

Roland Boutique JU-06 | £229

A Juno-106 emulation from Roland for just £229? That sounds too good to miss! **Dan JD73 Goldman** gets chorused...

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WHAT IS IT?

4-voice, Juno-106 ACB emulation, in a compact module format

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Perhaps the most successful of the three Boutique emulations in terms of authentic sonics
- 2 Compact and portable, without the reliability headaches of the Juno-106
- 3 Has some feature improvements over the original 106

Launched in 1984, the Juno-106 was the successor to the Juno-60, adding basic MIDI, a new all-metal/plastic case and 128 memories (vs 76); plus the Juno-60's arpeggiator was removed (unfortunately)! Old Junos are still very popular today, as they offer a rich and distinctive sound with a wide sweet spot, at a reasonable price (around £800). However, with reports of 106 voice chips failing and a full set of replacements costing 280 euros (from www.analoguerenaissance.com) you might be wary of buying an old 106 – I ended up ditching mine recently when

it started dying. So, for those that are scared off, the Roland folks have answered your prayers with the Boutique series JU-06 – a 4-voice ACB emulation of the original Juno-106.

The JU-06 is built into the same metal faced/plastic chassis enclosure as the JP-08 and JX-03 and has the same solid build quality, power via 4 x AA batteries (or via the MicroB USB socket/your computer) and a 0.5 Watt speaker for playing on the move. The sliders are nicely playable, having considerably more travel than the JP-08. Like the other Boutiques, the JU-06 uses colour schemes and layouts that closely reflect

the originals; so, for example, there are blue backlit buttons and the same red name tabs for each sound engine section: LFO, DCO, HPF, VCA and ENV. To go into a little more detail, there's an LFO with rate control plus delay and the LFO can be sent to the DCO and VCF in varying amounts, (dictated by the position of the LFO slider in each section). The LFO goes into audio range too for clangorous/distorted sounds, effects and dirt and it also goes faster than I remember on my original 106.

The DCO section features a single DCO (Digitally Controlled Analogue Oscillator) but, as DCOs are inherently more stable than VCOs, the famous chorus effect is included to add width/animation. Other features include poly/solo/unison modes, 16', 8' and 4' range switches, a PWM level slider (dictates how much PWM is applied to the pulse wave) and a switch to dictate whether the PWM rate is set manually (MAN) or via the LFO. There's also an upwards ramp (saw) wave which can be switched in alongside the pulse/saw mixtures and a ballsy-sounding square wave sub-oscillator for thickening up sounds, just like the original. Finally, in the DCO section, there's a noise slider for blending in white noise.



Next up is a fully variable 1-pole HPF (like the Juno-6) – this differs from the 4-position switch on the 106 and gives a wider range of tones which is great. Also onboard is a 24dB low-pass filter which has frequency and resonance controls (it's a great-sounding, versatile filter with plenty of texture, spikiness and balls on the low-end), then an envelope polarity-flip switch and sliders for the amount of envelope to filter, amount of LFO to filter and amount of keyboard voltage tracking the filter (with this set to full, the filter will open up as you play



controls. I should also mention the sound selection buttons and there are eight banks with eight patches in each, (half as many sounds as found on the Juno 106). This is slightly disappointing as, with a unit that sounds this good, you want as many patch storage locations as possible! Once again (like the other Boutiques!), these buttons also

It's nonetheless a very handy scratchpad/ideas generator and great to have onboard. Also (like the other Boutiques), MIDI CCs are only available for the mod ribbon, expression pedal and hold (CC 1,11,64), though slider automation is possible via Sysex. The sliders also transmit Sysex in Chain Mode – this mode allows chaining of

further JU-06s (or other Boutiques) via DIN MIDI for additional polyphony.

