





to the E5 and setting it to the lower half of the keyboard (split) and running a Rhodes sample on the right split and that worked great – simply turn the part mix dial fully right, which mutes the left half of the split, enabling you to hear just the sound of the external instrument. Alternatively, you can mix the lower/upper internal part with the external MIDI instrument's sound.

Other newness includes a big OLED screen which is a huge departure for Nord boards but, true to Nord's ethos, there's still no menu diving so the focus remains firmly on hands-on tweakability. This screen allows you to view/select

quickly using the value dial/shift button. It all works very intuitively and is a big/natural improvement over the old Electros (and the Stage) and I hope it also features on the Stage 3. In addition, there's Live mode (like the Stage) that continuously stores front panel tweaks to three locations.

The piano memory has jumped from 180MB to 1GB which now means you can load much bigger piano samples, including the lovely new XL Silver Grand and my favourite, the XL Bright Grand. Like the E4, we still have the long release and string resonance features which add much to the authenticity,

Yamaha CP80, Wurlitzer EP200 and six Rhodes samples showcasing different models. These all sound excellent for comping or solo work, though I'd still like some new XL Rhodes samples with tighter damper response and a more punchy mid to high range for upfront soloing. The Clavinet samples are still some of the best for authenticity of tone, though a muted sample and key on/off noise are still absent. The piano samples' velocity response curves have recently been overhauled for all Nord piano samples and this has made a huge difference to the playability of the AP and EP samples, especially from the waterfall keybeds.

The organ section (which is still one of the finest Tonewheel emulations around) now has the 122 rotary speaker emulation

from the flagship C2D organ and you can select close-miked or distance-miked versions, plus tweak horn balance, acceleration and more to taste. In addition there's now a great Principle Pipe Organ (also from the C2D) and a really useful B3+Bass model which allows you to use the pedal drawbars for deep, growling bass – this is a real bonus for organ trio players and LH bass players, plus you can add the B3 bass alongside the pianos and samples too.

Add in the great effects, EQ and amp emulations and, without doubt, this is the best sounding and most versatile Electro yet – at this price it's pretty much unbeatable! **FM**

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patches more easily, shows drawbar graphics and also works great with the new Setlist and List/Organize features. Setlist allows you to line up four patches on each of the ABCD preset buttons for specific songs, while the List/Organize feature allows you to scroll through/organise a list of patches

although there's no support for the Nord Triple Pedal and pedal noise (as on the Stage 2). Regardless, I still find that Nord's piano samples are my favourites for sheer playability and authenticity. The same downloadable/swappable selection of EPs is available that you'll find in the Stage 2 including a great



**SPECS**

**Keyboard:** 61 (C-C) velocity sensitive waterfall keybed, Splits/layers

**Piano:** 1GB memory, String Resonance, Long Release

**Sample:** 256MB memory, Attack and Decay/Release control, Filter/Velosity

**Organ:** Adjustable percussion/key click, Vibrato/Chorus, 4 Tonewheel modes

**Effects:** 2 Effect blocks plus master reverb and delay

**I/Os:** L & R jack outs, Monitor input, Control pedal, Sustain pedal, Rotary speed pedal input, MIDI In/Out, USB

**Dimensions**  
900 x 296 x 97mm  
**Weight**  
8.1kg

**ALTERNATIVES**



**Roland V-Combo VR-09**

£549

Very much Roland's answer to the Electro series, the VR-09 is considerably cheaper and offers up organ emulations, EPs, splits, effects and a two-manual mode, and it's very portable too.

[www.roland.co.uk](http://www.roland.co.uk)



**Nord Stage 2 EX Compact**

£2,189

A big jump up in price but you get more memory, a comprehensive synth section with mod wheel/pitch bender, aftertouch and lots more splitting and layering functionality/general flexibility.

[www.nordkeyboards.com](http://www.nordkeyboards.com)



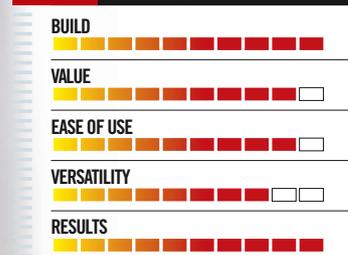
**Korg SV1-73**

£1,019

Korg's own electromechanical emulator features some authentic EPs, Clavinetts, acoustic pianos, synths/strings and organs alongside vintage-style effects. It also has a real tube to add warmth/vibe and a weighted hammer-action keyboard.

[www.korg.com](http://www.korg.com)

**FutureMusic VERDICT**



The Electro feels like a much more complete instrument and has been improved in all the right places.