

B2L Arcade Replica Pads - Overview/Thoughts

Website:

<https://www.iborntolead.com/product-category/arcade-replica-pad/>

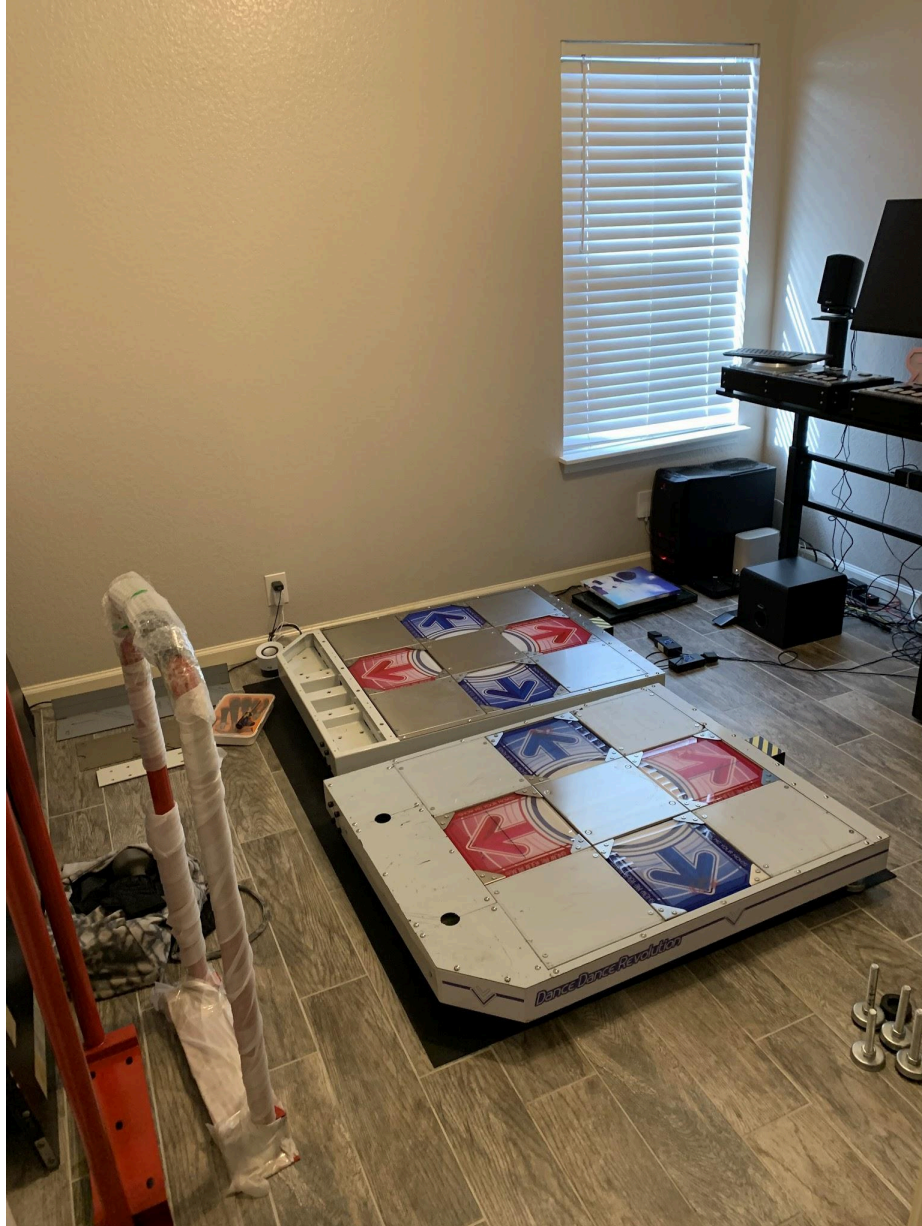
Note: I wrote up this document in March 2024, and my pads were built several months before that (approximately mid-2023). Newer builds of the pads likely have various tweaks/improvements/options not covered here.



B2L Arcade Replica Pads - Double Stage, DDR A Theme

I've owned these pads for a few months and played a good amount of both DDR Grand Prix and Stepmania on them. Here are my assorted impressions, thoughts, and experiences with them.

- [For a pretty in-depth look at these, Dr. D has detailed unboxing, setup, and modding videos.](#)
Keep in mind, however, that his pads were an older build and various improvements have been made since then (in particular, the brackets on mine are the proper shape, and the panel sizes are more consistent).
- I bought these pads from a friend (he snagged a real cab while these were on order) so I don't have first hand experience with the order process. But from what he told me, communication with the seller (via facebook messenger) was great from start to finish.
- Maneuvering these around isn't bad. Two people can carry one of these pads no problem, and I didn't have any trouble turning them on their side during setup. I've never lifted real arcade pads personally, but my impression is that these are built a bit lighter.



