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## Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by cchocjr - 2005/08/15 16:16

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Greetings, all.

Not that I need any new synths, mind you, but I was curious of anyone's experience with worthwhile, CHEAP, analogue synths. I have a Matrix-1000, which I am just starting to give the time of day. I got it for \$70 through harmony-central.com (ugly as shit, but works great!). This synth just seems to fit the criteria of 'good' and 'cheap,' especially with the help of a software editor to take advantage of the powerful underlying architecture.

I also have a DSI Evolver, which I still haven't given a fair shake as of yet (though I'm moving slowly and surely)--this synth, obviously, has an amazing price-point for the features and control that this synth offers.

Any other thoughts? Doesn't necessarily have to be an analogue synth. Any synth really...

What diamonds in the rough have you stumbled across?

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by glaive - 2005/08/15 16:24

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If you haven't yet gotten into the Evo, I'm not sure why you are looking for another synth ...

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by udenjoe - 2005/08/15 17:57

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This frustrated liberal has been getting into DIY. I suggest you guys get into it. While the projects I'm planning on doing aren't synths there are others. I suggest, if you are interested, do a Paia project. I did a Fatman synth along with a few modifications. It was my first soldering job. If you got any common sense soldering isn't that hard. Just practice with some cheap components bought at your local version of Radioshack.

I just ordered a Tube Head Preamp from Paia. I also plan to build an SSL Compressor Clone. I want to build a stack in a cheap fender amp. I'm going to take the speaker out and build everything inside it. I gotta find out if it's possible first.

There is also the uCApps projects I'm planning much later.

I have no intention in buying anything from a manufacturer except maybe the announced sp404. Did they say battery powered?

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by glaive - 2005/08/15 18:11

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Man, I wish I had time for DIY stuff like that. I can barely keep up with the stuff I already have. Maybe you'd like to give a talk on DIY synths at the next MEMS ...

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by ggoodwin - 2005/08/15 19:04

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well I would second the idea of digging into the evolver some more...

but if you have the GAS, and since you said it doesn't HAVE to be true analog, you might want to think about gobbling up a first-gen nord modular...the micromodulars appear with pretty good regularity and usually end around \$300 on ebay, and the keyboard versions can be had for under \$500 if you're sharp. the rack version is more scarce...anyways, I guarantee that you will have plenty to do with one of those synths...

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by cchocjr - 2005/08/15 19:04

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glaive wrote:

If you haven't yet gotten into the Evo, I'm not sure why you are looking for another synth ...

Well, for starters, I buy too much goddamned equipment. But beyond this, I have a certain curiosity about this sort of stuff, and wouldn't mind having some info./opinions for the next time I find myself lusting for more gear. I'm good to go for now. Like I said, I have the Matrix-1000 and the Evolver to delve into...and I have yet to even touch the FM+ machines in the MNM.

PLENTY to explore for the time being. But curious nonetheless. Though research I've been able to find out about 'secret' synths out there that people absolutely love, and happen to be quite accessible in terms of cost.

Why do you have to throw my weakness in my face, Glaive? ;-)

cchocjr

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by cchocjr - 2005/08/15 19:08

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glaive wrote:

Man, I wish I had time for DIY stuff like that.

I do plan on starting some DIY stuff myself--in particular, the uCapps Sid synth. I just need to sit down and make a list of all the necessary components and get them ordered! Also scoping out eBay for C64's at a decent price...waiting for a deal, maybe on a semi-functional one where at least the SID chip and the power supply will be intact.

I'll check out the 'Fatman' synth as well.

Anyone else know of any cool DIY projects out there (well documented, with accessible parts and instructions)? I'm on the waiting list for an x0xb0x, myself...

cchocjr

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by Acidfever - 2005/08/15 23:02

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A rewarding and cheap analogue synth would be the Waldorf Pulse. Real goo for bass sounds and very underrated if you ask me, specially if you check it's features!

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by milkmansnd - 2005/08/15 23:25

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the fatman is lame - don't bother. The Midibox SID blows the shit out of that thing, and you could build 6 for the same money!

There are a lot of DIY synths out there - like this one:

screw the fatman - its trash. However, Paia is a great company - and will support you while you build it - but the synth is not very exciting, and its not hugely DIY because its a kit with an expensive case... sourcing and designing the case are half the fun!

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by aom - 2005/08/16 16:45

I recently acquired a desktop Evolver, and I find that beside an Elektron interface, it's not the most intuitive or inspiring piece of gear, so I haven't found myself using it as much as I thought I would.

I can totally appreciate the potential of the Evolver based on the presets and the bit of noodling about I've done, but it's def. not as immediate as my MD.

Have other Elektron users had similar experiences when trying to pair up Elektron and non-Elektron gear?

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by glaive - 2005/08/16 18:23

Yes, completely the same. SFX-6 + desktop Evo here.

The Evo is a hardcore synth. You have to know what you are doing to get anything out of it. Elektron stuff, although incredibly deep, has an entry level of functionality that anyone can get up an running with in short order. Not so with the Evo.

That being said, I've been working almost daily with the Evo over lunch for 20-30 minutes, and I'm starting to get usable, interesting sounds out of it. It has a great sound that compliments the Mono well. It adds warmth and fullness (whatever that means) to the Elektron mix. I've been using it at low volumes as a second line background percolator. When I have better chops, I'll use it more in the foreground. There are some very cool interactions between the Evo sequencer and the Mono's.

The Evo is a lot like the Nord Micromodular -- you get out what you put in. It's not really set up to just start grooving, and you have to program it in a serious way to get anything useful. But man, I believe in the sound. It's freakin' wicked! Melting, buttery, slice-off-your-head-in-a-loving-way goodness.

