

Gateron Kangaroo Ink Switch Review

-ThereminGoat, 11/21/2020

With Thanksgiving celebrations just around the corner here in the US, one thing has been squarely on my mind for well over the last week now: Turkey. While many people outside of the US (as well as a lot of people in the US, to be entirely honest) see the Thanksgiving season from the lens of 'Black Friday', where we all ritualistically stampede the massive chain stores and fist fight our neighbors to get 50% off of a blender we don't actually need, I am a much more simple goat focused on the food and family gatherings that will not be had this year. At the least, I will be able to cozy up in bed with my family of switches and a small turkey dinner to watch the Dallas Cowboys lose their traditional Thanksgiving game.



Figure 1: I'm not sure how you could possibly think I am biased against the Cowboys at all.

With the cultural ramblings out of the way, my switch family is honestly starting to turn into more and more of a petting zoo at this point with all of the recent switches being released with animal themed names. Aside the slew of new 'Adjective Pandas' being added in the recent weeks, Cranes, Robins, and now even *Kangaroos* are being added to the ever increasing animal naming scheme for switches putting the theme right up there next to fruits and plays on the word 'Zeal'. I'm super thankful to have gotten my hands on the Kangaroo switches in part due to a fellow Ohioan by the name of chaoskills08, who graciously donated a small portion of his 70 pack to me so that I would be able to take a look into these. With pack size from my long-time vendor of choice Novelkeys being increased recently, I'm going to have to be relying on graciousness like this as well as my Patrons on my new Patreon page to help me out in keeping up with some of these newer releases. Regardless of how you choose to support me, being it by donating to the Patreon, sending me switches, or even just reading every article that I put up online, know that I am most always thankful for your support, and not just seasonally so.

Switch Background

I will admit, I am very much in the same boat as the majority of the community on this switch in that I absolutely was not aware that it was coming or was going to be released any time soon. While I would state this may be a result of me just having "too many switches to keep track of", these genuinely do appear to have completely flown under my radar. Looking online though, it does seem that the Gateron

Kangaroo Inks were announced via Monstargears at some point in mid to late September of 2020. With the only other page discussing these switches prior to their arrival being a brief mention of their existence on KeebTalk, these switches flew fairly low under the radar until their release on Novelkeys in early November of 2020.

In the hang time between the quiet teasing of these switches and their eventual release onto the market at large, there was a ‘recolor’ of these switches announced via Reddit that I *was* aware of. Announced in late September on Reddit, as well as discussed in that initial Keebtalk posting on Gateron Kangaroo Inks, CMM.Studio’s Freather announced the ‘Gateron Limbo’ switch, which appears functionally identical to the Kangaroo switches but in an opaque grey housing with a blueish stem combination. While it was stated that these would run sometime in November of 2020, the reason that I had heard of these prior is that they had already been run via a Chinese-exclusive groupbuy earlier in 2020, though I was unable to easily get any into my hands prior to writing this review. I do believe that I have narrowed down a deal though with one of my proxies to be able to get some to me *eventually*.



Figure 2: You could say my ownership of them is in *limbo*.

As of the posting of this review, Gateron Kangaroo Inks are currently available via both Monstargears and Novelkeys at a price point of \$0.90 per switch, which is significantly higher than other ‘highly tactile’ and ‘Gateron Ink’ switches being marketed alongside the Kangaroo Inks.

Kangaroo Ink Switch Performance

Appearance

Of all of the switches in recent memory that I have both reviewed *and* received for the collection, I can unequivocally say that these are some of my least favorite looking switches. Thus, I will proceed to absolutely dunk on them here for the rest of this section. Being entirely transparent about why I feel the need to dunk on how these look, my first exposure to them came via the way of Novelkeys’ pictures of them on their Gateron Inks sales page, which you can find below. As you can clearly see from these photo, these switches appear to have a light-teal colored stem as well as a slightly more yellow tinted, yet still smoky black housing. Comparatively from the photographs, these almost seem like they’d arrive looking like dustproof Tealio stems in lighter Black Ink housings.