I've always
loved the
Juno-106's
simplicity/

versatility and how quickly you could dial in a sound/hit a sweet spot and the same is true here – the JU-06 really nails the inherent tone of the Juno-106. In fact, I find this to be an even more successful emulation of the Juno-106 tone than the JP-08 is to the Jupiter-8. However, the sound is slightly more compact when compared to the original 106 (particularly noticeable in unison and poly modes) due to two fewer voices. Also, (like the JP-08) the top-end/high-mids appear to sound less open/lively compared to the original 106. This isn't a problem (it's merely an observation/difference between ACB and real analogue) but it's worth being aware of all the same. In most other respects, it's surprising just how close the JU-06 is to the 106 and all those classic sounds are easily made – once again the JU-06 demonstrates what a powerful technology ACB is. If you want an authentic Juno-106 emulation in a compact, reliable and reasonably-priced box, then look no further! **FM**

Notable Features

The JU-06 also works as a convenient 2-in/2-out Audio/MIDI/USB interface, so you can connect it directly to your DAW without additional cabling. You can also run other gear/audio into the stereo minijack input, though unfortunately it bypasses the sound engine and chorus and runs straight to the output, which is a real missed opportunity.

Other than this, the modelled Chorus effect (taken from the original Juno range) sounds extremely close to the original circuit. The Juno chorus is one of the most revered chorus effects around and it really can transform any sound into something lush and warm with plenty of stereo width and movement. Also, you can press the Chorus 1 and 2 buttons together to get a third chorus mode (unique to the JU-06) and you can mute the emulated background hiss! Finally, the JU-06 can dock with the 2-octave K-25m keyboard and it has a handy onboard delay effect for adding additional life and ambience to your sounds.

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Category	Score (0-10)
BUILD	8
VALUE	9
EASE OF USE	8
VERSATILITY	9
RESULTS	9

The key characteristics of the Juno-106 but without the reliability headaches. An essential purchase.

SPECS

Maximum polyphony: 4 voices
User memory: 64 (8 patches x 8 banks)
LFO Section: RATE slider, DELAY TIME slider
DCO Section: RANGE buttons 16', 8', 4', LFO slider, PWM slider, PWM mode switch, SQUARE, SAW buttons, SUB oscillator slider (square wave), NOISE slider
HPT Section (1-pole type): CUTOFF FREQ slider
VCF Section (24dB LPT): CUTOFF FREQ slider, RESONANCE slider, Polarity switch, ENV slider, LFO slider, KEY FOLLOW slider
VCA section: Control signal switch, VCA level slider
ENV section: Attack Time slider, Decay Time slider, Sustain Time slider, Release Time slider
Effects: Chorus (3 modes), Delay
Step sequencer: 16-step/16-pattern
I/Os: OUTPUT: stereo minijack, PHONES: stereo minijack, INPUT: stereo minijack
MIDI (IN, OUT) connectors
USB: MicroB type (Audio, MIDI), 24-bit, 44.1kHz, 2 in/2 out

Dimensions:
300 x 128 x 45mm
Weight:
940g

ALTERNATIVES



Roland Juno-106

The original 6-voice 106 is a sought-after classic! It has two more voices than the JU-06, plus a full-size 5-octave keyboard too. Watch out for bad/failing voice chips!



TAL-U-NO-LX

The TAL-U-NO-LX plug-in emulates the Juno-60 (the 106's predecessor) and it sounds right on the money. It features an arpeggiator and up to 12 voices too.



Roland Alpha Juno 2

The successor to the Juno-106, the Alpha Juno 2 has a similar DCO engine and continuously variable chorus, with aftershow.

eBay, Gumtree, etc...

FutureMusic 89

higher). Next is a VCA level control and a switch that dictates whether the envelope is a simple on/off gate or whether the sound is shaped by the envelope's ADSR (the final section on the far right). It's all very simple on the surface but a surprisingly wide range of tones are coaxable from just these basic

double as function buttons and as step on/off buttons for the sequencer.

The sequencer is the same 16-step/16-pattern monophonic affair as on the other Boutiques (featuring swing and seven play-order modes) and it can be clocked via MIDI, though unfortunately it doesn't output MIDI.

