

Roland Juno-Di | £549

Roland's Juno-Di promises a lot, but does it deliver?
Dan 'JD73' Goldman finds out



WHAT IS IT?

The latest in the Juno line, with thousands of sounds, song player, external editor and more

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Pretty cheap
- 2 Portable
- 3 Versatile and full of very usable sounds

The Juno-D was the first in the newly resurrected Juno line back in 2005. Aimed at performers and producers

wanting portability and a great base of versatile sounds at a very reasonable price, the Juno-D proved popular. Never ones to rest on their laurels, however, Roland have sought to improve and expand where the Juno-D left off, and for 2009 they bring us the Juno-Di.

Plenty of important areas have been upgraded and improved since the Juno-D. The latest Juno's polyphony has doubled from 64 to 128 notes, and the number of presets has increased from 640 to over 1,200 (user patch memory remains at 128 patches). Wave memory has been doubled too, from 32MB to 64MB, and a song player has been added for playing MIDI files and for playlisting/running WAV/MP3 files from the newly included USB memory port.

Juno reloaded

On top of these changes, there's also a jack mic input with a dedicated reverb (eight types), an onboard vocoder (which sounds decent), the ability to power from batteries (using nickel metal hydride batteries), more drum kits and

rhythms, expanded effects and more performances (now with splits and layering) – and if that's not enough for you, there's also a very comprehensive Mac/PC editor to allow you to get deep into sound programming. Overall this is a very comprehensive upgrade,

especially when you bear in mind the £549 price tag.

While all the above improvements are very worthwhile the general feel throughout the hardware doesn't instil the greatest of confidence, though I fully understand Roland has had to cut some corners to bring the Juno-Di in at this price. For a start, the keybed is too stiffly sprung for really sensitive playing (a criticism I also angled at the Roland AX-Synth in my recent review). Then there are the dials, which have some sideward play, and the fairly cheap plastic used for the case/underside.

I don't want to be too harsh, however, as this is a budget instrument (and there are keyboards that cost significantly more and have wobbly encoders!). In its favour, the Juno-Di would make a great studio board and is very light, weighing in at 5kg (11 pounds). You can pick it up easily with

Effects and Patch Editor

There's a useful array of effects available onboard the Juno-Di. There are three effects processors – a main reverb generator with five types, a main chorus generator (with two chorus effects and a delay effect) and a master FX unit with 79 available effects. The quality of these effects is good in general, with some nice choruses, amp sims, delays, EQ, reverbs, modulation effects and a pretty good vocoder. Like the onboard sounds, the FX aren't top-class, but they are very usable and versatile. Particularly



when coupled with the patch editor, many more controllable parameters are available.

The patch editor is very easy to use. Each section (common, filter, amp and so on) is listed at the

left-hand side, and it's simply a question of moving sliders until you get the desired sound, then saving the resulting patch and sending it back to the Juno using the onboard USB connector.



