome crew over at Divinikey who've been super helpful with both switch and switch-related purchases that I've made over the past year or so. While you should go check them out in general since they've got a pretty large amount of keyboard related stuff to purchase, I would also highly recommend using code 'GOAT' at checkout if you buy anything for 5% off on your end.



D I V I N I K E Y

Figure 1: Or click through this image here to go through my affiliate link!

That is not to say, though, that Divinikey is my only sponsor/affiliate deal that I have and I would be remiss if I didn't mention the other companies and people who help support my switch addiction disguised as a series of informative, weekly content. If you go check out the 'About' tab at the top of this page, you'll find the full list of everyone who has contributed to the collection, supports the website, and keeps me on top of everything that I am doing here since it is quite the operation for one goat to handle. With respect to sponsors/affiliates, I would highly recommend going to check out Mechbox UK,

KeebCats UK, proto[Typist], and MKUltra Corporation as well, as all of them have been more than kind in supporting the website both directly and indirectly and are great crews of people that I've bought plenty of stuff from prior to formally adding them on in this capacity. As well, I have to thank my Patreon supporters for their contributions which directly allow me to continue purchasing switches for review, updating equipment (Soon TM), and keep the website up and running. And finally, I also want to say thank you to you, my readers, for making all of this possible. While the contributions from the above affiliates, sponsors, and donors are all extremely appreciated and help keep things running the way that they have for the past few years, none of this would be here if you all didn't appreciate the work and kept coming back around for these long-winded reviews. Even though I try and be gracious and thankful as much as I can because this is far from a one-man operation on many fronts, its weeks like this where I'm busy with damn near everything up to the point of keyboards and switch reviews that it truly makes me realize how much this all means to me and how lucky I am to have all of you.



Figure 2: ... and all the switches. The switches are pretty nice too.

Switch Background

Ah yes, the Novelkeys x Kailh family tree grows ever further yet again! While not exactly my first candidate that comes to mind with respect to storied switch lines with a lot of drama, background, and history to them, I kind of have to accept that they are at this point given that I've done not only a full length review of the original Novelkeys x Kailh Cream switches, but also their tactile, Blueberry counterparts that inspired this switch that is being reviewed right here. Given that I've covered a bit of the history and interesting points of note about both of those switches in their respective reviews (which you should go read), I'm only going to cover the most recent historical aspect of the Tactile Creams in this review with perhaps a broader look at how Novelkeys appears to be doing switches, currently.

First announced via video update on Instagram, Mike from Novelkeys first announced the 'Novelkeys Launch Cream' and 'Novelkeys Cream Tactile' switches on August 26th of 2021. While details were a bit more focused on the entirely blue Launch Creams than the all-grey Tactile Creams, the tactile switches were stated to be replacing the Novelkeys Blueberry switches as the all new, tactile stand in for the Cream line of switches. Beyond this, not much more was initially teased, with these switches going up for sale in late September/early October of 2021. Unfortunately, I don't entirely know the exact

date on this as I was already in the depths of graduate school and completely missed the initial sale date. In fact, I think I had initially missed the announcement as well and was pretty much informed they were going on sale by Apiary's twitch stream where she was building with these a week or so before they were released to the general public.



Figure 3: Screenshot from the Novelkeys video update with Launch Creams and Cream Tactiles front and center.

Within the grand scheme of the Cream family of switches, these Tactile Creams represent the 7th publicly available switches in the lineage. Prior to these switches were the original Novelkeys Creams, Nolives, Blueberries, Chocolate Creams, Box Creams, and Launch Creams, with the Nolives and Launch Creams being both limited run, special edition colors of already existing switches. Additionally, behind the scenes there were also two, unreleased prototypes of swapped-stem, Cream housing based switches akin to the Blueberries which I am super grateful to Mike and the Novelkeys crew for allowing me to add to the collection. Seen below in the family photo with the rest of the Creams are what I affectionally have dubbed as 'Redberries' and 'Brownberries', which were initially tested alongside Blueberries as potential available switch options for public release.



Figure 4: A variety of the Cream family of switches including the 'Redberry' and 'Brownberry' prototypes.

