
Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by RyanA4 - 2013/06/19 20:11

I'm considering a few different desktops to play using the user mode with my Ableton push or another controller and syncing to my Elektron chain (A4-CV outs to MI Anushri, MDUWMKII, soon to be OT):

Tetra 4: Seeing them on CL for around \$600

Local guy selling a Blofeld for \$350 on CL

Scanning for a TI Polar, but not sure if it's worth it and the Virus sound had been done to death.

Mutable Instruments Shuthri (\$375 assembled and modded with extra filter and CV in/out)

Mutable Instruments Ambika (\$1,100 assembled)

MnM (you can rig that to be a Polysynth, right?)

Any other suggestions: I'm willing to go vintage, 2x chain, or a rack- whatever. Just some playable leads, quick "noodles" and some nice FX drenched chords/strings are kind of a missing sonic element here separating my hardware setup from being all knobs and sequencers.

I guess I can throw my computer out the window (nod to LCD Soundsystem there...) after all this comes together.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by CliffordMilk - 2013/06/19 20:25

I'd add the Nord Lead 2X to that list. Great quality. A safe bet.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by pixelife - 2013/06/19 21:03

Thumbs up to the Tetr4. I'm using it as my desktop poly when I don't use the big boards and for my live rig.

There's some of 80/90's digital polys in desktop format too if you want to go that way that are very inexpensive.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by boboter - 2013/06/19 21:12

Ambika.

You can do a lot with it and MI is an awesome company with a great user base. Definitely worth the money.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by VennDiagram - 2013/06/19 22:22

Loads of options -

Tetra,
Blofeld
Novation Nova (with the last OS - makes it pretty much a 16 voice Supernova) -This is what I use as a desktop poly expander.
Nord Lead Rack

Yamaha TG33 - far better than you'd think (poor mans wave station)
Yamaha DX200 or AN200
Something like an older Roland JV Rack or 1010
Roland SH-32
Older model Access Virus
Korg MS2000

Good places to start IMHO

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by pixelife - 2013/06/19 22:39

I also will vouch for the TG33. Great pad machine. Unique sound. Especially great when layered with something more analog-ish.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by previewlounge - 2013/06/20 01:05

a nicely well-kept vintage korg Prophecy, perhaps? just a thought ...

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by TheKM - 2013/06/20 01:09

I would strongly recommend the Blofeld. It's synth engine is... elaborate and the interface is quite good.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by udenjoe - 2013/06/20 01:24

Keep in mind the Shruthi is mono.

I have an older Indigo 2. I wouldn't say it's overplayed. It's a VA but I think it has a wide palette with the modulation routing and lots of voices. I'm planning to somehow trade for a prophet 600 though.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by previewlounge - 2013/06/20 01:29

'elaborate' - i like the sound of that descriptive word ... intriguing.

i still have no idea what the blofeld is, after all these years of reading the name.

okay, sound-wise, would, say for example Left Field have considered using one on their breakout mid 90's record?

sometimes i wonder what synth they used on the hit radio song 'you're original, " etc etc.

maybe it was a Prophet?

.

after being shown the Prophecy by two owners over the years, i have always been impressed by the synth's ability to create incredibly intricate and cool soundsphere's, for want of a better word.

first met the Prophecy in Melbourne, in '98, by way of jamming with a psy trance producer art pal and then once again in 2006 by a progressive dj who said i could borrow the Prophecy if i bought a power adapter for it. the Ribbon controller also works in quite nicely with the ability to design multi-layer sounds that sound almost impossible to make in a synth that is supposedly monophonic.

monophonic the Prophecy may be, but it is multi layered, and would yield many treasures in the right hands.

as far as i remember, the Prophecy also does nice bass and cool lead sounds.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by Synthetique - 2013/06/20 04:48

Discard SH 32...

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by teevee - 2013/06/20 06:08

Nord Micro Modular?

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by jonah - 2013/06/20 11:14

I like the radias. It's very digital and for cold, but living and organic FM, evolving textures, vocoder weirdness or spacey FX'd out strings it's a lot of knobby fun. Although, after falling hard for the rest of Elektron's instruments, I feel I have to try a monomachine. The way elektron pairs the deep sequencer with the sound engine is very creatively inspiring for me. The radias is fun to sequence from the MachineDrum though!

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by TheAssociate - 2013/06/20 13:18

The cheapest polysynth I like is the Roland SH-32. Very underrated and unique. Best polysynth for the money - Nord Lead Rack. Gnarliest vintage polysynth for the money - Oberhiem Matrix 6R. My personal favourite, and not cheap at all - the Dave Smith Prophet 08 Rack.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by RyanA4 - 2013/06/20 15:15

Some guy just offered to sell me his Roland JX-305 for \$350.

