
Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/02/05 17:10

I haven't really used pads in my music before and would like to start doing so now. Does anyone know of a relatively cheap, mini-synth (not full sized) that is good at doing pads?

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Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by milkmansnd - 2006/02/05 17:19

alesis micron. A steal at \$399.

tough to program - but the perfect size and sounds great for the money.

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Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by - 2006/02/28 21:38

Any other options?

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Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by ingrid - 2006/02/28 23:08

Sorry to sound like a smart ass...but how about a SidStation, Monomachine or a Machinedrum?

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Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by ggoodwin - 2006/02/28 23:17

Microwave XT! or evolver.

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Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 01:00

Well, I have the Monomachine and the Evolver. I think it comes down to the fact that I just don't know how to program pads. Any help you guys can give me?

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Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 01:01

ingrid wrote:

Sorry to sound like a smart ass...but how about a SidStation, Monomachine or a Machinedrum?

Ok, show me how to make them on the Machinedrum.

=====

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by ggoodwin - 2006/03/01 01:53

Both of those instruments are excellent for pad sounds. There are an infinite number of pads in either one, in fact, but as a general guideline for pads you first need to get the volume envelope right, probably just a full sustain with slow attack and release. Then you want the harmonic content to change a lot so that the pad is interesting, just make sure you use a lot of slow modulation envelopes or LFOs routed to choice parameters.

You seem like more of a preset-rocker type of guy...you could always consider trading some of your more programmer-friendly synths in for a Motif or something.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by synthy - 2006/03/01 02:17

For good pads you need a synth with a good, smooth filters (dual filters are nice to have), built-in reverb and delay, and good polyphony. A used Virus is an excellent choice IMO. Most other VAs will probably work out as well.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 02:28

ggoodwin wrote:

Both of those instruments are excellent for pad sounds. There are an infinite number of pads in either one, in fact, but as a general guideline for pads you first need to get the volume envelope right, probably just a full sustain with slow attack and release. Then you want the harmonic content to change a lot so that the pad is interesting, just make sure you use a lot of slow modulation envelopes or LFOs routed to choice parameters.

You seem like more of a preset-rocker type of guy...you could always consider trading some of your more programmer-friendly synths in for a Motif or something.

I'm not a preset rocker...I just mainly used synths for basslines and simple melodies... now I want to expand my range of sounds. Remember up until this year I used a computer and was mainly sample based. However, I always programmed my own sounds on Reason for the synth sounds and never use presets. I just have a limited range when it comes to programming. Man, I know I ask alot of stupid questions and am learning slowly...but I must admit I truly feel dissed that I am labelled a preset rocker...especially since I don't have any music on this site except a simple song I did when I just got my MnM...with bad programming...but no presets... and then the contest beats...which do not allow you to be a preset rocker. fuck.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by actuel - 2006/03/01 02:43

jsrockit wrote:

well if its any consolation js, i never consider you a 'preset rocker'.

i'm not deep enough into my MD to offer any assistance for pad settings but i've got quite a few pads i made in the MnM that i could sysex to you if you want to see how i got them. not sure they're what you may want but the point would be to point you in the right direction.

let me know...

lol brother

peas
a

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 02:47

Sure, I'd love to hear them... and I can upload them to my MnM... I won't jack them from you...lol.

I have made high pitched string sounds with my Mono...but can't seem to get a "pad" ... I'll keep trying. I'll keep asking until I get it I guess.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by actuel - 2006/03/01 02:51

cool, i will get them all together and get them to you by this time tomorrow evening.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by papertiger - 2006/03/01 03:24

js -- keep asking questions. never stop. you stop asking questions, and you will stop learning. and that sucks.

-M

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 03:36

Thanks actuel and papertiger.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by ggoodwin - 2006/03/01 03:43

hey man, no insult intended, that's up to you if you think it's a bad thing. I'm just suggesting that maybe instead of beating your head against a wall trying to learn all this programming stuff, it might be easier for you to get a nice preset box and just get right to the music making...you seem a bit touchy about this stuff, dude...

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 13:34

ggoodwin wrote:

hey man, no insult intended, that's up to you if you think it's a bad thing. I'm just suggesting that maybe instead of beating your head against a wall trying to learn all this programming stuff, it might be easier for you to get a nice preset box and just get right to the music making...you seem a bit touchy about this stuff, dude...

I don't mean to be touchy... and you did give constructive criticism, but I'm not interested in presets. I'm trying to learn how to program these things. I have always programmed my own synths...but I was always doing it by chance without

understanding what I was really doing...now I want and need to understand so I can really make some good sounds. However, I have asked on the web and nobody wants to help really...people always say to go with presets. Makes me wonder if alot of people don't know how to make pads.