Rounding it off to a broader discussion of Novelkeys, though, it appears that the Cream line of switches is nowhere close to being done or capped off at the release of the Launch Cream and Cream Tactile switches. While I don't specifically have any information to back up this claim, Novelkeys has seemed to be broadly releasing many switches over the past year or so that are limited edition in color, design, or thematically linked to specific product releases such as the NK65 keyboards, launch of the website, etc. Releases such as the Midnight Jade and Emerald Silk recolors for the randomfrankp NK65, Milkshake Silks for the Milkshake NK65, the Olivia Silks for the Olivia NK65, and new website design themed Launch Creams all lead me to believe that we will see quite a few more iterations of both the Cream, as well as the Silk family of switches in the coming year's time. (In addition to the already teased silent Jade switches that I'm both way too excited for and absolutely begging you, the one Novelkeys crew member reading this, to send to me already. I won't tell Mike, I promise I can keep a secret.)

At the time of posting this review, the Tactile Creams are available only on Novelkeys at \$23.40 per pack of 36 switches. Working out to \$0.65 per switch, these are the same price as the normal and Launch Edition Creams and a few cents cheaper than the Box Creams which are priced at \$0.70 per switch. These switches, like all packs of 36 are being delivered in biodegradable bags in blue, rectangular cardboard housings that are consistent for all Novelkeys switches now, and not just special Launch Creams.



Figure 5: Novelkeys packaging as of mid-late 2021 after the website redesign.

Cream Tactile Switch Performance

Appearance

Coming in an all-grey colorway, the new Cream Tactile switches are about as unadorned and simplistic as you can get. Broadly speaking, I am rather certain these were at least started off of the same molds as the Blueberry switches before them, and by extension the same Cream molds that were used in the original design of the Novelkeys Cream switches. By extension, these are also 5-pin (PCB mount) switches with simple designed, silver color springs. Given that I don't believe I've gone in depth on any Kailh molds or switch designs in depth prior, though, allow me to do that below.

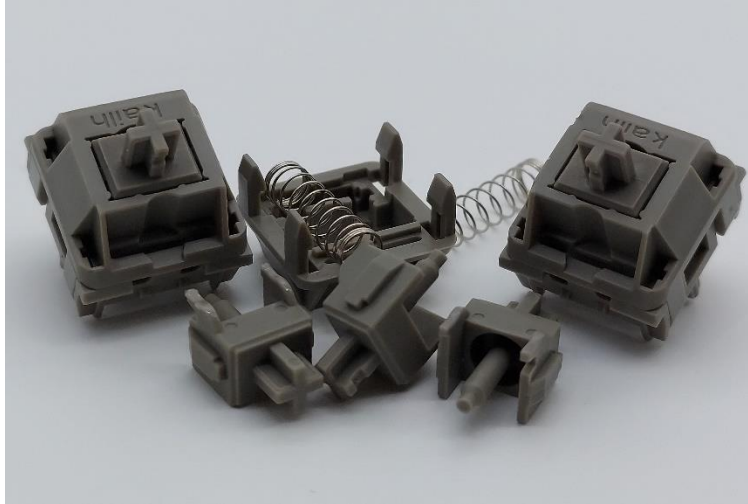


Figure 6: Novelkeys Cream Tactile switch with components.

Looking first to the top housings of these switches, on the exterior they are fairly plain and only feature two mild details of note. First and foremost, they feature a simple, all lower case 'kailh' nameplate that is upside down and without the Kailh logo appended on either end. While the vast majority of modern Kailh switches have featured this style of nameplate, and especially so throughout the entirety of the Cream line of switches, some older Kailh switches such as the original Razer switches that they manufactured featured rather different nameplate designs. These variations would occasionally feature the Kailh logo in addition to 'kailh' on the nameplate, as well as an entirely different nameplate of 'Kaihua' instead for OEM-style releases from 2014-2016. The other external feature of note here is the long, rectangular LED window which allows for a wide adoption of through-switch LEDs.

Internally, these top housings are rather mundane, as well, though I feel the need to go over them for posterity's sake. Along the outer edge of the top housings there are 5 ejector mold marks with one on each side except for the LED slot side which features two, instead. While the region up around the nameplate is structured ever so slightly differently than previous switches I've reviewed here before, I'll leave the comparisons to be up to the reader to go look at photos of these details from previous reviews. The one tiny detail worth noting, that may or may not be able to be picked up in the photo below is that the identifying mold mark is a single number located in



Figure 7: Cream Tactile top housing exterior design.

the upper right-hand side of the LED slot in a *very* tiny circle which has not been seen prior on any of the Novelkeys Blueberry switches that I looked at while writing this review.