Pad setup in progress

- Looking at the fit and finish of the metal frame, it's obvious these aren't a perfect match with Konami arcade pads. Looking closely, some pieces don't line up 100% perfectly, and some edges aren't the smoothest (though I wouldn't call anything dangerously sharp). Some screw holes on the outer cosmetic pieces have stripped threads (all the important screw holes are fine). The bars seem to be ever so slightly thinner in diameter than real arcade bars and don't have a perfectly shiny paint finish. So overall, these pads certainly have "knockoff" vibes, but in my experience none of these things compromise the gameplay or maintenance experience.

- When setting up the pads, for some reason the second pad was missing 7 of the 9 socket cap screws needed to bolt down the bar. So I had to grab some M10 1.5x30mm socket cap screws and M10 washers off of amazon.
- The bars seem as sturdy as arcade ones and mount to the pads just like the arcade ones do. No concerns here. And according to Dr. D's experience, the seller will do custom sizing for those who want something taller than DDR height bars. I just got standard DDR height bars.
Update: PIU style bars are now a selectable option on the product page!



Bar detached from pad

- The bars came with some thin cheap cushions that don't even really cover the area where one would grip the bar. [I just bought the official bar cushions from ddrpad.com](https://ddrpad.com).
- The leg levelers aren't the same as the arcade ones. The front ones are actually shorter than the back ones because unlike arcade pads, the threads for the front legs sit lower than the back ones. Interesting design choice, but I don't perceive any issue with it. I also had to use silicone lubricant on a couple of the legs because they were too difficult to screw in all the way otherwise. The thread size is actually the same as the arcade (M16), so arcade leg levelers will probably work with these pads, but I haven't tried myself.



Included leg levelers

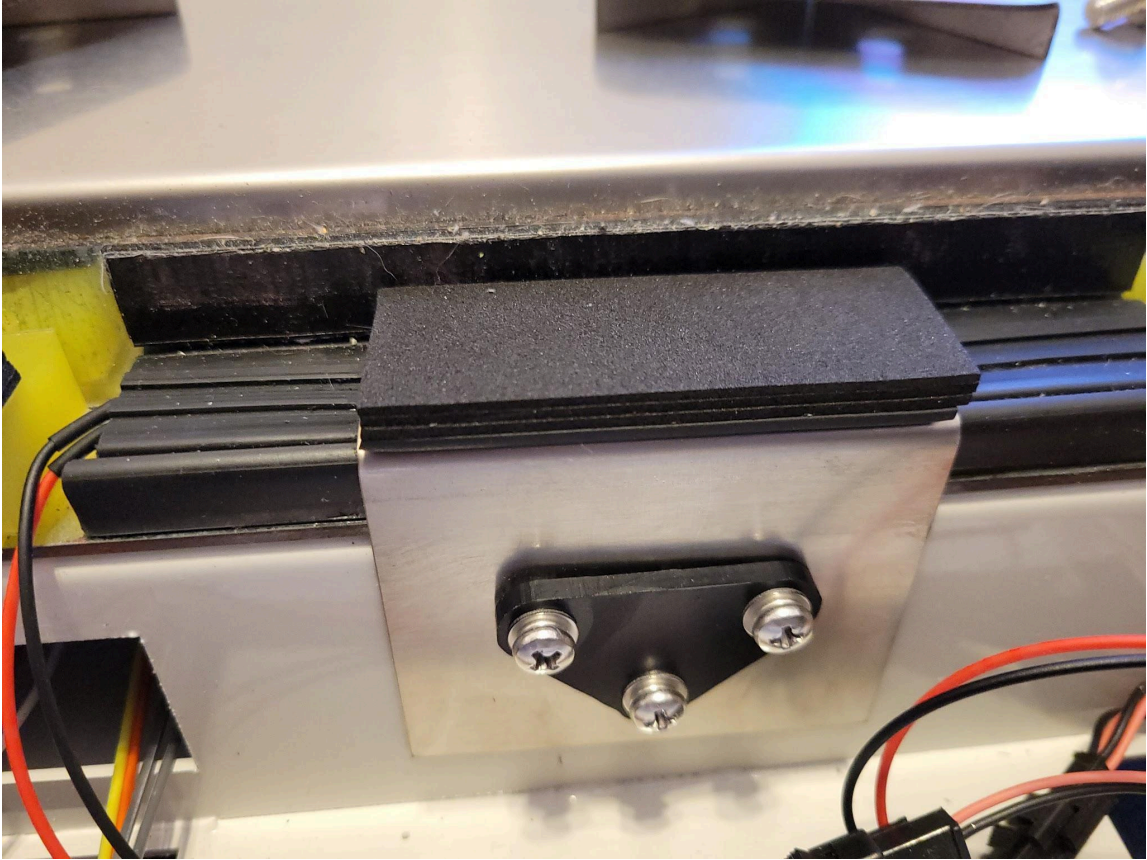
- The arrow panels have quite a bit of wiggle to them inside the frame. Nothing a bit of foam tape on the sides can't fix, of course. The panels are also ever so slightly larger than arcade panels it seems, by approximately 1 mm in length and width. The dimensions are interesting and I don't have easy access to an arcade pad to do a direct comparison and spell out the differences. But the center panel is the right size and nothing feels off when playing, so I'm not concerned.