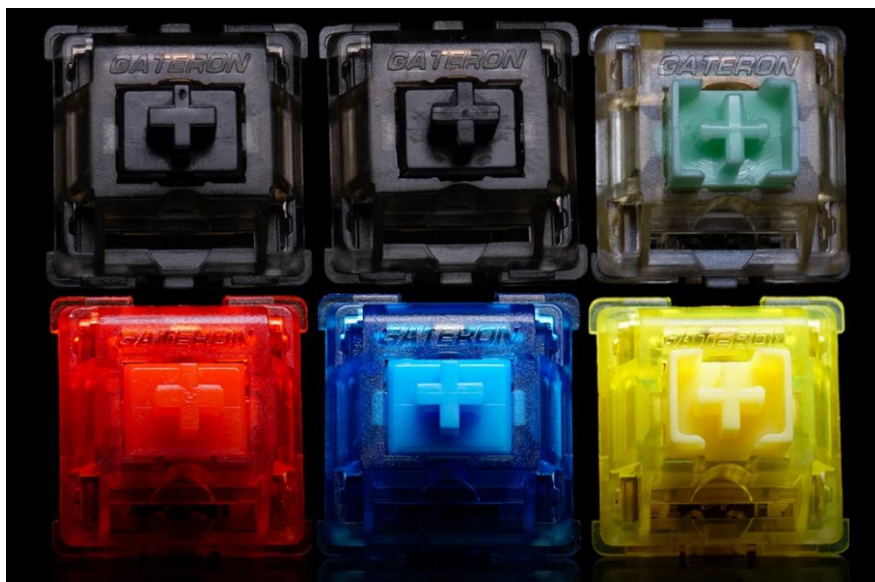


Figure 3: Novelkeys' Gateron Ink Family Photo with Kangaroo Inks in the top right corner.

However, when I actually got these switches into my hands and took a strong look at them, I can assure you that is not what showed up. Granted, the Mostargears and Keebtalk posts discussing these switches had color-accurate photos of these switches, though I was not aware of these nor was I forming my excitement and opinion about these switches on those posts. What I instead received appeared to be modified Box Crystal Jades that had been either stored or used in the vicinity of a carton-per-day smoker who had left the otherwise clear, crystalline nylon housing permanently nicotine stained.



Figure 4: Not pictured, a Gateron switch top which has just ended its decades long battle with smoking.

Looking as if they quite literally need retrobrighted prior to usage in boards, the Gateron Kangaroo Ink switches have an extremely pale yellow, transparent top and bottom housings which hold a dustproof, lime green stem. Even under non-white light like my yellow-lighted desk lamp, these switches still appear a fairly funky color combination that looks like someone at the Starburst factory would throw them out for being a rejected product. While many people would claim that looks are not a necessity when it comes to switches due to the fact that they are hidden by keycaps and almost entirely driven by

performance over appearance, you still have to *interest* people with the design of your switches and these most certainly do not do it for me.

Internally, though, these switches also boast a couple of interesting characteristics appearance wise that I think would be worthy of discussing. Immediately upon opening the switch, the most notable feature is a set of four dots on the front of the dustproof stem that do not necessarily appear to be injection mold points. While these also do appear on the photos of stems of Gateron Limbo switches, these dots do not appear on Gateron Yellow Ink stems, leading me to believe that there were further mold design changes made to the dustproof stems that Gateron sold since these dots would indicate new molds needing to be made.



Figure 5: Dots on the front side of Gateron Kangaroo Ink stems.

The other big point of interest about the internal appearance of these switches are the extremely long springs. While we have seen long springs in several different switches this year, including KK Lightwaves, Cranes, and Giant V3s, we have yet to see long springs from any Gateron release marking these the first to my knowledge to do so. In fact, based on photos of the Gateron Limbo switches that were in the initial Reddit post, as well, Gateron Limbos appear to have ‘normal’ sized springs whereas the Gateron Kangaroo Inks don’t, making this the distinguishing feature between these switches to suffice not to call them ‘recolors’.



Figure 6: Gateron Kangaroo Ink spring (top) vs. normal spring length (bottom).



Figure 7: Gateron Limbo's normal spring length.