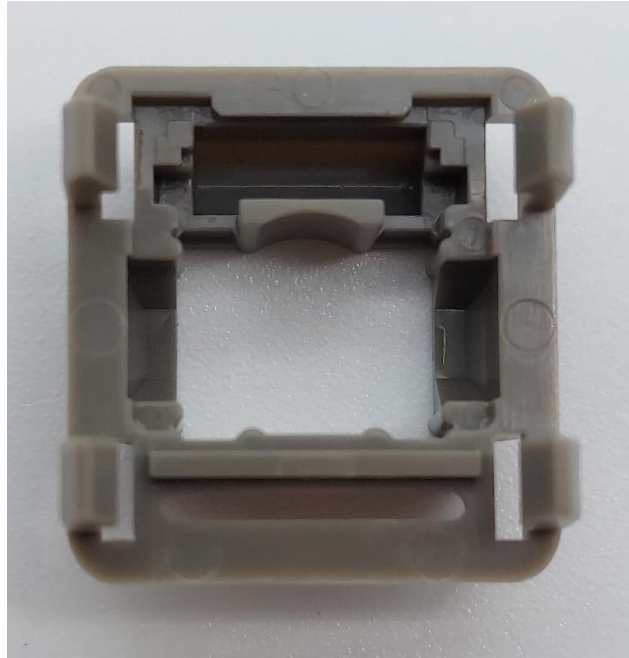


Figure 8: Cream Tactile top housing interior design showing mold markings and mold number if you squint really hard.

Moving next to the stems of these switches, they are fairly similar to, but definitely not identical to the Novelkeys Blueberry switches which they are replacing in the Novelkeys lineup. Similarly, these stems feature all the classic design points of recent switches including a stepped central pole, tapered slider rails, and a tiny amount of factory lubrication on the legs of the switches to prevent leg-leaf issues after usage. The mold circles for these switches are located both on the back side of the stem and on the front plate of the stem in a pair of tiny mold circles that sit just to the inside of the legs of the switch. The most interesting point, and probably the one you skipped directly to this section to see, though, is the shape of the tactile bump on the stem legs. While still featuring that same ‘large magnitude’ legs that many people came to expect (and were initially surprised by) in Novelkeys Blueberry switches, the bump itself seems much more well-rounded and less segmented than the Blueberry switch. Based off the sight of this, alone, you should be able to tell rather easily that these definitely do not feel the same as each other.

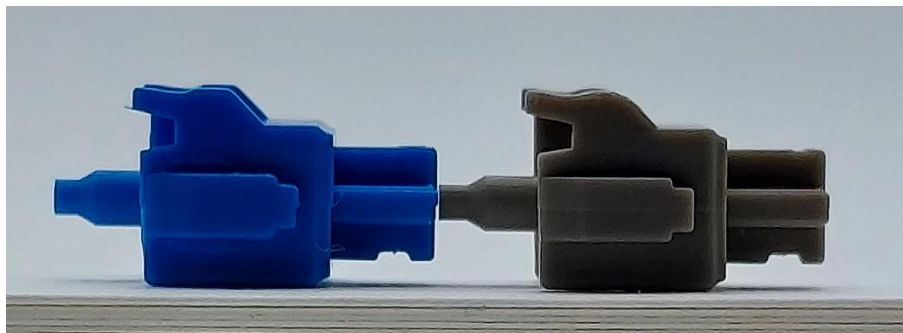


Figure 9: Novelkeys Blueberry and Cream Tactile side by side stem comparison.

Finally moving to the bottom housings of the Tactile Creams, they are fairly mundane like the top housings as well. Internally, around the upper rim of the bottom housing they feature four ejector mold marks in addition to some rather unique stepped ridges at the corner that I want to point out for those of you that are interested in these details even though I damn well know that it's only me. At the bottom interior of the bottom housing there are stepped areas at the bottom of the slider rails as well as around the central hole, but there are no mold markings nor other design features rather interesting to point out. On the underside, the mold markings are located in the bottom left and right corners near the wide LED slot with a sideways number on the left-hand side and sideways, single letter on the right-hand side. Interestingly, looking at the spec sheet for these switches informs me that only the 'B' marking is present, leading me to believe that this letter indicates the mold marking whereas the number indicates the machine or part used to injection mold these parts, specifically.