- My partner, who plays no bar, feels that the arrow panels have a bit more flex than arcade panels. The thickness appears to be the same, so perhaps the material used is a bit different. It's hard to say at this point what that means for their longevity.



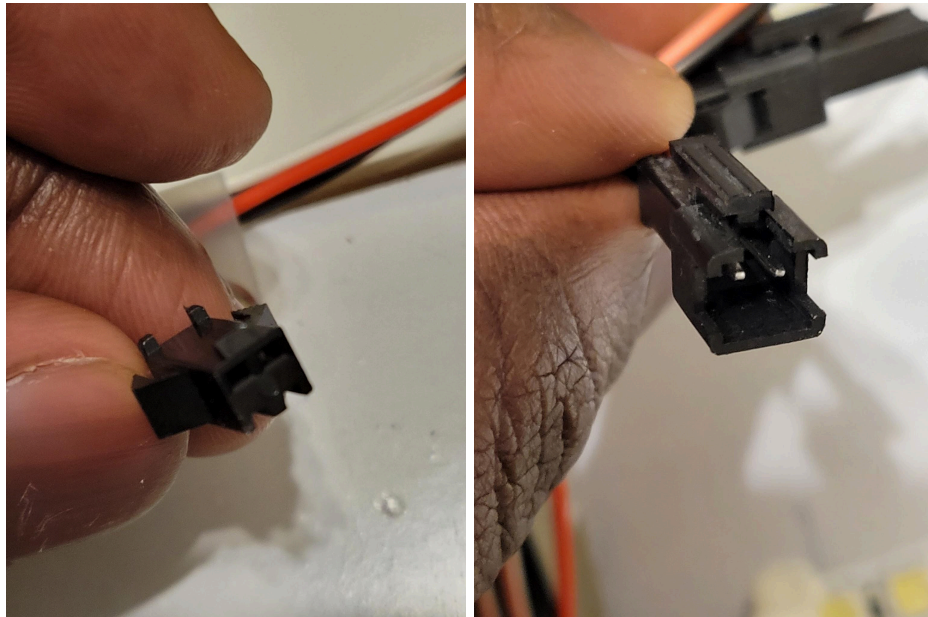
Open pad with all pre-installed foam removed

- Opening up an arrow, the inside looks mostly like an arcade pad, the primary difference being the use of generic sensors (commonly referred to as ez2dancer sensors or aliexpress sensors) rather than official Konami ones. They are nice and sensitive and I've had no issues with them so far. If I have to give a critique, perhaps they make the panels feel a bit less springy than the Konami sensors do, but my modding might also be to blame for that.