I know how to use samples, I know how to program drums... I know how to make leads and basslines using synths... but I just cannot figure out pads and strings. Also, I do make music...every day. I am finishing an 11 song CD I made just using my Monomachine...for drums and all. I will post a few songs here...but they are rap songs and are very minimal. Everyone here seems to be more interested in tweaks per second and high BPMs in their stuff...I tend to let a beat ride in my stuff and it is slower...may be a bit too boring for this group. I'm going to stick with Mono and try to make some pads with that. Also, the evolver seems like a good candidate with its four oscs.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by Jyoti - 2006/03/01 16:00

jsrockit wrote:

However, I have asked on the web and nobody wants to help really...people always say to go with presets. Makes me wonder if alot of people don't know how to make pads.

Yeah, I noticed you got a bit of flak on the Vger forum too, JS, as if it's impossible to make an interesting pad sound on a 3 osc monosynth. I don't think they got what you were asking about.

FWIW, I'm self-taught in synthesis: I got a Rogue, started twiddling and, eventually, read a couple of books on synthesis. But if I had gone straight for the books, it would have put me off. I'll have a dig around and see if I can find any book resources for you - the web stuff you know already, innit?

I will post a few songs here...but they are rap songs and are very minimal. Everyone here seems to be more interested in tweaks per second and high BPMs in their stuff...

Not me - my music is a mix of miserable indie and camp synthpop. :-D

I'm also into a lot of new hip hop (stuff like The Perceptionists, Doom, Lone Catalysts, Reef The Lost Cauze, Cyne etc). Looking forward to hearing your stuff! :-D

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by mos6581 - 2006/03/01 16:17

Remember that it isn't TPS (nice expression :)), BPM or overwhelming richness that makes music good.

Whats even more important is that YOU feel satisfied with what you have created. Sharing your music takes courage, especially if you have set high standards for yourself. People may not like everything you do but it only takes one hit to make a one hit wonder, right?

I liked that rap song you shared some time ago btw.

/Andreas

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by emisor9 - 2006/03/01 16:30

The key to succesful pads is not only synthesis but whatever audio signal (could be synthesis, electric guitar or whatever) combined with decent effects and tricks and harmonic content.

Main characteristics:

-slow attack/long decay settings
-chords with harmonic content should be played/programmed (for instance Em9 which you could play as E3+F#3+G3+B3+D4 or E3+G3+B3+D4+F#4 - if you don't have knowledge about chords and harmony it's pretty interesting to dig in deeper there).

The Ensemble wave synth on the MnM allows you to do this since you can add 3 notes to the basic note, you could make them wider by copying that machine into another track and adding even more notes (1 octave up or below).
Add delay and chorus to taste, mess with the detune parameter. Assign slow LFO's to pitch.
Not happy yet: assign those tracks to the chorus effect machine, adjust to taste and add delay to the chorus machine.

In case you want to splash some cash you could get an Eventide H3000 which instantly transforms whatever signal into an atmospheric pad :-)

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 17:24

Jyoti wrote:

FWIW, I'm self-taught in synthesis: I got a Rogue, started twiddling and, eventually, read a couple of books on synthesis. But if I had gone straight for the books, it would have put me off. I'll have a dig around and see if I can find any book resources for you - the web stuff you know already, innit?

I've seen a bunch of stuff on the web... and read a few things that are specific to synth I don't own. I was looking for some stuff like emisor9 gave me above (thanks emisor ;))... something I can try on one of my synths...then go from there. I would love to know some good books. I'm not trying to be a pain in the ass...I'm just trying to learn in a practical way. Tweaking blindly is cool...but sometimes you just want a certain sound and it is good to know how to get it. I think my personal definition of a pad and a string sound might be too simple. I'm not looking for chords of billions of sounds stacked on top of each other (the orchestra effect)...just some simple back round stuff.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 17:29

mos6581 wrote:

Whats even more important is that YOU feel satisfied with what you have created. Sharing your music takes courage, especially if you have set high standards for yourself. People may not like everything you do but it only takes one hit to make a one hit wonder, right?

I liked that rap song you shared some time ago btw.

/Andreas

true. and thanks.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by cchocjr - 2006/03/01 17:59

jsrockit wrote:

I will post a few songs here...but they are rap songs and are very minimal. Everyone here seems to be more interested

in tweaks per second and high BPMs in their stuff...I tend to let a beat ride in my stuff and it is slower...may be a bit too boring for this group.