Push Feel

To say the least, the push feel of these switches is rather interesting and definitely something that is not replicated well in any other stock switch that I can think of out there right now, for better and for worse. Working in order of increasing importance to discuss, the biggest knock against the feeling of these switches is just how scratchy they are in stock form. While people are quite ready to jump to the 'oh they're POM on POM on POM and so they are just that way', I've pointed out in my Novelkeys Launch Cream scorecard that there is something about this new wave of Cream switches that has a lighter, and much more sandpaper-esque scratch to them. By comparison, I recall and personally feel like original Novelkeys Creams had a much more leathery, consistent grain scratch to them than these Tactile Creams do, and I'd much rather have something like that than what these have. As well, these are fairly heavily weighted at a 75g. tactile bump and 95g. bottoming out force, though I will say these don't quite feel as heavy as these numbers may betray.

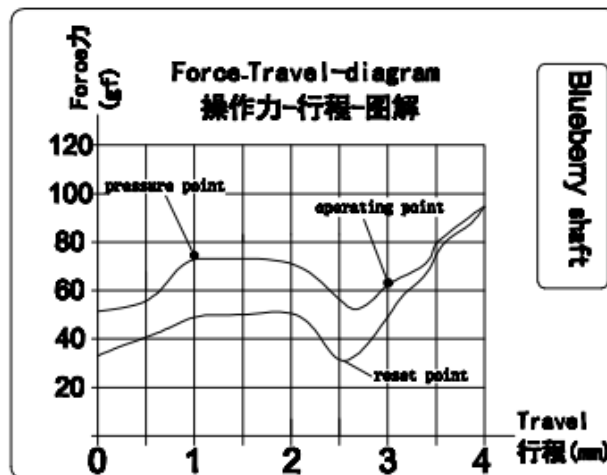


Figure 10: Cream Tactile force curve from Kailh spec sheet. (Yes, I realize it still says 'Blueberry shaft' too)

Onto the part that everyone here is wondering about though, and you may have been able to imply from the force curve shown above, the tactile bump on these switches is... strange. I should say that purely based on that force curve, alone, that they are strange, but that they also don't exactly seem to mimic this curve one to one either. While this curve would lead you to believe there is a pretty substantial increasing in force around 1 mm into the downstroke where you hit the start of the long tactile bump, it actually is fairly subtle and due to the curvature of the stem leg, it works up to it quite nicely. Is there still some weird, half-cocked pre-travel in this region, sure, but the actual jump into the tactile bump is not nearly as jarring as one may think. The overall bump itself is fairly well rounded, long, and not overly

sharp and pointed, with the bottoming out feeling a bit less firm than the tactile bump itself. As well, as noted above, while you may definitely feel that these are ‘heavier’ than normal tactile switches with respect to the tactile force and bottoming out, blindly testing these before reading these numbers would lead you to believe they are more like a 78g. bottoming out tactile switch than a 95g. one.

Sound

In their stock form, the sound of the Cream Tactiles is honestly one of the biggest disappointing features of the entire switch. While I will caveat that they do improve rather substantially with lube as I was curious to try this out for myself, I am rather disappointed with these in the same way that I was for the Launch Creams when I completed their scorecard. The most predominant sounding features of this switch sound are all not great including a noticeable scratchiness, pinging from the stem-leaf interaction, and a noticeably sharp spring ping in about half of all the switches that I received in my batch. Again, while all of these do improve with aftermarket lubrication, I feel like these take a massive step back from where the Blueberry switches were as they didn’t feature these issues to nearly the same magnitude as to what I see here in the Cream Tactile switches. As for the okay parts of the sound, though, the tactile bump is surprisingly snappy sounding, and rolls off the leaves with a bit of a sharper, mid-pitched sound to them but not to any extent such that it feels sharp or out of place. People generally in favor of louder tactile switches would definitely be a fan of how noticeable these are in a full build.