I don't even know if I'll ever use it much, but if it's in good shape I could keep in the the closet and sell it to vintage hogs in 10 years (like we all are now) for 3 times that.

Thoughts? Any previous users?

Also, there's a Matrix 6R on ebay right now for at \$202 with 2 days left on the auction...

http://www.ebay.com/itm/OBERHEIM-MATRIX-6R-RACKMOUNT-ANALOG-SYNTHESIZER-MODULAR-200934670872?pt=Keyboards_MIDI&hash=item2ec8a3c218

Korg Radias is a tough one to get for under \$6-800 nowadays: is it really worth it at that price point? I love all the knobby goodness on that front panel, but I could just save up and get, say, a Prophet 08 or something.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by RyanA4 - 2013/06/20 15:23

"What about the Nord Micro Modular?"

I LOVE that thing but I'd hate to be hooked up to my computer all the time (which the Tetra 4 basically requires as well)

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by RyanA4 - 2013/06/20 15:36

Check out what this guy's doing to old Yamaha DD11 pads....

Jesus. I kinda want this haha.

http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/X1L3-circuit-bent-synth-mod-Yamaha-DD11-drum-machine-281123004635?pt=UK_Musical_Instruments_Pro_Audio_Synthesisers_CV&hash=item41743ca0db

Even better with the 12...

http://www.ebay.co.uk/itm/X1L3-circuit-bent-synth-mod-Yamaha-DD12-drum-machine/281120861469?rt=nc&_trksid=p2047675.m1851&_trkparms=aid%3D222005%26algo%3DSIC.NUQ%26ao%3D1%26asc%3D15866%26meid%3D8504104784791188885%26pid%3D100005%26prg%3D7588%26rk%3D4%26sd%3D281123004635%26

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by anigbrowl - 2013/06/20 18:30

RyanA4 wrote:

Just some playable leads, quick "noodles" and some nice FX drenched chords/strings are kind of a missing sonic element here separating my hardware setup from being all knobs and sequencers.

Get an old workstation module like a Korg Triton or a Kurzweil K2000. They're quite capable synthesis-wise and will grow with you but there's nothing wrong with having a bunch of studio grade preset sounds within easy reach. There's a reason they've graced so many hit records, in both the mainstream and more experimental genres - they're well engineered, sound great in a mix, and versatile.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by anselmi - 2013/06/20 20:59

waldorf microwave xt are going quite cheap this days

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by NickD - 2013/06/20 21:13

Now to try to make my first post not look like a shill attempt.

First off, I'm new to Elektron - my Analog Four is arriving tomorrow, so I can't really speak about compatibility here, though I don't anticipate any problem.

Around a year ago I decided a poly was what I needed to 'complete' my setup (having repeatedly failed to learn that a setup is never complete). I didn't want to spend a lot of money on something like a Prophet 8 and I wasn't too concerned about it being analogue. I also decided I didn't need to go vintage for this - I just wanted a solid polysynth for polysynth duties, such as pads.

I did a lot of reading around and ended up buying an Ultranova, and a year on I'm happy with that decision.

I went for it mainly because it seemed like a good all-rounder. It can run on USB power, it acts as an audio interface, it runs Automap as a master controller - there's a lot of value added there, the usefulness of which will depend on your setup. For me it replaced a couple of other pieces of kit and improved a fair few areas (an aftertouch keyboard powered via USB was a great addition for me in itself).

Anyway, as a polysynth, the bads:

It's monotimbral, which is understandably a major stumbling block for a lot of people. I wanted it mainly as support for my analogue monos, so it's not so bad for me.

It only has one smooth knob (plus the mod wheel) - there are eight other assignable knobs, but they're detented and no fun to tweak with. If they were like the A4 knobs I'd be a lot happier, though in fairness the detents do make patch editing precise.

It involves menu-diving, but so did every competitor in the price range. It's one of the most accessible implementations I've seen, though - it's clear how to get to everything, and you can get there fast. Nine knobs are a great help there.

The presets are pretty grim - a hands-on demo might well have put me off.

No FM.

And the goods:

The touch encoder feature is fantastic - each of the knobs is touch-sensitive, and you can assign several parameters to each one. So a single touch can activate the effects, increase the LFO amount, detune an oscillator and retrigger an envelope, for example. You can do some amazing things with this system, and you can have eight knobs set up simultaneously. A simple arpeggio sequence can develop beyond recognition and fuel an entire session.

Some great sync options - a fair few unusual LFOs (e.g. scale-based), envelopes with retrigger, a well-featured arpeggiator and a flexible, programmable gate effect can all come together really well.