This is the stuff I find myself programming more and more on my MD--that is, slow and steady. Steady illin! But seriously, there are definitely variances in taste and style on this forum, which is a good thing. Personally, I wouldn't be too strusfrated. I don't like everyone's style on this forum, and I'm sure others will say the same thing. I just try to learn what I can, where I can. Shit, man. I just have fun programming a beat that makes me get the fuck up out of my seat!

XOXOX

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 18:35

cchocjr wrote:

Shit, man. I just have fun programming a beat that makes me get the fuck up out of my seat!

XOXOX

Yeah, or one to make me sit down and relax...

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by udenjoe - 2006/03/01 18:35

I know alot of people don't like it but I think it is a wonderful cheap synth, The korg MS2000. You can get them cheaper than a micron, I'm sure. They are DSP based. The original thing about them is the modulation sequencer. They can make good pads that cut through mixes quite well. Some people don't like it, but there are many dedicated users that love them.

I think pads are abviously slow attack long release. The other thing to do is tune osc up or down 12 semitones, 5 and 7 semitones, and detuning oscs. I like to add noise and other LFO destinations.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by cchocjr - 2006/03/01 18:36

Either way. :-)

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by ggoodwin - 2006/03/01 18:51

ok JS, I have a few thoughts on this subject...

- in addition to the tips already listed, remember to think about the frequency content of your pad sounds. IMO this is as important as the volume envelope. A pad is usually used to "pad out" or fill out the spectrum in respect to the other elements in your track. So you probably don't want too much bass going on in your pad patches, or else you'll clash with the bassline. Stuff like that. And for what it is worth, some of my favorite pad sounds that I've made don't follow the "slow attack, long release" formula...but closer in shape to an organ envelope (instant on, full sustain, instant off). This calls for a different approach to sequencing the sound, as well.

- I don't want to make you feel defensive, but sometimes I think you should change the way you approach programming, from a mental perspective. I see you make quite a few topics about new synth releases, which synth to buy next, boutique effects boxes, etc...there is nothing wrong with collecting gear that you like, but I get the feeling that if you

devoted as much effort to learning the synths you already have as you do to hunting down new stuff to buy, you might already know how to program some killer pads....especially since you already own the monomachine and the evolver! Please take this as sincere advice and not as a personal attack. I've been in the spot where I thought getting X polyphony or Y modulation feature was gonna make me a better programmer, and I got over it by just remembering how much sound you can get out of a guitar. It's the oldest truism in this game, but it's still true: it's not the gear, it's the musician.

- in the same vein: it would behoove you to just get in there and tweak...you don't need (or want) a recipe for making sounds. If you accidentally do something that you're not supposed to...sample it, remap it, effect it, and use it as a brand new sound source. If you go and ask on forums like this, how do I make a string sound? You get the standard recipe for the string sound that everybody with a synth has tried. If you are interested in forging your own style, there is no way to accomplish that other than learning the synth on your own terms, and superimposing each synth's parameter matrix on your own system of cognitive machinery.

- judging from your description of your sparse hip hop style, I'd love to check some of your stuff. Like somebody already said in this topic, it takes a lot of courage to post something...so select the best and put it up there man!

---- G

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by cchocjr - 2006/03/01 20:03

ggoodwin wrote:

If you go and ask on forums like this, how do I make a string sound? You get the standard recipe for the string sound that everybody with a synth has tried. If you are interested in forging your own style, there is no way to accomplish that other than learning the synth on your own terms, and superimposing each synth's parameter matrix on your own system of cognitive machinery.

---- G

True. And yet, on the other hand, many 'masters' in visual and literary arts achieved their level of mastery by first copying the existing work/technique of their predecessors. Some of my favorite stuff has been accomplished by just noodling around. Then again, when I have a sound in mind that I want to achieve, and I can't get it right because I don't know what I'm 'supposed' to do, I feel pretty frustrated. What I'm suggesting is the more traditional 'master the basics...learn them inside and out, in order to move 'beyond' approach. In other words, I've found it often the case that before I'm able to successfully break the rules, I must first understand them. And on the other, other hand, ggoodwin, your comments about the propensity for some folks (myself included, to a shameful extent) to look for the solution to their problem in other gear are certainly true. Whether or not they have any bearing on Mr. rockit's dilemma, I will not venture. But it certainly is something that happens to me.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 20:10