Wobble

The wobble on these switches is both fairly par for course for both Kailh and the Novelkeys Cream line of switches, though distinctly better than the Launch Creams with respect to top housing wobble. Speaking to the latter point first, unlike the Launch Creams which had a pretty substantial, almost requiring films about of top housing wobble in the E/W direction, none of these switches in my batch had top housing wobble in either direction. As for the stem wobble, there is definitely a noticeable amount in the N/S and E/W directions, and especially so when compared to the much better tolerance competitive switches that have been releasing as of late. Do I think this is necessarily a turn off with respect to these? Definitely not, and far from it. Rather, I think that people who are particularly anti-wobble would not necessarily be as much of a fan of these as others who are not.

Measurements

Novelkeys Cream Tactile Measurements			
	Component	Denotation	mm.
Stem	Front/Back Plate Length	A	7.17
	Stem Width	B	5.52
	Stem Length with Rails	C	8.54
	Rail Width	D	2.15
	Center Pole Width	E	1.91
	Rail Height	F	5.21
	Total Stem Height	G	13.37
Bottom Housing	Diagonal Between Rails	L	9.32
	Interior Length Across	M	9.54
	Rail Width	N	2.59
	Center Hole Diameter	O	2.24
Top Housing	Horizontal Stem Gap	X	7.75
	Vertical Stem Gap	Y	6.04
Methods	Number of Switches Used		3
	Replication Per Measurement		3

Comparison Notes to Other Notable Tactile 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 the Cream Tactiles switches side by side.

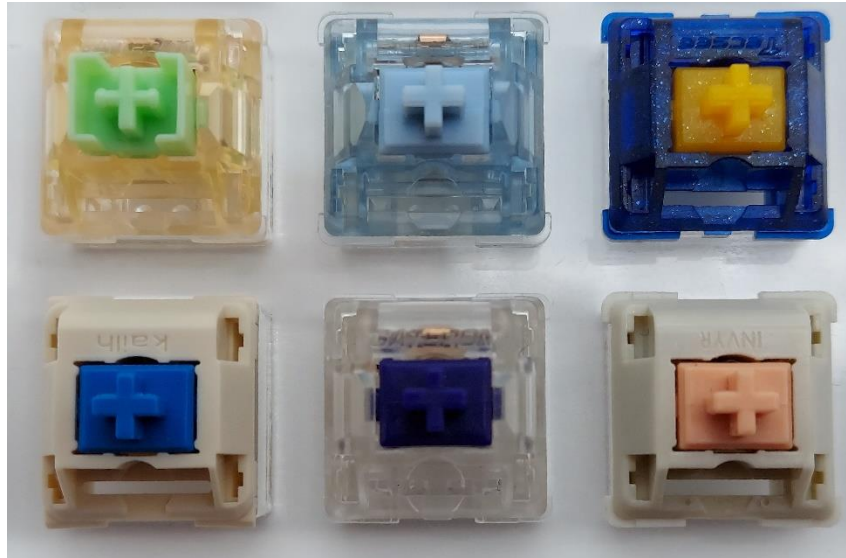


Figure 11: Switches for comparison. (L-R, Top-Bot: Gateron Kangaroo Ink, Cerulean, Tecsee Sapphire V2, Novelkeys Blueberry, Zealio V2 (78g.), and Massdrop x Invyr Holy Panda.

Gateron Kangaroo Ink

- Scratch and ping noises aside, the Cream Tactiles are pretty similar to the Gateron Kangaroo Inks in terms of overall volume of sound, though perhaps a bit sharper and less ‘full bodied’.
- While the housing collisions in the Gateron Kangaroo Inks are a bit more sudden and forceful, they do feel a bit softer and dampened than that of the Cream Tactiles.
- In terms of tactile bump comparison, the Gateron Kangaroo Inks are a tiny bit sharper than the Cream Tactiles, but I feel as if this is more of a function of how short the tactile bump is compared to the long, drawn-out bump of the Cream Tactiles.

Cerulean

- The tactile bump of the Cream Tactiles is not only significantly larger than that of the Cerulean switches, but it is also significantly stronger.
- As well, the Cream Tactiles are also by extension both louder in terms of overall volume as well as a bit snappier than the Cream Tactile switches.
- While the Ceruleans also have spring ping to them as do the Cream Tactile switches, the slight spring ping is more noticeable in the push feel of the Ceruleans. As well, this seems to be a feature of the switches rather than an isolated issue in some, whereas the spring ping in the Cream Tactiles is more noticeable by sound and present in only half of the switches tested.

