

# Elektron Monomachine SFX60 MkII | €1,290

Elektron are well known for producing interesting and unusual audio gear and the SFX60 is no exception. **Bruce Aisher** sizes up the Monomachine SFX60 MkII



### WHAT IS IT?

An integrated digital synth and sequencing hardware system, that attempts to take a unique approach to a seemingly simple idea.

### CONTACT

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Depth of sequencing possibilities
- 2 The SID chip emulation
- 3 It doesn't sound like anything else

**E**lektron, makers of the Monomachine, are a Swedish company who first gained recognition for their

SidStation synthesizer, which utilised the early '80s SID chip (see box to the left), as its core sound generator. The SidStation was developed as part of a university project in 1999, and was followed by the now-classic Machinedrum in 2001. The original (MkI) Monomachine SFX60 (alongside its keyboarded sibling the SFX6) was introduced in 2003.

The MkII version reviewed here arrived in 2007 and has seen a number of OS updates since then. The main functional difference between the original and newer incarnation is the ability of the MkII to host user waveforms (more on this later), but it is also smaller in height, has better signal-to-noise figures and balanced

outputs. So what is the Monomachine? At its core, it has six monophonic synth engines (all DSP-based, so no analogue here) associated with a sequencer track. There are also a further six polyphonic tracks provided for sequencing of external MIDI gear. This might sound

rather limited, but the it is in the detail that the Monomachine finds its niche.

### Keeping Track

Each Track in the Monomachine is independent from the others and is best thought of as combined sound generator and sequencer. The sound generation is determined by the type of Machine (synth or effects module) selected and is married to Amplification, Filter and Effect stages, alongside three separate LFOs. Each track is then routed to an output buss (or another Track) via a global envelope stage, where it can be sent to the Main or individual outputs.

Tracks can also act as effects-only sections for processing other tracks, or audio from the two inputs. The most important factor in determining the overall sound of each track, is the type of Machine chosen. There are five main types of synth Machine, which cover a

### The Original SID Chip

The SID (Sound Interface Device) 6581 chip was a specially designed synthesizer chip originally produced for the Commodore64 computer.

What made it so special was that it featured three independent oscillators, each with four possible waveforms that could be passed through a multi-mode filter,

alongside three ring modulators. Each had it's own ADSR Amplitude envelope control and all parameters were controllable from software.

These features made it far more advanced than any other home-computer sound generator circuitry, and allowed for distinctive and advanced (for the time) musical backing

tracks. Since it's introduction in 1983, it has gone on to be used in a number of hardware units (including Elektron's first product, the SidStation), where its imperfect yet memorable sound was used to good effect. *Zombie Nation's Kernkraft 400* is one such track, but it is also favoured by Timbaland.