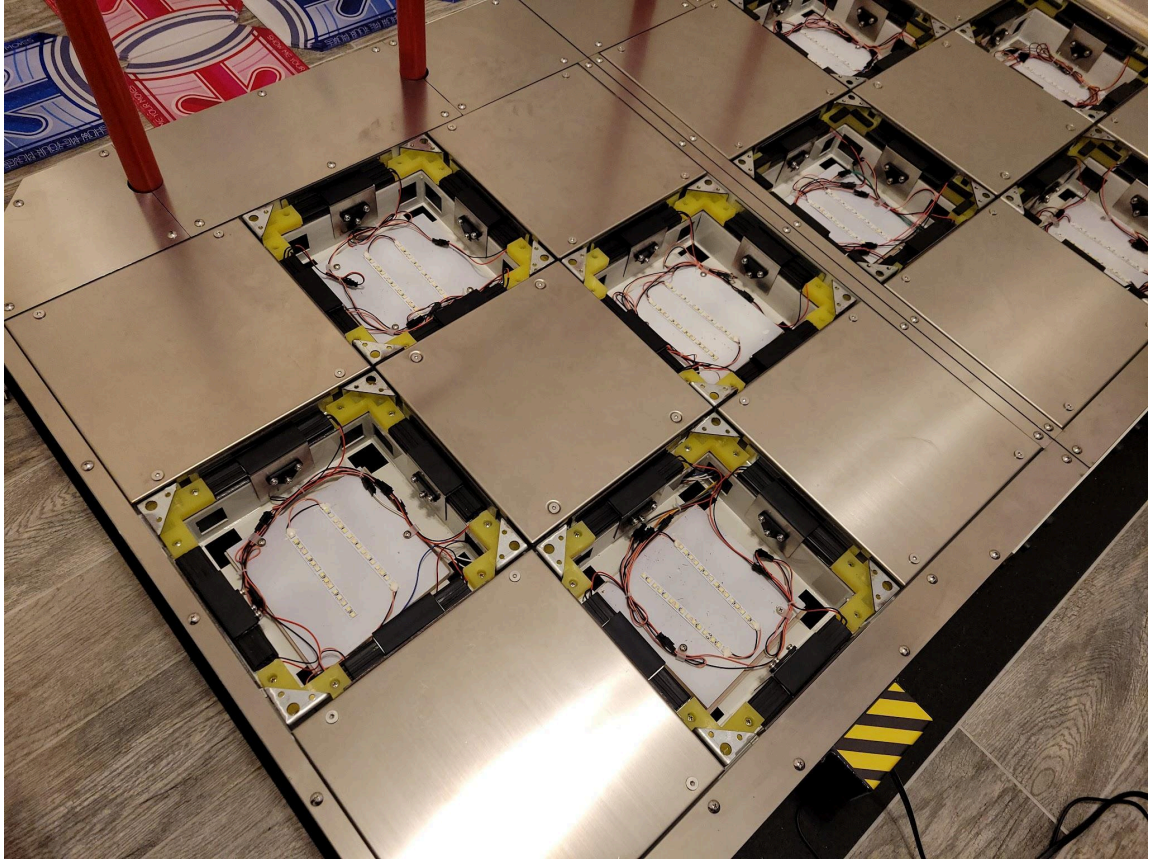
Sensor under L-bracket (my own foam/rubber applied on top)

- The one annoying thing about the sensors is that they use JST-SM connectors rather than [the JST-XH connectors on the sensors one would buy from aliexpress or ddrpad.com](#), so getting replacements in the future will require either reaching out to the original seller or getting a little creative with the wiring. I believe the seller does offer the option to use official Konami sensors rather than the generic ones, if desired.