Push Feel

Much like with the surprise in appearance of these switches, the push feel of the Kangaroo Inks also has a few other surprises that definitely would have been mitigated had I seen the Monstragears posting first. The first and most noticeable attribute of these switches out of the gate is that they have a reduced stem travel distance to bottom out as compared to most other switches. In fact, both according to Novelkeys' website as well as personal testing, these switches appear to have roughly the same actuation point and definitely do have the same bottoming out point as the Gateron Yellow Inks at 3.5 mm as opposed to the 'standard' 4.0 mm bottom out. While this isn't necessarily something that I dislike, the fact that the tops of the stem do not finish flush with the top housing and instead stick out a fraction of a millimeter is a bit off putting to me testing these in hand.

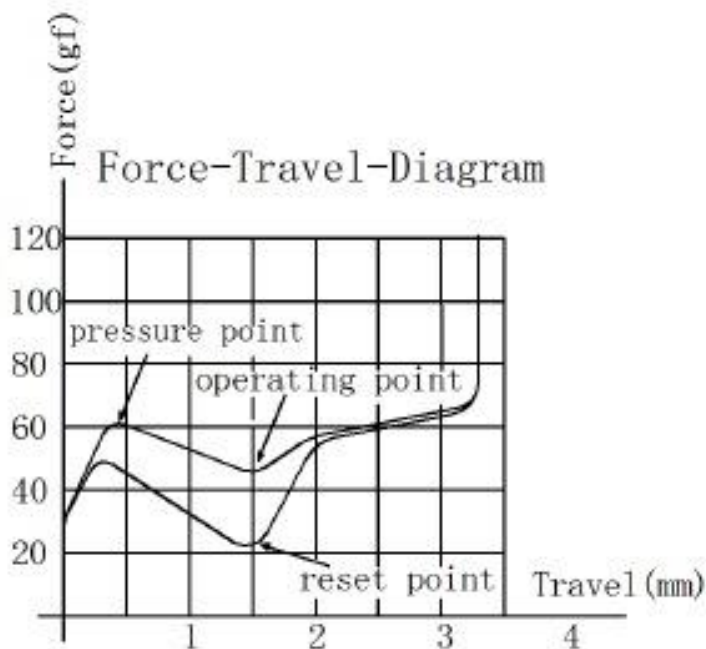


Figure 8: Gateron Kangaroo Ink manufacturer force curve.

Shortly after noticing the reduced travel distance in these switches, both by feel and by the force curve for Gateron Kangaroo Inks above, it's readily noticeable that there is absolutely no linear pre-travel in these switches whatsoever. In fact, this lack of linear pretravel immediately shifts into an early-in-stroke tactile bump which appears to be the currently desired trend among tactile switches in the market. As can be seen by the force curve as well, the peak tactile force of this downstroke bump is nearly equivalent to that of the bottom out force of the switch at 65g.

While none of these features that I've mentioned thus far along are necessarily strange or surprising in a vacuum, the one push feel feature that really did stand out to be as interesting was actually the upstroke tactile bump. Unlike other tactile switches such as most Holy Pandas or Zeal V2 switches which feature an upstroke portion of the force curve that is similar in shape and size to the downstroke portion, you can readily see in the force curve for the Kangaroo Inks that this is not the case and you can most certainly feel it as well: the upstroke bump of these are actually stronger and larger than that of the downstroke tactile bump.

This actually produces a relatively rare feeling of a 'two-toned tactile' switch in which the downstroke does not feel similar to the upstroke in anyway whatsoever. While the downstroke has no linear pretravel, followed by a short, fairly rounded tactile bump, the upstroke has a midway-through-stroke placed stronger, and more rounded tactile bump that is definitely distinguishable from the downstroke feeling. To the best of my knowledge, not many switches play with the upstroke versus downstroke feelings of the tactile bump in nearly the same capacity as the Kangaroo Inks, with the exceptions that come to mind being Novelkeys Blueberries or Kailh Polias, though the latter is based purely on a guess based on their force curves.

Sound

As a whole, these are actually fairly pleasant sounding yet simultaneously loud tactile switches. While the downstroke produces a fairly quiet, muted sounding bottoming out noise, the combined upstroke of the tactile bump and topping out produce a much more loud, high pitched, and thinner sounding noise. That is not to say, though, that the upstroke noise produced in these switches is thin in a harsh kind of way, as they actually produce a fairly well rounded sound with a bit of a bass to it, though it is just noticeably thinner than the downstroke bump and bottoming out sounds.

