

Roland Juno Stage | £1,049

The 'Stage' model is the newest addition to the Juno range and caters for the live-based performer.

Dan 'JD73' Goldman sees what's on offer...



WHAT IS IT?

A 76-note rompler built with the live player in mind

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Very portable, sturdy build and decent feeling keyboard
- 2 Most main features are easily accessible, though editing can be deep
- 3 High-quality, musical and wide ranging sound set suitable for many styles



Back in 2005 the Juno brand name was resurrected with the launch of the Juno-D sample playback synth.

While many were disappointed that the new Junos were not analogue synths (as before), they've still proven to be very popular. The latest Juno continues down the sample playback route, but this time focusing on live performance.

The Juno Stage is a neat looking synth. It feels very well-made yet it's very light at only 9.8kg (21lbs approx). The switches all feel positive and the dials are responsive and feel sturdy enough to take plenty of on- and off-stage abuse.

A quick overview of the front panel shows up a few intriguing features. The first (on the far left) is a metal flap concealing a USB port for plugging in a USB memory stick for reading and saving sounds/info.

The Juno Stage can read (in real-time from a USB stick) MIDI files, AIFFs, WAVs and MP3s and add them to playlists (using the included DAW

playlist editor) for putting live sets of backing tracks together. You can also play your iPod through the Juno and remove vocals, or use the built-in mic input to sing along with dedicated reverb. Very karaoke, but very practical. The Juno also has a dedicated click output available when playing back

standard MIDI files. It's good to see the D-beam included which is great fun both sonically and visually and enables control of many user definable parameters such as filter cutoff or LFO in true theremin-style.

The 'mode' area deals with selecting patches. The patch button enters patch mode allowing selection of preset/user sounds via the panel (or footpedals) which can be made up of up to four PCM waves, while the performance button puts 16 of these sounds into a multi-timbral set for external MIDI control. This mode is also used for setting up splits and the dual button enables two patch layers. This is very easy to set up on the go.

Also in this section are buttons for accessing the parts (layers) within a performance sound, the MIDI controller function menus (the stage has comprehensive controller functionality) and the piano mode button that gives instant access to the Juno's piano and EP sounds. There are

Effects, Vocoding and Arpeggiator

The Juno Stage is very well specified in the effects department. Patch mode allows use of one Master FX processor, one chorus and one reverb while Performance mode allows three Master FX units, one chorus and one reverb. There are 79 effect types in total, plus a global chorus and reverb processor available.

Of the 79 types available, notable effects include the slicer that

rhythmically slices a sound into segments using an LFO, the tape delay which sounds very tapey indeed, a very nice COSM guitar amp simulator, some very lush choruses, phasers and various other delays, the great rotary speaker emulation from the Roland VK7 organ, a 16-step sequenced ring modulator, a lo-fi compressor, radio noise emulator and many more!

These are all top-quality, have plenty of user definable parameters and add greatly to any sound routed through. There's also a half decent vocoder that can be used in conjunction with the onboard mic input, though I had trouble getting the sound clear enough to distinguish words clearly. Finally, there's a comprehensive arpeggiator onboard to round things off nicely.





1,027 preset sounds plus 256 GM2 sounds onboard but unfortunately only 256 user writeable slots, (though the additional sounds are available via SRX card expansion). Preset patches can of course be edited and then stored to this user area.

The centre section is dominated by a monochrome display which is clear on the whole, though in the effects

electric) and strings/guitars have always been a strong point for Roland and here they don't disappoint. The acoustic pianos are wonderfully rich and realistic (there's even control over how open the lid is on the grand pianos) and the electric pianos are also very authentic.

There are also some great analogue-style pads, leads and basses,

band-pass. These all sound smooth and juicy with little stepping, even at high resonance levels. It's really hard to find fault with this synth sonically.

All in all, this is a very well-featured and high-quality synth especially at around £1,000. It provides very good value for money and there's enough on board to keep anyone occupied for a long time. The only real downsides are

the lack of aftertouch, the wall-wart power supply, lack of individual outputs and lack of user writeable memory onboard.

If you are

looking for a £1,000 gigging synth that can suit pretty much any application save for sequencing or sampling, then you should really put this high on your list of synths to check out. **FM**

The onboard sounds in the Juno provide a hugely versatile sound set for any style of production

routing mode, it does become a little cluttered and cryptic.

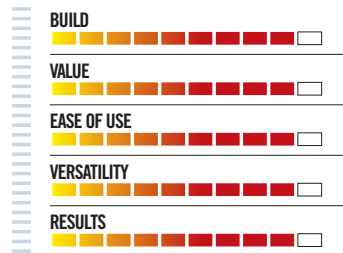
To the left of the display are controls for accessing the deep editing pages, including envelopes for filter, pitch and amp, a MIDI matrix for assigning MIDI control to virtually any parameter, two LFOs, plus a 16-step LFO for evolving sounds and detailed parameter editing for the arpeggiator and drum sound sets/patterns, effects and more). You can also store your favourite patches and banks for direct instant recall using Favourite mode.

The onboard sounds in the Juno provide a hugely versatile basic sound set for just about any style of production. The overall quality is very good and there really is something for everyone. Pianos (acoustic and

drums, strings, acoustic/electric basses and some outstanding sitars. All in all, there is little to complain about in terms of the quality and variety of sounds (not taking into account the sound expansion board options). It's just a shame that there is currently no weighted keyboard version on the cards or any aftertouch. As synth action keyboards go though, this is well-balanced, feels high-quality and gives the extra keys 'serious' players demand at a superb price.

The Sound Modifying section provides instant access to key parameters including filter, amp envelope, 2-band EQ and reverb level. Filter types include three types of low-pass, a peaking filter that's great for wah effects and a high-pass and

FutureMusic VERDICT



A very well-specified synth for the money that sounds great, is perfect for gigging and easy to use.

SPECS

- Keyboard 76-Note with velocity (no aftertouch)
- Sound Generator
- Maximum polyphony:** 128 voices
- Parts:** 16 parts
- Wave memory:** 128MB (16-bit linear equivalent)
- Preset Memory
- Patches:** 1027 + 256 (GM2) **Rhythm Sets:** 32 + 9 (GM2) **Performances:** 64
- User Memory
- Patches:** 256
- Rhythm Sets:** 32
- Performances:** 64
- Effects
- MFX:** 3 systems, 79 types,
- Chorus:** 3 types,
- Reverb:** 5 types, mic input,
- Reverb:** 8 types
- Song Player
- File format:** SMF: format-0/1
- Audio File:** WAV/AIFF/MP3
- Arpeggiator
- Preset:** 128, **User:** 128
- Controllers:** D-beam controller, pitch bend/modulation lever, S1/S2 switches, sound modify knob x 7
- Display:** 240 x 64 dots graphic LCD (backlit)
- Expansion slots:** SRX expansion board: 2 slot
- External storage device:** USB memory (supports USB 2.0 hi-speed flash memory)
- Dimensions: **1251 x 344 x 112mm**
- Weight: **9.8 kg**

ALTERNATIVES



Korg M50-88
£1399

Latest Korg synth with a sizey 88-note model that uses Korg's great sounding EDS synthesis taken from the Oasys and M3. Includes a touchscreen and sequencer too.

korg.com



Yamaha MO6
around £700

End of line Yamaha workstation that's good value if you can find one. Large AWM2 sounds set onboard, with Motif compatible sequencer and weighted version as well.

yamahasynth.com