Tecsee Sapphire V2 (UHMWPE Stem)

- Regardless of difference in bump length, these feel as if they have a fairly similar strength in tactile bump, with perhaps the Cream Tactiles being just a tiny bit more forceful as a result the heavier spring used.
- Overall, the stem wobble between these two switches is definitely the closest on this entire list in terms of magnitude. (Do note that this is the most recent release of the Tecsee Sapphire switches and that the original, non-UHMWPE stems didn't have nearly as much wobble as these do.)
- In terms of overall sound, the Tecsee Sapphires definitely seem to change with faster activation speeds whereas the Cream Tactiles stay pretty similar sounding at both low and high activation speeds.

Novelkeys Blueberry

- In terms of overall tactile bump, the Tactile Creams are definitely the better well rounded, slightly punchier, and altogether better performing strong tactile bump between the two of these.
- With respect to sound between these two switches, picking ideal cases of either sans any of the issues they both have, the Blueberry switches definitely sound a bit more thick, and with a slightly more muted and mid-pitched sound than the Tactile Creams.
- The stem wobble on the Novelkeys Blueberry switches is a lot closer to that of the Tactile Creams than I had remembered previously, though in all honesty it is still a bit better than the Tactile Creams.

Zealio V2 (78g.)

- With respect to the tactile bump, the heaviest of the Zealio V2 switches is definitely sharper and a bit more forceful than the tactile bump of the Tactile Creams, but again, whether or not this is a function of the difference in tactile bump length is worth considering.
- In terms of overall sound, the Tactile Creams are louder and higher pitched with respect to the general housing collisions and tactile bump as well as their ping and scratch sounds.
- Given the increased length and lack of initial ramp up to the tactile bump in the Tactile Creams, the linear pre-travel region to the tactile bump is significantly less awkward and unwieldy here than the Zealio V2s.

Massdrop x Invyr Holy Panda

- In terms of overall tactile bump strength and feeling, these are actually surprisingly similar between these two switches. To think the one tactile switch that didn't market itself purely as a 'Holy Panda-like tactile switch' is actually the more Holy Panda like than most is honestly just a damn beautiful level of irony.
- The stem wobble, and especially that in the E/W direction is noticeably worse in the Massdrop x Invyr Holy Pandas than in the Tactile Creams.
- In terms of overall sound, though, these switches are on fairly opposite ends of the spectrum with these Holy Pandas being much more bass heavy and firm sounding than the relatively high-pitched Tactile Cream switches.

Scores and Statistics

Note – These scores are not necessarily completely indicative of the nuanced review above. If you've skipped straight to this section, I can only recommend that you at least glance at the other sections above in order to get a stronger idea of my opinion about these switches.

Cream Tactile		
<i>Switch Type: Tactile</i>		<i>Kailh</i>
25	/35	Push Feel
15	/25	Wobble
4	/10	Sound
14	/20	Context
6	/10	Other
64	/100	Total

Push Feel

The push feel of the Cream Tactiles is unfortunately a tail of two halves. On the positive side, we have a relatively smooth, strong, but not overly aggressive large tactile bump that is pretty heavily weighted and well executed versus other offerings to date. On the other hand, though, scratch and ping issues from both spring and leaves really do hurt the stock performance of these switches, and especially so relative to their predecessors.

Wobble

The stem wobble is fairly on par for Kailh releases with a noticeable amount in both the N/S and E/W direction and no top housing wobble. Is it bothersome to the point that it will turn off most people? Not really, no. It will likely only be a real issue for those particularly susceptible to wobble but there is still plenty of room for improvement by Kailh.

Sound

As hinted to above in the push feel section, real and substantial issues with the stock sound of these switches come in the form of spring ping, leaf ping, and scratch that are not consistent across all switches but present in a large enough amount to be a concern.

Context

Previously I had described the Novelkeys Blueberry switches as a 'steppingstone' to a new and better switch in the future, and with respect to purely the tactile bump, these switches definitely are that. With the issues they have, though, it's a little hard to see them as a true replacement for the Novelkeys Blueberry switches. The pricing and availability that is Novelkeys, though, will definitely make them about as accessible as they could possibly be though.

Other

The one real saving grace that assigned a lot of these points in this category is that these switches improve fairly noticeably with even a half-assed lube application. I really feel like these could be the favorites of some tactile fans that don't mind getting their hands dirty a bit.