As well, in a big deviation from other long-springed switches that have been released earlier this year, there is not noticeable spring ping nor crunch in the Kangaroo Inks at any typing speeds. While this was for a long time my main hang up on the introduction and developing trend of long springs in switches, the fact that these switches don't appear to suffer from spring ping or crunch is both fairly interesting and promising from my perspective.

Wobble

Aside the differences in stem design details that leads me to believe that there were new molds designed entirely differently than the Gateron Yellow Inks to produce these switches, the wobble also contributes to this idea. These switches have a very small and potentially noticeable stem wobble in both the N/S and E/W directions, though the N/S direction wobble is noticeably lesser than that of the Yellow Ink switches. Additionally, there is no top housing wobble to these switches at all.

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 the Gateron Kangaroo Inks to other tactile switches in preparation for this writeup.



Figure 9: Switches for comparison. (L-R, Top-Bot: C3 Kiwi, Cherry MX Brown, Novelkeys Blueberry, Kailh Box Royal, Massdrop x Invyr Holy Panda, Zealio V2 68g)

Massdrop x Invyr Holy Panda

- Audibly, while these Holy Pandas have a significantly deeper, more muted, and thicker sound to them in terms of both tactile bump and bottoming out, there is an occasional spring ping that is completely missing from the Gateron Kangaroo Inks.
- While the Kangaroo's downstroke bump feels similar in strength and size to the Holy Panda, the upstroke tactile bump feels much stronger and more pronounced.
- There is ever so slightly more N/S stem wobble in the Massdrop x Invyr Holy Pandas than there are in the Gateron Kangaroo Inks.

Zealio V2 (68g)

- The tactile bump of the Zealio V2 switches is actually quite similar in strength and shape to that of the upstroke tactile bump of the Gateron Kangaroo Inks, though not the downstroke. (Note, while many people would be aghast to learn that this would therefore imply that Zealio V2 switches are more tactile than Holy Pandas, I would rather point them to the lesser quality that Massdrop imbues into its products by virtue of doing more to them, such as assembling them for you. If you want better Holy Pandas, do it yourself.)
- There is noticeably less stem wobble in the Zealio V2s as compared to the Kangaroo Inks, regardless of direction.
- Much like the Holy Pandas, the Zealio V2 switch features from the same audible spring ping and/or stem/leaf ping that the Gateron Kangaroo Inks simply do not have.

C3 Kiwi

- While scratch isn't necessarily the primary point of interest or noticeability in highly tactile switches, the C3 Kiwis do feel ever so slightly smoother than the Kangaroo Inks.
- To nobody's surprise, there is significantly lesser stem wobble in both N/S and E/W directions of the Kiwis as compared to the Kangaroos, which is likely due to them sharing top housing molds with the C3 Tangerine V2s.
- The actual upstroke collision with the top housing does feel a bit lighter and less forceful than that of the C3 Kiwis.

Kailh Box Royal

- The tactile bump of the Box Royal, in terms of strength and size, lies somewhere between the upstroke and downstroke bumps of the Kangaroo Inks, though much closer to the upstroke tactile bump than the downstroke one.
- The Kangaroo Inks have both a significantly louder and more well-rounded sound than the Box Royals, which is especially noticeable due to the added higher pitch noises that are simply muted in the Box Royals.
- The stem wobble in both directions for the Kailh Box Royal switches is fairly comparable to that of the Gateron Kangaroo Inks, and probably the most accurate match on this entire list.

Novelkeys Blueberry

- While not entirely similar in terms of shape, placement, nor feeling, the two-toned tactile feeling of the Novelkeys Blueberry switches does seem much more noticeable when compared to the Gateron Kangaroo Inks. If the change in tactility throughout the stroke of the Blueberries was your main hang up with them, I would anticipate that you may not like the Kangaroos.
- By virtue of the Cream housings, alone, the Novelkeys Blueberries do have a fairly noticeable amount of scratch that comes through even alongside their tactile bumps.
- Even though it is a bit muted, the general sharpness of the sound of the Novelkeys Blueberries is similar to that of the upstroke bump and topping out noise of the Gateron Kangaroo Inks.