I take no offense to the learning what I have stuff...and it is no secret that I am a gear whore of sorts... However, I have the money now due to massive overtime...and will be unemployed in 24 days. Once unemployed...I will spend alot of time with my equipment. I do spend an hour or two every day now...but alot of it has been spent doing vocals, finishing old tracks. Once I finish the songs I'm working on... I will start using my other equipment full on. I do know how to use the MnM and MD. The Sid is not my thing...since I don't like programming it really. The Evolver is great...but I am only in the beginning stages of using that. I think I just bought too much at once and am trying to learn it all at once. Plus, I want to expand my usual types of sounds. To tell you the truth. I could make everything on the MPC I have...since I understand how to use samples and how to blend them and have been working that way for years. But after getting the Monomachine, I found that I like synths and wouldn't mind doing songs without samples as well. I used synth for bass always...but never for anything else...so now I'm learning. I guess I just come off as a complete idiot who doesn't know how to even make a song...but owns too much equipment. I can assure you that I know how to make a song...but just want to expand the way I do things. I understand that it is VCO to VCA to VCF to Envelope etc...but within those are tons of sound possibilites...and alot of room for error or happy accidents. Sometimes it is better to ask someone...get the

tried and true way...and then make it your own....which is why I do not mind getting generic examples of strings and pads. By the way, alot of songs on the radio use presets from the Triton and others...and they are fine with that. I'm not. I'll use samples if I want to use an existing sound. The reason I am trying to learn about synths is so I can make my own sounds...or I would just stick to sampling.

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by Toni - 2006/03/01 20:49

This is the way things have worked for me:

1. Empty machine

When I get new gear, I listen the presets once (sometimes don't even do that as in case of MD) and then empty the machine. From now on it's going to be my individual machine. Nobody else is going to make the same patches. Making the patch and saving it investing for the future. I might find way to use it (if I make sure that everything I make has been for serious).

2. 'I can make it with any gear' -attitude

'I can make it with any gear' -attitude doesn't mean I could benefit from having loads of gear. It is quite opposite; it means you will only need one piece of gear to do your stuff. Autechre once said that they don't care about gear, they can do interesting stuff with any gear. I love this attitude. So focus on the 'one machine' (sell the rest).

3. Understanding of concept of good

Good hasn't anything to do with the price of the gear, features, genrestyles or material at all (forget the fattness and analogue). Good lives inside human minds. It transmits through concept of beauty. So learning to do good stuff is learning about how you relate to the world. Think outside of box you normally live. What I'm trying to say that there isn't any universal synth basics, its more of a path one need to walk and it can happen only by tweaking the thing and making it your own tweaking habits.

4. Keep your desk clean

I read this from somewhere as an advice for starting musician (which I am myself too). I think it perfectly captures my idea of how I like to approach the thing. So clean your desk, set your MnM to it and start to do pads on a regular basis. It will come. (Try to layering tracks on a MnM.)

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by Jyoti - 2006/03/01 21:36

jsrockit wrote:

so now I'm learning. I guess I just come off as a complete idiot who doesn't know how to even make a song...but owns too much equipment.

Not to me you don't, mate. I just hear someone with a powerful desire to exploit the tools they've managed to gather and is looking for advice. That kind of hunger to learn is a *good thing,* in my book.

I've probably not been too helpful because I don't want to offend you: I don't want to say 'oooh, I get a gread Mono pad sound with these settings' in case it sounds too beginner-y and maybe patronising? Obviously, I don't want to tell you stuff you already know.

But I shall go into my studio now and have a look at some of the Mono pads I've been using, then come back and post the details!

:~)

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by ggoodwin - 2006/03/01 22:03

Toni, I really liked your last post, it was very inspirational. Thanks.

=====

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 23:16

I did the one synth approach. I used only a Monomachine on the CD I am working on. Unfortunately, it is the machine that made me into a gear whore.

=====

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/01 23:18

Jyoti wrote:

I've probably not been too helpful because I don't want to offend you: I don't want to say 'oooh, I get a great Mono pad sound with these settings' in case it sounds too beginner-y and maybe patronising? Obviously, I don't want to tell you stuff you already know.

But I shall go into my studio now and have a look at some of the Mono pads I've been using, then come back and post the details!

:-)

I don't know much...so I'd appreciate it. I'm a beginner to hardware synths...but not to music.

=====

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by Jyoti - 2006/03/02 05:10

jsrockit wrote:

I don't know much...so I'd appreciate it. I'm a beginner to hardware synths...but not to music.