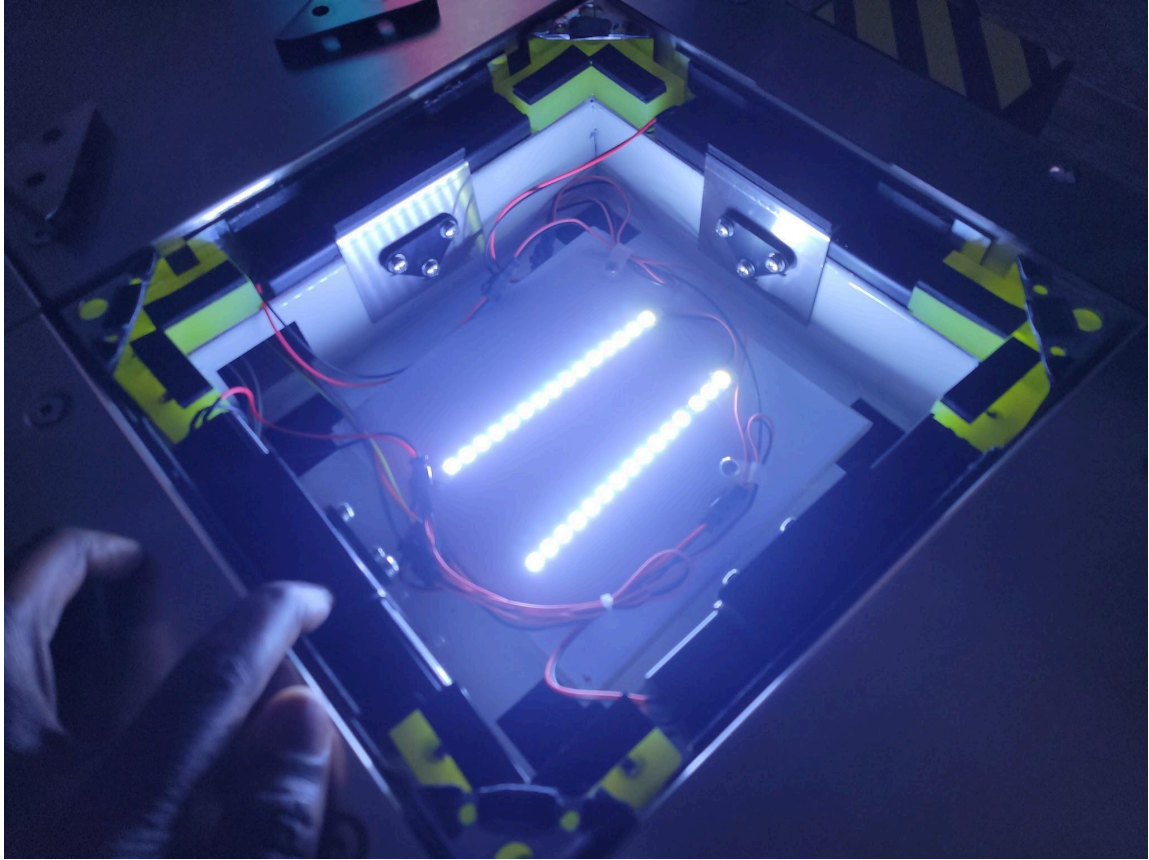
JST-SM male and female connectors

- These sensors sit lower than arcade ones do, so it takes significantly more foam and/or tape on top of the L-bracket to raise the panel to a good height. The pad actually comes with some foam pieces underneath each L-bracket to account for this gap, but they're way too squishy and feel pretty bad to play on. Getting rid of all the existing foam and doing a proper foam/tape mod is definitely the way to go.



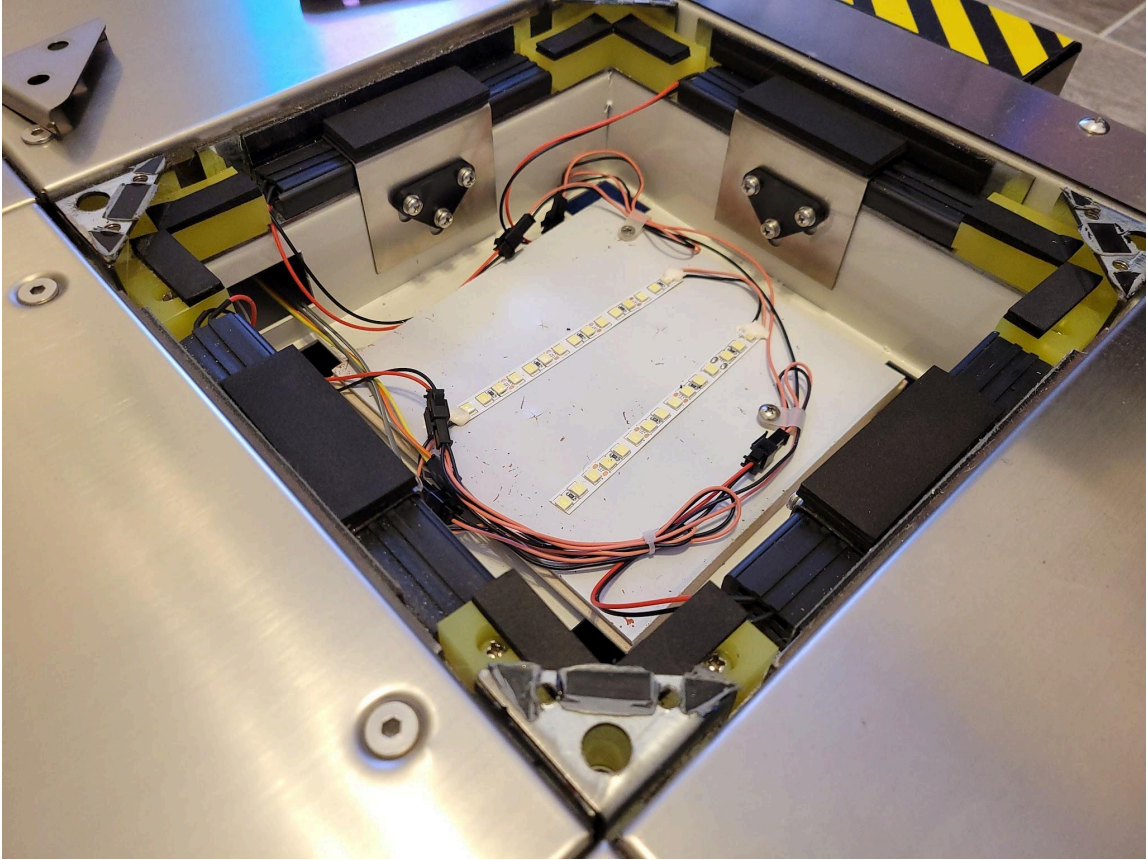
Pad modding in progress

- I find the amount of goop used to adhere the sensor channels to the sensor frame a bit excessive. Some of it tends to get on the L-brackets. It hasn't caused arrows to stick during gameplay or anything like that, but it's something to note.
- The LEDs in each panel are nice and bright and look fantastic. They illuminate the panel very evenly.