Cherry MX Brown

- The tactile bump strength of the Cherry MX Brown is noticeably lesser than the downstroke tactile bump in the Kangaroo Inks and significantly lesser than the upstroke bump.
- For what its worth, the actual topping out feeling of the Cherry MX Browns, as well as other Cherry MX switches in general, is similar in terms of firmness to the Kangaroo Inks, which I was fairly surprised about.
- As a whole, the Cherry MX Brown switches were significantly more quiet in terms of tactile bump, topping out, and bottoming out noises as compared to any of the sounds of the Gateron Kangaroo Inks.

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.

Gateron Kangaroo Inks		
28	/35	Push Feel
16	/25	Wobble
7	/10	Sound
11	/20	Context
7	/10	Other
69	/100	Total

Push Feel

This was a hard category to score. While I am not necessarily a fan of the minor scratch nor the reduced travel distance of the stroke, the two-tone tactility of the Kangaroo Inks is fascinating and not altogether bad feeling. It would certainly take some getting used to, but it definitely is a unique tactile option out there right now.

Wobble

No top housing wobble with mild, potentially stem wobble in the N/S and E/W stem directions. This is not only fairly expected for Gateron Ink switches, but an ever so slight improvement on existing standards.

Sound

While many people are often in the hunt for deep, 'thocky' sounding tactile switches, I don't necessarily think that these are bad because they are not that. These definitely have a loud, high pitched, and in-your-face sound that not many tactile switches can pull off well.

Context

These switches are honestly full of nuance with respect to context. On one hand, they're clearly an improvement of existing molds, pull off long springs well, and have a unique tactile bump. On the other, I think they're a bit overpriced and inaccessible for testing, which makes their surprising reveal a bit harder for the average user to try out.

Other

The Gateron Kangaroo Inks take a great step forward in terms of improving and expanding upon ideas that have only recently shown up in switches, which has me damn excited, just not for the price that they are demanding currently.

Statistics

Average Score			Gateron Kangaroo Inks		
25.5	/35	Push Feel	28	/35	Push Feel
15.5	/25	Wobble	16	/25	Wobble
6	/10	Sound	7	/10	Sound
11.7	/20	Context	11	/20	Context
5.9	/10	Other	7	/10	Other
64.7	/100	Total	69	/100	Total
Total Switches Ranked			38		
Total Tactiles Ranked			10		
Kangaroo Inks Rank			11th Overall, 4th Tactiles		

Final Conclusions

Having gotten these with fairly little hype or discussion surrounding them prior, I must say I'm honestly not entirely sure how I or the community at large should feel about these switches. I can pretty acutely recognize that this switch pushes forward design concepts that we've not seen done well in previous switches, such as long springs and 'bifurcated' tactility. However, I'm torn at the general lack of accessibility, fairly steep price tag, and in small part their fairly ugly looking color scheme. I don't even necessarily think that the features that this switch does extremely well are the new 'trends' in the hobby, rather I think they will develop into an interesting niche of tactile and/or long springed switches that will remain such until someone really hammers out the fine details as well as the price point that matches that performance to make them 'the next best thing'. In the meantime, much like I did with my Novelkeys Blueberry switch review, I'm going to classify these as a 'stepping stone' switch – they aren't exactly great all things considered now, but these are definitely one step past Blueberries and KK Lightwaves, and pushing towards a much more interesting future switch.

Further Reading

Novelkeys' Gateron Kangaroo Ink Sales Page

Link: <https://novelkeys.xyz/collections/switches/products/gateron-ink-v2-switches>

Wayback:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20201121030755/https://novelkeys.xyz/collections/switches/products/gateron-ink-v2-switches>

Monstargears Kangaroo Ink Sales Page

Link: <https://www.monstargears.com/1291362592/?idx=292>

Wayback:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20201121030855/https://www.monstargears.com/1291362592/?idx=292>

Gateron Kangaroo KeebTalk Page

Link: <https://www.keebtalk.com/t/gateron-kangaroo-gateroos/11035>

Wayback: <https://web.archive.org/web/20201121031016/https://www.keebtalk.com/t/gateron-kangaroo-gateroos/11035>

Gateron Limbo Switch Interest Check

Link:

https://www.reddit.com/r/mechmarket/comments/ith5j1/ic_cmmstudio_x_gateron_limbo_tactile_switchtease/

Wayback:

https://web.archive.org/web/20201121031139/https://www.reddit.com/r/mechmarket/comments/ith5j1/ic_cmmstudio_x_gateron_limbo_tactile_switchtease/