Okay, I've just been bashing round on the Mono and I've uploaded a Kit + Pattern:

Jyoti's Pads

I saved the pattern from H01, dunno if that makes any difference as I've never done it before!

Now, as for the sounds:

1. Standard floaty pad. Swave Saw, lfos -> unison, filter width and panning for a wee bit of movement.
2. Liquidy Pad - Swav pulse, lfos -> UNIW and filter base. Again, not too exciting so should be backgroundy.
3. Brassy pad - lfos -> pitch, filt env, resonance. This is far more blarty and obvious, more animated. But you can back the blarty bit back by reducing the filter eg amount.
4. Kraftwerky ensemble - lfos -> vibrato. Pretty simple one-finger-chord jobby, just a bit of vib to liven it up.
5. Dpro wave - lfos -> synth WP, WP and to delay time for a delayed wacky harmoniser effect. Now this is far more intrusive, not that much use as a trad pad.
6. GND sin - lfos -> pitch vib, dist, dist. This is just me mucking about, to be honest. Probably better labelled as an 'atmosphere' or something rather than a pad. The sound does evolve for quite a long while if you hold it down.

Bear in mind that all the above were programmed to be played in poly mode. They do work in mono, of course, but even the ensemble sounds better in poly because of the note overlaps.

Hope some of the above helps! Any questions, just ask!

:-D

(One final caveat: I've never done any sysexing from the Mono before so I've no idea if I've done it correctly - load at your own peril!)

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by Toni - 2006/03/02 09:57

jsrocket wrote:

I did the one synth approach. I used only a Monomachine on the CD I am working on.

Sounds like a dedicated attitude to me (programming and music wise). :-)

I also red that you are used to do stuff with mpc(?). I would like to believe that people tend to grow with couple of units, which they will use on and on (and this way escape from the world of too much gear and technology to the world of music). So I wouldn't move the mpc too far from reaching it (maybe you aren't anyway), because you know it inside-out already.

jsrocket wrote:

Unfortunately, it is the machine that made me into a gear whore.

I'm lucky to have too little money to spend on gear. When I accept that, new gear doesn't blur my focus (sure there is nice things at the marketplace though). :-)

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by - 2006/03/02 12:05

Sequential prophet VS / Yamaha FS1R / Nord Modular G2

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrocket - 2006/03/02 14:20

Jyoti wrote:

jsrocket wrote:

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Hope some of the above helps! Any questions, just ask!

:-D

(One final caveat: I've never done any sysexing from the Mono before so I've no idea if I've done it correctly - load at your own peril!)

Thanks for your time and efforts... I've only sysexed with the sid so far...but I'm sure it isn't a big deal.

=====

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrockit - 2006/03/02 14:33

Toni wrote:

jsrockit wrote:

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jsrockit wrote:

Unfortunately, it is the machine that made me into a gear whore.

I'm lucky to have too little money to spend on gear. When I accept that, new gear doesn't blur my focus (sure there is nice things at the marketplace though). :-)

I am currently using an MPC...and it is relatively new...but back in 2000 I had one so I was familiar with it and am comfortable with making music with just samples...since I have been doing it for years. The MPC is a keeper. I just stopped using Reason for doing everything...and moved to hardware.

Synth / drum machine wise...I'm going to stick to the MnM, the Evolver, the MD, MPC1000, and a Jomox Xbase09. Instead of buying more synths...I think I'll spend cash on effects...and save the rest for a future purchase after I am comfortable with the gear above. The Sid and a K-Station will be sold. The Sid is not something I like to program...and it just wasn't for me sound wise either. I will sample the hell out of it and sell it. The K-Station just isn't up to par with the MnM or the Evolver sound wise...though it is easy to program. I'm sure I could get into the Sid and the K...but I need to minimize and learn. I think I am overwhelmed. Now, drum machines...I don't get overwhelmed by those.

=====

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by Jyoti - 2006/03/03 00:13

jsrockit wrote:

Thanks for your time and efforts... I've only sysxed with the sid so far...but I'm sure it isn't a big deal.

How did it go? Are the patches any use to you?

=====

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by jsrocket - 2006/03/03 00:42

Jyoti wrote:

jsrocket wrote:

Thanks for your time and efforts... I've only sysxed with the sid so far...but I'm sure it isn't a big deal.

How did it go? Are the patches any use to you?

I'm sorry Jyoti...I didn't get to them yet... I was doing vocals today. I'm sure they will be excellent and can't thank you enough for your patience and help.

=====

Re: Synth for pads?

Posted by Jyoti - 2006/03/03 01:36

Okay mate, no worries! :-)

=====