



WHAT IS IT?

A Waldorf soft synth based on the Blofeld/Q sound engine with VA, FM and wavetable synthesis, plus FX, EQ and arpeggiator

CONTACT

Who: Hand In Hand
Tel: +44 (0)1752 696633
Web: waldorfmusic.de

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Simple-to-use and easily navigable interface with most parameters MIDI-controllable
- 2 High-quality Blofeld-like atmospheric sound
- 3 Dizzying array of sound-shaping options, with onboard EQ, FX and modulation



FutureMusic

Platinum Award

Waldorf Largo | £175

Following on from the very well received Blofeld range comes Waldorf's first soft synth utilising Blofeld and Q technology. **Dan 'JD73' Goldman** checks it out...

Recently I was lucky enough to review the Blofeld Desktop and Keyboard version, and I was very impressed by both.

My inkling was that it was only going to be a short time until Waldorf packaged the basic sound and features from the Blofeld into a soft synth. So here it is – Waldorf's latest Bond-themed VST/Audio Unit soft synth, AKA Largo.

Installation can be done in two ways. Largo's soft license code can be installed on a Synchrosoft USB dongle key (which you may already own, or you can purchase separately), or you can download an e-licenser code instead. The beauty of the dongle installation is that Largo can be used on any computer, whereas using the e-licenser means that Largo is tied to one Mac/PC.

First off, it's worth comparing the Blofeld and Largo. The basic architecture of Largo is very close to the Blofeld – three main oscillators per voice, with VA waves from the Waldorf Q and 68 (128-step) wavetables from the Q/microwave range, Blofeld and PPG Wave ring mod, noise generator with variable colour, FM, osc sync, detuning, extensive unison mode, two multi-mode filters per voice, three LFOs, and extensive modulation/modifiers section plus FX and arpeggiator.

What's the difference?

There are some significant differences, though – notably, oscillators 1 and 2 in Largo also have additional sub-oscillators for thickening sounds, and these are a very welcome addition.

Largo is lacking the user sample upload from the Blofeld (though most DAWs have sample ability anyway), and the PPG low-pass filter and brilliance control for brightening sounds are also missing – though Largo does add a very comprehensive and high-quality EQ (see box, right). Hopefully, some or all of these missing features could be added in future software upgrades. There's currently no way to move presets between a Blofeld/Q and Largo, but maybe that's also something Waldorf might consider including in the future.

Structurally, Largo sounds can have up to four independent layers with three oscillators each (plus sub-oscs), and up to 256-note polyphony, facilitating sounds consisting of a total of 12 main oscillators plus eight sub-oscillators – 20 oscs in total! Largo is a sound designer's dream, and I can see it making its way into plenty of film scores in the future. Not only can it do straight-up analogue textures, but it's also capable of very complex evolving sounds and amazing sound effects. Of course, complexity of sounds does depend on CPU power and available RAM, though I'm pleased to report CPU load is low on my MacBook Pro with 2GB RAM and a 2.4GHz processor.

Each of the four layers can be switched in and out easily and controlled via independent MIDI

channels from your MIDI controller (layer 1 = MIDI channel 1, layer 2 = MIDI channel 2 and so on), while selecting MIDI channel 5 from your controller controls all four layers together for monstrously huge stacked sounds. Further to this, each layer can be processed independently using your DAW's FX or external processing (via the multi-output option), or as a whole (using the stereo/mono output option). Also, hovering your mouse over a control tells you the MIDI CC number. Neat! This makes it simple to assign Largo's parameters to your controller of choice.

Front end

Praise is also due to Waldorf/Axel Hartmann for the well-thought-out interface – it makes navigating what is an extremely complex and deep synth a breeze. My only criticism is that Largo's window can't currently be resized, and thus it's worth having another external monitor around. However, all the main functions and common parameters, filters/envelopes, effects, LFOs and the arpeggiator have their own direct tabs, making it easy to get straight to the function you need. Bug-wise, I'm happy to report Largo was on the whole stable, though I did get Logic to crash sometimes when opening a mono instance. Waldorf are working on a fix for this, however.

