

Nord Stage 2 EX 88 | £2,549



Nord's Stage 2 EX is the latest version of their popular Stage series.
Dan 'JD73' Goldman checks it out...

INCLUDES AUDIO

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WHAT IS IT?

Latest EX (expanded) version of the popular Nord Stage 2

CONTACT

Who: Sound Technology
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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Covers a lot of sonic territory to a high standard
- 2 Built like a tank but portable
- 3 Plenty of great real-time effects onboard, plus comprehensive splitting/layering/MIDI facilities

SPECS

400 Programs

Organ: B3, Vox, Farfisa

Piano: 1GB memory

Synth: Samples: 380MB memory, VA, FM, Wavetables

Effects: 2 Mod FX blocks, Delay, 3 speaker simulations, Tube amp, 3-band Equalizer, Rotary

Master effects: Compressor and reverb

Connections: 4 Outputs, Sustain, Rotor, Organ Swell, Control Pedal, MIDI In/Out, USB

Weight:

18.5kg

The original Nord Stage 2 was a pretty significant upgrade to the outgoing Stage Classic EX.

The Stage series has proved a big hit for folks looking for a no-nonsense stage board with lots of power under the hood for all stage and studio tasks, and four years on, Nord have just launched the Stage 2 EX (expanded).

Like the outgoing Stage 2, there are three models available of the Stage 2 EX – an 88-note weighted version, an all-new lightweight 76-note weighted model and a 73-note compact waterfall version (this model now features an E-E keyed instead of F-F, which is more practical). The main hardware is almost identical, save for some new orange panel legending, improved pots/potentiometers across the panel, some centre detenting on knobs in the synth section and a kettle lead connector replaces the smaller figure-of-8 power connector of the standard Stage 2.

All major sound bases are covered brilliantly on the Stage 2 EX. First on the left is the organ section which contains a very-authentic Hammond B3 and rotary speaker simulation with additional Vox and Farfisa models. You'll still find digital drawbars (the real drawbars from the Electro 5D haven't been ported over) but these work great

in practice, though they are a little slower than the real thing. The Vibrato and Percussion sections still sound nicely authentic too, though I wish the better Leslie/Tonewheel emulations from the latest Electro and C2D organ had also been ported over as they do sound more authentic. Regardless, it's still an excellent emulator and is only really surpassed by dedicated 'clonewheel' emulators with real Leslies, or when using a Leslie pedal emulator (such as the Neo Instruments Ventilator).

Double the memory

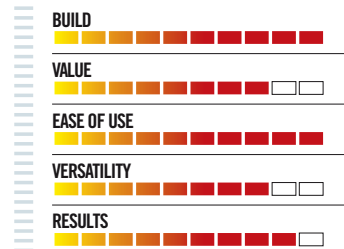
Next is the piano section into which you can load sounds from the Nord Piano Library. I love the Nord pianos and the range is constantly expanding. My faves included the lovely Yamaha Bright Grand and the Steinway Grand Lady D – these come to life even more when using the string resonance, long release and pedal noise options/Nord triple pedal. The piano samples all have an unprocessed natural realism which still makes them my go-to pianos on stage and in the studio. Importantly on this EX model, the piano memory has been doubled to 1GB so you can now squeeze more sounds in and you'll find small, medium, large and XL versions of all the Grand/Upright samples.

Also in the Piano section, you'll find some fantastic Clavinet samples with an authentic dedicated EQ section (though there's still no muted sample or key-off noise) plus there are seven Rhodes models available including a lovely Bright Tines model and a felt-hammered Sparkle Top. These Rhodes samples are still some of the best around, though I feel that Nord needs to bring out XL versions with more tine/mechanical noise and also more high-mid punch and tighter damper response for those that like to dig in/solo hard. There are also some authentic CP80, Wurli and Harpsichord samples, plus the new DX EP samples round things off nicely.

Moving on, the synth section remains the same, though it's still surprisingly versatile with VA, FM, Wave and sample-playback capabilities. The Sample section is particularly noteworthy as you can load sounds from the ever-expanding Nord Sample Library and also add your own sounds/samples using the Nord Sample Editor. Finally, you can layer the panels, trigger the sections from different external MIDI channels (for dual-keyboard action), use the External section for triggering external MIDI gear, split the keyboard and add those lovely authentic-sounding insert and master FX.

All things considered, the Stage 2 EX is a killer package and an improvement over the Stage 2, but ultimately it's just a minor refresh rather than an entirely new model – for that you'll need to wait for the Stage 3! **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT



Its no menu diving/live focused approach is still hard to beat and the sounds/facilities are top-notch.