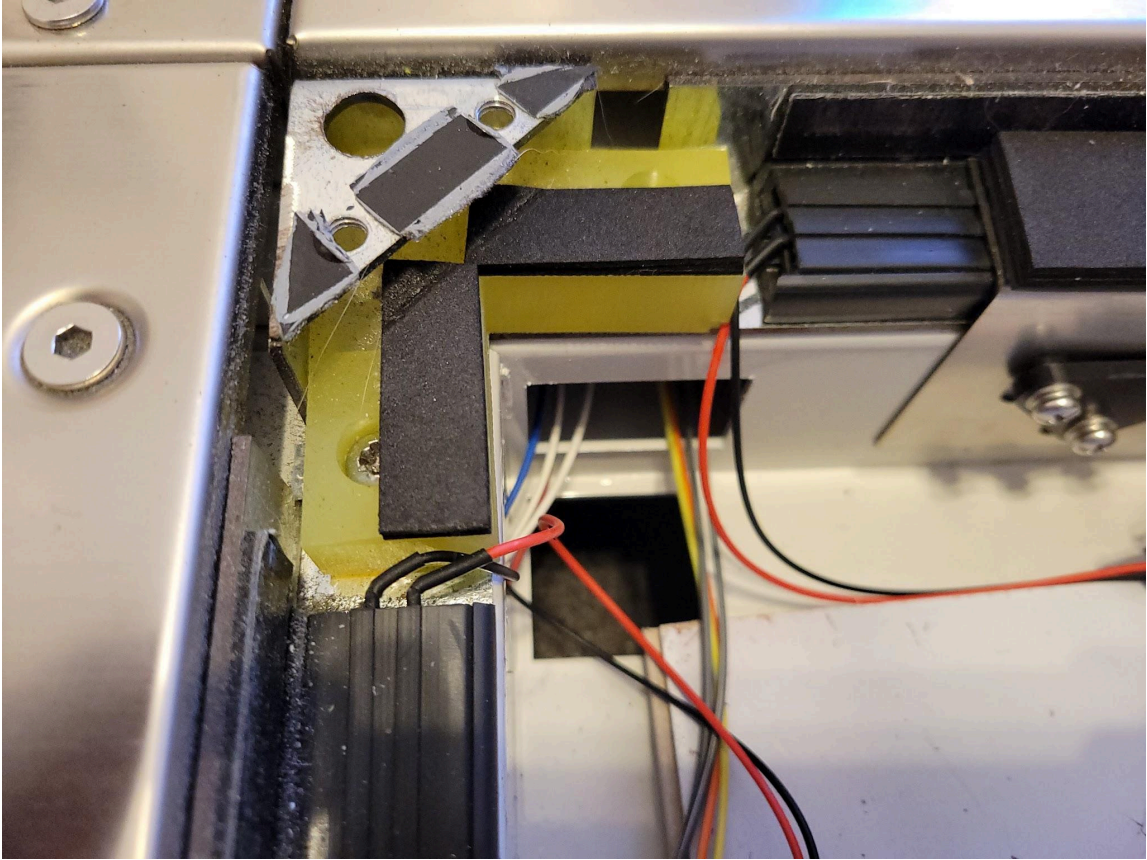


Illuminated LEDs in active arrow

- It's very nice working with a clean, newly manufactured product. Getting real arcade pads often involves dealing with rust, stuck on gunk, stripped screws, worn sensors, broken parts, and years of dust and debris built up. This pad has none of that and it's wonderful.
- Probably the most annoying inconsistency with these pads is the sensor frames. The corners where the brackets sit are not perfectly level on a lot of them, so many of the brackets kind of slope down toward the panel. This makes raising the panels to a good height tricky. I addressed this by adding small pieces of gorilla tape on many of the corners to level out the brackets. This works reasonably well and I was able to get the panels to the height I wanted this way. This could also be worked around by router modding the panels if desired. This is something I hope will be (and possibly already has been) improved upon.
*Update: It's a little tough to tell without seeing one in person, but photos and videos from more recent customers *seem* to show more level brackets. So I'm optimistic that the sensor frames have been improved.*