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by chiasmicon - 2005/08/17 00:37

i agree that the Evo is a hardcore synth; very powerful and lots going on. but I disagree that you really have to know what you're doing to use it well. I found it easy to get up and running with it in minutes, and it was one of my first synths! no, it's not like the Elektron gear, but once you've created a couple patches, you start to get a real feel for it and can program the thing blindfolded. however, I'd have to agree that it's not immediate at all. that's part of the reason why I sold mine, great though it sounded (and incredible deal that it is).

original poster: I find it ridiculous that you are so interested in learning about which synths are excellent and cheap and great values for the money...when you've got three of the best bang-for-the-buck synths in your arsenal and you haven't even explored one of the most interesting parts of one of them! I'm talking about the FM synths in the MnM! get on that shit, man! appreciate what you've got, learn the hell out of it and only look for more when you feel stifled by it! seriously, I thought that Elektron fans, of all electronic musicians, would be less prone to GAS given the depth of the Elektron gear and how it just stomps all over other gear, in terms of sounds, musical fulfillment, value and features... I mean, I know you're just curious to learn more about what's out there and that's cool...but seriously, check out what you've got! there's LOTS to be found!

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by milkmansnd - 2005/08/17 01:59

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I agree - there is almost as much depth to the FM+ machines as there is in the evolver.

However, the evolver is a different animal - to me I see the boxes at 2 ends of a spectrum:

MnM.....DSI Evolver

on the left side there is something that is different than other synths out there in terms that its got a different filter type, machine types that are highly uncommon (the SID in particular - I mean, those are not everyday synths!) And the user interface is more basic and entry level \*seeming\* - as in, you can dial in sounds looking at the nice GUI on the LCD. However, we all know that massive amounts of detail and originality can be reached with the sequencer and LFO's.

On the right hand side, we have the evolver, which is a more conventional type of synth - subtractive, ASDR filters and ENV, etc. Also, believe it or not its got a very conventional sequencer - sure, it seems radical - but this is a throwback to the analog sequencers of old that Dave Smith built with SCI - the evolver is an inexpensive, highly adaptable conventional synth and sequencer.

So whats in the middle of these 2 extremes? In my opinion, you have stuff like the Waldorfs and the Virus's and the Nords - shit that is highly usable, somewhat adaptable, and somewhat conventional to use and design on. ASDR - maybe has a seq - maybe has a little character to the filters... you know what I mean.

If you are looking for just another piece of gear - and you want it cheap - you are going to be forced to settle for something mediocre, unless you are quite lucky and score something. Or you are going to get something that is highly out of fashion like an alpha-Juno, which is a very usable and sick synth btw, and going cheap on ebay! However, before the money spends, I would spend a week making music with just the machines on the monomachine that you usually pass over - the VO, the FM+ and see where that takes you. If its not to a good place, then perhaps you might want to think about something more conventional - something towards the middle on that stupid chart I just made :-D

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by ggoodwin - 2005/08/17 02:06

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Good work, chart boy.

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by milkmansnd - 2005/08/17 02:17

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wait until you see my Venn Diagram... I should make one for this!

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by cchocjr - 2005/08/17 04:49

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Uhhh. Thanks?

If anybody feels like responding to the question in a straight-forward manner, go ahead. :-?

cchocjr

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by glaive - 2005/08/17 04:56

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I think the straightforward opinion of most of the forum is 'use what you already have'.

And, oh yeah, let me amend: 'have to know what you are doing or be a supragenius from the planet Geekton'.

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by cchocjr - 2005/08/17 04:57

Forget I said anything. Just curious about people's experience with stuff they're enthusiastic about--surprisingly satisfying purchases, etc.

I'll be quiet now.

cchocjr

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by glaive - 2005/08/17 05:06

Naaa, it's cool. We're just here to help each other out and voice our opinions. I've bought and sold tons of stuff in the last 5 years, but the most valuable thing I've learned is that you can express yourself musically with just about any gadget. It seems like this gig is about getting what's in your heart and mind out into the world as sound waves, and the actual tools you use are secondary to that. With the caveat, of course, that Elektron gear just smokes anything else for accomplishing this. I mean, back in the day, when I didn't know what the fuck I was doing, I was grumpy about having a Yamaha A3000, Yamaha Rm1x, and a Nord Modular. Damn! Even today that setup can do just about anything. But I didn't put the time into learning the tools.

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by dirge - 2005/08/17 05:38

i think that the sequential sixtrak is great. it offers 6 monophonic tracks of analog voices that could be sequenced easily from something like the monomachine. it is all CC-controllable, so again, the MnM sequencer would be great for manipulating sounds. cheap these days and sounds wonderful.

i've been very happy with the Roland SH-101. instant gratification. no setups or menus (or patch memory...); everything is right in front of you. the little sequencer is great for sketching out melodies, basslines, and such.

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by jsrockit - 2005/10/15 17:24

I'd say the Roland MC-202 / SH-101 are very cool and not crazy expensive yet. I'm jonzing for a Roland MC-202 / TR-606 combo myself. I use a computer with Reason 3, Live 5 (battery, pluggo), and Logic. I also have a MM and MD for Elektron. My next will be a bent Speak and Spell / Read / Math. Then a Sidstation. I guess typical stuff for this forum. if I were you, I'd check out nanoloop at [www.nanoloop.de](http://www.nanoloop.de) or a Yamaha CS01 for real cheap deals.

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by - 2005/10/16 05:40

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i've been considering a Waldorf Micro Q...lacks the knobs, but excellent sound and get one used on Ebay for like \$300!

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by jsrockit - 2005/10/18 18:46

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The technosaurus microcon is also kind of cool.

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## Re: Worthwhile budget analogue synths...any thoughts?

Posted by ggoodwin - 2005/10/18 18:58

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the only thing better than an evolver is...

two evolvers!

(or a polyevolver).

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