Statistics

Average Score			Cream Tactile		
26.3	/35	Push Feel	25	/35	Push Feel
16.5	/25	Wobble	15	/25	Wobble
5.7	/10	Sound	4	/10	Sound
12.6	/20	Context	14	/20	Context
6.0	/10	Other	6	/10	Other
67.1	/100	Total	64	/100	Total
Cream Tactile Overall Rank			T-#75/128 (64/100)		
Cream Tactile 'Hard' Rank			T-#93/128 (44/70)		
Cream Tactile 'Soft' Rank			T-#39/128 (20/30)		

Final Conclusions

After having sat down and thoroughly tried these switches out, I can say that I'm honestly left with a pretty big bag of mixed feelings about these switches. For true replacements of the Novelkeys Blueberry switch line, I am rather disappointed with the glaring flaws in their stock performance with the issues like scratch, spring ping, and leaf ping in some switches. While this doesn't necessarily imply that the Novelkeys Blueberries were perfect and free of these issues themselves, they definitely seem to have gotten either worse or at bare minimum more noticeable here in the new Cream Tactile switches. Especially given the relatively prominent nature of these for Novelkeys and how they are one of their in stock, 'branded' options, I really am left wondering why they didn't want to try and improve on these issues more, and I definitely don't think it's a matter of subtlety as if I'm the only person who would notice these tiny flaws in the switch – they're rather obvious.

But on the flip side of that, though, these definitely do make a notable improvement on some of the community wide complaints of the Novelkeys Blueberry tactile bump. These truly are a more well-rounded, better polished, and cleaner tactile bump than the Blueberries and to people who are seeking that out, they will absolutely enjoy these. As well, the weighting is pretty solidly chosen for this switch such that even though the big numbers at bottoming out and tactile bump might seem large, they still feel fairly reasonable on the heavy side of things. Above all, though, these really do improve pretty drastically with some decent care and attention with respect to lubing and perhaps spring swapping to an ever so slightly lighter weight if that is your type of thing.

So, in total, I'm not too happy with where these are in stock form and definitely think that there have been steps forward and backward with respect to various features of the Cream Tactiles relative to their predecessors in Novelkeys Blueberries. What I *will* be interested to see, though, is how these further improve or change over time as Novelkeys continues to grow and expand their selection and variation of switches.

Sponsors/Affiliates

Mechbox.co.uk

- A wonderful UK based operation which sells singles to switches that I've used above in my comparisons for collectors and the curious alike. Matt has gone out of his way to help me build out big parts of my collection, and buying something using this link supports him as well as my content!

KeebCats UK

- A switch peripheral company based out of the UK which sells everything switch adjacent you could ask for, they've been a huge help recently with my film and lube supply for personal builds, and they want to extend that help to you too. **Use code 'GOAT' for 10% off your order when you check them out!**

Proto[Typist] Keyboards

- An all-things keyboard vendor based out of the UK, proto[Typist] is a regular stocker of everything from switches to the latest keyboard and keycap groupbuys. While I've bought things from the many times in the past, they also are a sponsor of my work and allow me to get some of the great switches I write about!

MKUltra Corporation

- We may have stolen a few government secrets to get this one together. MKUltra is a US vendor that truly fills all the gaps other vendors simply don't offer and is continuing to expand their switch and switch related peripherals by the day. **Use code 'GOAT' for 5% off your order when you check them out!**

Divinikey

- Not only do they stock just about everything related to keyboards and switches, but they're super friendly and ship out pretty quick too. Divinikey has been a huge help to me and my builds over the last year or two of doing reviews and they'll definitely hook you up. **Use code 'GOAT' for 5% off your order when you check them out!**

Further Reading

Novelkeys Cream Sales Page

Link: https://novelkeys.com/products/nk_-cream-series?variant=40598616866983

Wayback: https://web.archive.org/web/20211031040822/https://novelkeys.com/products/nk_-cream-series?variant=40598616866983

Novelkeys Cream Tactile Spec Sheet

Link: https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/3099/8088/files/Cream_Tactile_Spec_Sheet.pdf?v=1633525241

Toufousoup's Novelkeys Cream Tactile Review

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YutmndbIIOY&t=38s&ab_channel=Toufousoup