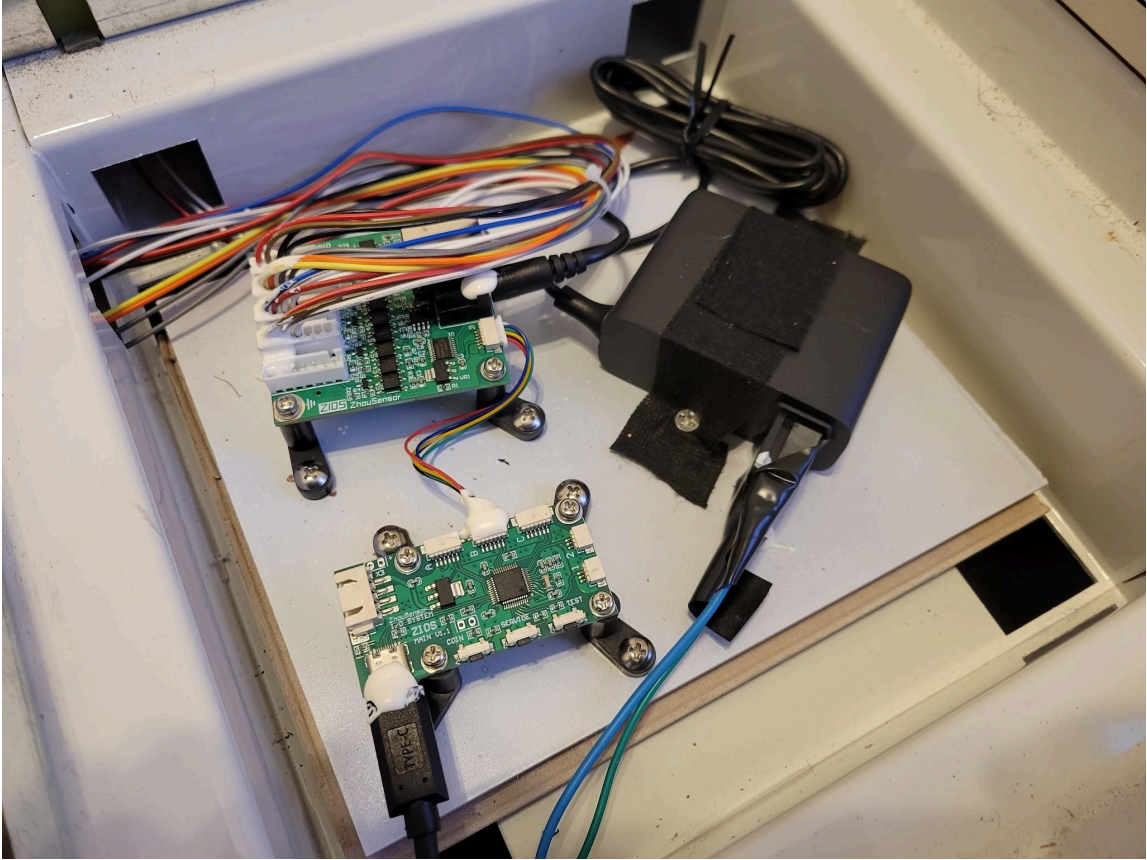


Open arrow with my completed mods



Gorilla tape pieces applied to sensor frame corners to level out the brackets

- Looking at the electronics inside the pad, there are two I/O boards as well as an AC adapter. I've certainly heard concerns about the AC wiring in these pads, particularly because there's no ground prong on the AC adapter, so I think opening up the panel and inspecting the electronics is a good thing to do. I personally didn't see anything concerning in my pads, the wiring was all secure. To be extra safe, I decided to add some electrical tape where the wires connect to the AC adapter. To be extra *extra* safe, one can plug the pads into a GFCI (which I did) and/or just pull the AC adapter out of the pad and plug it into the wall directly so there's no AC wiring inside the pad at all. I also imagine the AC adapter can be replaced entirely with one that has a ground prong if desired (it's 12V 3A).
Update: [This tweet shows that they've updated the design in response to the concerns and now the AC adapter is external to the pad.](#) So I would consider this a non-issue for any newly ordered pads.