So, the majority of functionality is pretty much the same as the Blofeld

Sounding Shaping and Processing

Largo has very comprehensive sound-shaping abilities. Its filters have several modes including low-pass, high-pass, notch, comb, filter FM, 12/24dB modes and parallel and serial connectivity. They also self-oscillate in a very smooth and pleasant way with no audible stepping, even at high resonance.

The onboard four-band EQ (with variable Q) is very powerful and allows detailed sound shaping. It's really handy to have this facility built into Largo itself without having to rely on any external processing.

Modulation possibilities are also extensive (like the Blofeld), and the modulators and modifiers



(found under the Matrix tab) are deep to say the least. Pretty much anything can be modulated by anything here, and it's great fun playing around and hearing the sometimes crazy results!

The arpeggiator is easy to use, with plenty of control and modes available and a graphic interface; it syncs to MIDI

and can be assigned per layer, too, for complex polyphonic patterns. Finally, the onboard effects (chorus, phaser, flanger, overdrive delay, reverb) are musical-sounding and sound suitably different to those built into most DAWs. They are undeniably 'Waldorfian' in character – very musical, yet slightly industrial.

and the sound quality/character is very similar too – perhaps Largo sounds a bit smoother, but the character is still bright and industrial, yet smooth and analogue-y. Largo sounds great for just about any type of sound, be it basses, leads, analogue drums, pads, FX or FM/ evolving wavetable/industrial sounds.

To conclude, Largo is reasonably priced and sounds the business – Waldorf have definitely captured the essential character of the Blofeld. Don't judge Largo by its presets, as these only scratch the surface of what it's capable of. Initialize a patch and get stuck in with the filters, envelopes and effects, and you'll be impressed.

It's not often I can say that a soft synth sounds as great as its hardware counterpart, but in this instance there

is very little to choose from between the two. Largo is probably the easiest to use, best-sounding and most versatile soft synth I've used to date. **FM**

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SPECS

System Requirements:
PC: Windows XP or better, Intel Pentium 3, 1GHz or better AMD Athlon, 800MHz or better, 64MB free RAM, VST host
Mac: OS X 10.3.9 or better, PowerPC: G4, 800MHz or better, 64MB free RAM, VST or Audio Unit host

Up to 256 voices per instance (depending on available CPU power), up to 4 layers per sound

Per Voice
5 oscillators: 3 main, 2 sub-oscillators

Virtual Analog Models:
Pulse with Pulse Width Modulation, Sawtooth, Triangle, Sine
Wavetables: 68 wavetables taken from the legendary Microwave and Wave synthesizer and Q and Blofeld wavetables

Filters
2 independent multi-mode filters with filter FM, resonance up to self-oscillation, low-pass 24dB/12dB, band-pass 24dB/12dB, high-pass 24dB/12dB, notch 24dB/12dB, comb filter with positive/negative feedback, 2 drive stages per voice with adjustable Drive Gain and selectable curves

Mod+Fx
Modulation matrix with 16 slots, freely programmable, 4 modifiers for transforming modulation sources with various algorithms, 3 fast MIDI-syncable LFOs with note retrigger and adjustable start phase

ALTERNATIVES



FXpansion D.CAM Synth Squad

£179

FXpansion's first soft synth, comprising four separate synths – polyphonic analogue, string, FM and modular (see our review on p96).

[synthsquad.com](#)



Cakewalk Rapture

£160

Powerful wavetable soft synth, with extensive modulation capabilities, 16-mode filter, multi-waveform oscillators, global FX and step generators.

[cakewalk.com](#)

FutureMusic VERDICT

STABILITY	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★★★
VERSATILITY	★★★★★
RESULTS	★★★★★

Captures the essence of the Waldorf hardware sound but puts it in an easy-to-use, versatile package.