Lots of oscillator features and depth. You can pile on 'virtual oscillators' without a polyphony hit, you can have virtual or 'real' sync, wavetables, ring mod - apart from FM, just about everything you might want.

Lots of modulation: six envelopes, three LFOs (and additional dedicated LFOs for vibrato, for example), an expansive mod matrix - I guess this is the advantage of its monotimbrality, you can throw a hell of a lot of resources at a patch.

Similarly, a five-slot effects chain with some great options.

Other bells and whistles like chord memory.

Keyboard has aftertouch and a nice feel.

It can sound great if you can restrain yourself a little with all these mod and effects options (which I don't think Novation can).

I'd come down to the Ultranova or the Blofeld, and much as I still wonder what I might be able to do with the Blofeld, I don't regret my choice. If you're not going to be using the DAW control features, or if you really need multitimbrality, then the case is probably weaker. But the performance features - especially the touch encoders - should be of interest to anyone who enjoys playing with a synth (as distinct from playing a synth).

I'm really looking forward to pairing the UN with my A4 and assigning a tweakin' hand to each, and I think it's worth considering. I do not work for Novation, though I do sometimes feel like a freelance unpaid intern.

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by StinkyBeat - 2013/06/20 21:49

Not mentioned so far:
Waldorf Microwave xt
Emu Command Station

Tough to find, but if the synth gods shine upon you:
Rack Fizmo

I'd probably go Blofeld with the choices.

Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by David909303 - 2013/06/20 22:10

speaking of the Yamaha TG33 - does anyone have a Mac editor for it?

And not MIDIQuest which is total shit.

Actually looking for Opcode Galaxy for OS9... yes OS9 !

:)

Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by rhizome - 2013/06/21 01:41

don't have a lot of experience here, but I do have a blofeld. it is a very, very deep synth, hard to imagine getting more for the money in that respect. that said, the interface is not for everyone (though far better than the tetra), and it still seems to suffer from a bug or two. other annoyances include finicky output levels and lack of MIDI out/thru.

Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by teevee - 2013/06/21 03:26

RyanA4 wrote:
"What about the Nord Micro Modular?"

I LOVE that thing but I'd hate to be hooked up to my computer all the time (which the Tetra 4 basically requires as well)

Of course you need to use it on a pc at first, because you have to build your synthesizer from ground and then you map it to your controller (BCR2000 example?) after that, you just unplug the unit and have a unique synthesizer ;)

Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by Synthetique - 2013/06/21 03:46

Maybe Roland xv 5080 ..

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by cosmosuave - 2013/06/21 03:48

teevee wrote:

RyanA4 wrote:

"What about the Nord Micro Modular?"

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Why bring the BCR just set up a midi machine on the MD or however it works on the OT or MM... Six controls from the Elektron and the 4 from the uMod should suffice...

Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by dionysiananarchy - 2013/06/21 05:57

old virus, they are cheap and sound as good or better than the new ones,,,, they can be had for 500

Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by RyanA4 - 2013/06/21 06:29

@NickD: I sold my Ultranova back when I had no idea where I was going with my setup- and I do regret it a bit.

In the long run, I'd probably have ended up replacing it anyway.

Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by RyanA4 - 2013/06/21 06:53

Does anyone have experience with Emu's? Seems pretty deep for such a cheap box. I could buy a command station XL for \$245 on Ebay right now. I can also pick up an Emu Mo'Phatt rack for \$120 bucks off a guy on CL.

The Waldorf Microwave XT's are WAY out of my price range.

Also, does anyone with a Mac running Lion also have a Nord Micro Modular? I hear you can't use the editing software on Macs anymore.

Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by Noisebuddy - 2013/06/21 07:45

I recommend the Blofeldit has a very cool soundengine but needs to be handled with care

less oscillators are more the sound covers quite a lot of "room" and tends easily to send other instruments into the back ...

i recently bought the Mininova well not as sharp and clear like the Blofeld, more a synth in the middle and with less pressure

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Re:Best desktop polysynth for Elektron for the money:

Posted by jonah - 2013/06/21 08:22

RyanA4 wrote:

Korg Radias is a tough one to get for under \$6-800 nowadays: is it really worth it at that price point? I love all the knobby goodness on that front panel, but I could just save up and get, say, a Prophet 08 or something. In the winter I saw them go for slightly under 500 for the module, the keys aren't a good value, I think. 5-600 depending on how much you like digital.

Maybe it went up because the king korg wasn't as knobby as people (me at least!) woulda liked? It'll probably go down when new Electribes come out, which I figure will be sooner rather than later. :)

Personally, I wouldn't put up with anything with bad interface, with so many good options available today, or in the pipeline.

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