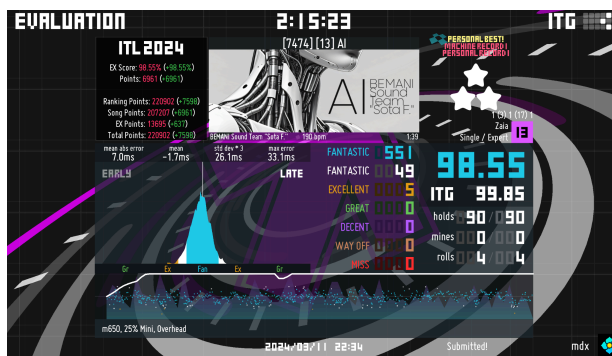
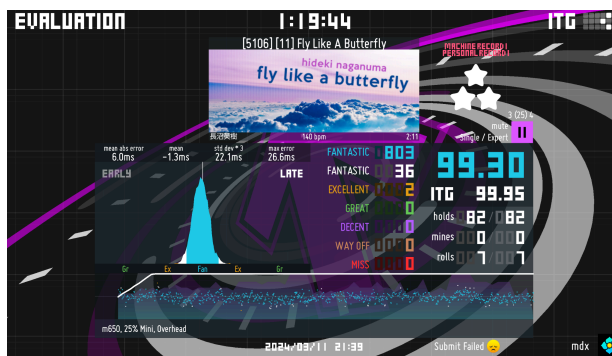
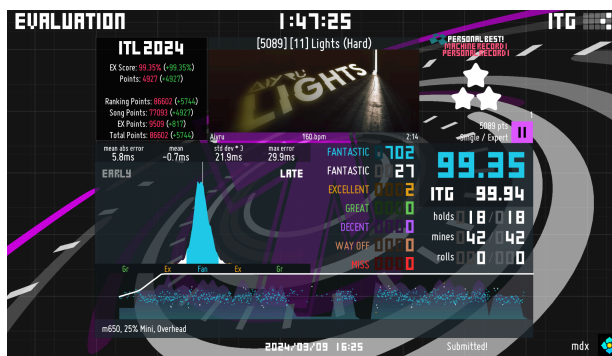
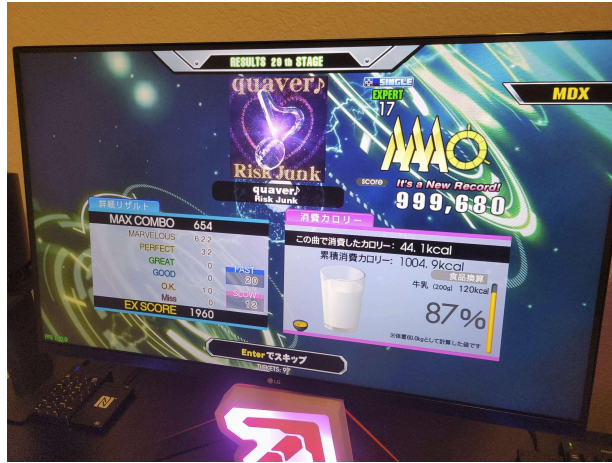


Electronics underneath the corner panel

- Each pad has a USB-C port and an AC port at the front. I found that one of the USB cables that came with the pads was bad and would disconnect when I wiggled it a little, so I replaced the cable with my own. I also had the pads drop out during gameplay a few times when I had both plugged into an unpowered hub. So I plugged them directly into the back of the motherboard instead, and I've had no random dropouts since. I don't think there's a problem here, I think like arcade pads and SMX pads, these pads just consume too much power to share one USB port.
- These pads act as keyboards. The left pad is keys A, B, C, D and the right pad is keys I, J, K, L. Weird choice, but it works just fine. The only (extremely minor) annoyance is that DDR GP has a couple of non-configurable key binds that can be triggered by stepping on the left pad (C opens the sort menu and A increases difficulty).
- My gameplay experience with these pads has been splendid. I think the DDR white cab pad "feel" is spot on. I feel the proper rebound from the pads being elevated by the leg levelers. I have the pads on top of a thin rubber mat and they really don't move at all. I have no concerns with the I/O, it's perfectly responsive. For modding I used a combination of adhesive rubber strips and some dense foam tape to give the pads a nice crisp feel without being overly harsh on the legs. The panels are wonderfully sensitive and I've had no trouble with my steps registering

on single or double. Any misfires I get I can blame on my own bad/lazy form. My DDR GP scores are comparable to my A3 scores, and though I don't play Stepmania all that consistently, I've certainly been getting some of my best scores in the first few weeks of ITL Online 2024. And since I dialed in my mods on both sides, I haven't had to open up the pads to fix anything. (I obviously expect to do regular maintenance just like any arcade pad, but nothing seems excessive so far.)





Miscellaneous DDR Grand Prix and Stepmania scores

- Dripping even a little bit of water or sweat onto the pads makes things terribly grippy, but that's just an issue with most pads. Maybe over time as the metal finish wears it'll be less of an issue. |

don't sweat excessively so it's only a problem every once in a while. I just wipe the pads down with isopropyl alcohol every so often to keep them nice and clean.

- Countersinking screws and router modding the panels are certainly possible on this pad, I am just personally choosing not to do those mods.

Overall, I think these pads are a good buy and I'm very satisfied with them so far. At the price point, I think these provide excellent bang for the buck compared to SMX pads or actual arcade cabs. The inconsistencies and imperfections will bother some more than others, but despite them I think these pretty faithfully replicate the arcade pad feel without the hassle of finding and refurbishing actual arcade pads. They're not amazing out of the box and it certainly takes a good amount of time and effort to prepare them for high level play, but once dialed in, I think the gameplay experience is quality. On top of that, the seller seems to be actively supporting and providing customization options to customers (at least for now) and seems to be continuously iterating and improving on their process for manufacturing these (I see [improved leg levelers](#) and [countersunk brackets](#) on their facebook page!), so it's likely pads ordered now will be better than mine.



