# Cyclone Analogic TT-78 and TT-606 £389 (each)

The French company have cloned another two classic Roland drum machines. **Bruce Aisher** puts them through their paces

CONTACT **WHO:** Cyclone Analogic **WEB:** www.cyclone-analogic.fr **KEY FEATURES** Analogue audio circuits with adjustable tone parameter(s) per instrument, individual audio outs, 64 user patterns, up to 64 steps per pattern, with swing, accent per instrument, roll and flam, flip between write and play without interrupting playback, save kits and pattern clip ideas, 'nuance' parameter automation/modulation, all parameters are controllable via Midi CC.

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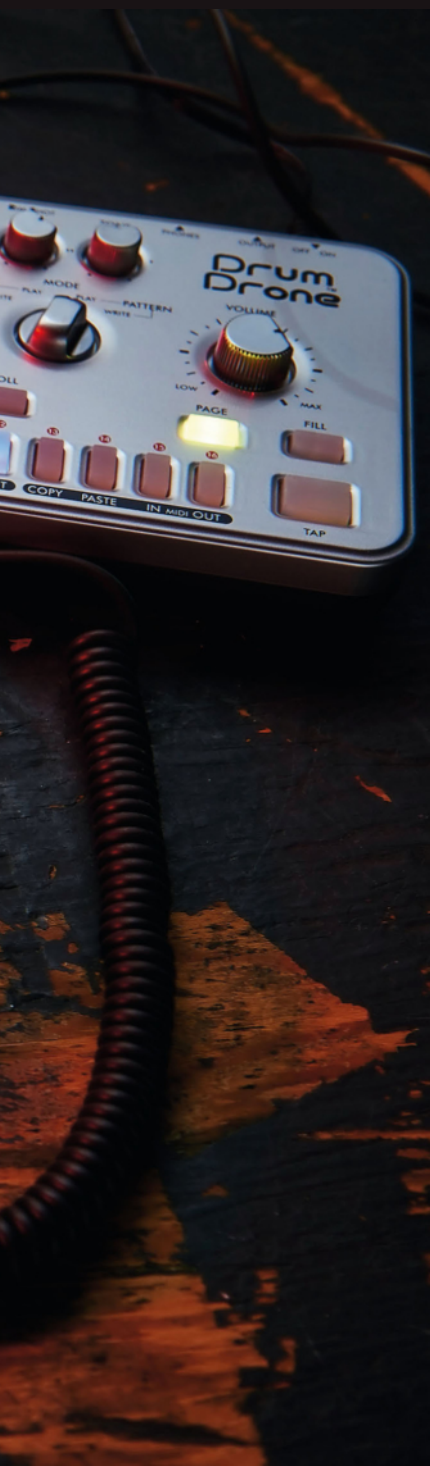
New sounds added to the original 606 palette

Much more flexible than the originals in both sonic and programming terms

'Nuance Auto-Variation' adds timbral interest to patterns

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No analogue clocking or triggering features

Not 100% soundalikes of the originals, though very close in places

Sound doubling for some instruments on TT-78 makes programming fiddly at times

M ythology has always played a massive part in music making, be it bluesman Robert Johnson selling his soul to the devil in return for musical skill, or the magical timbre and timing of an 808 drum machine, the allure remains.

In music technology terms, this often means ever-inflating prices on the secondhand market, even for kit that is severely limited in functional terms, and that presents

an opportunity for anyone willing to create a reliable, cheaper, and often even more featureful remake. Step forward, Cyclone Analogic!

The French company gathered much attention – and some infamy – a few years back, with the introduction of the TT-303 BassBot, which looked identical to the original 303 and added new features. The TT-303 also sounded very good, claiming to be an exact circuit clone of original (albeit employing modern Surface Mount equivalents of the original components). It is within

this context that Cyclone have introduced their promised TR-606 clone ,alongside one of the even-more-retro CR-78.

Whether due to legal action or a quest for design originality, the copying of both boxes' original stylings has been largely laid to rest – though the knobs and name font still tip a nod to the 303/606 family. The TT-78 is nothing like the original CR-78 in appearance, though this does mean it's far less bulky than its unwieldy ancestor. Sadly, the alluring wood-effect case and coloured buttons have also been resigned to '70s industrial design history.

There's a danger when reviewing music kit that copies or alludes to aspects of a well-regarded older designs that anything new (or that departs from the original spec and intent) should be seen as a bad thing, but let's throw that idea out for the time being, and look at the DrumDrone and BeatBot as if they were untainted by history.

The two new Cyclone drum machines feature identical programming systems, and similar knob and socket placement. The back panel has full-sized MIDI ports, with the output switchable to act as

Thru port if required. Unlike some other recent units, no USB interfacing is included. However, the MIDI implementation is comprehensive, providing full parameter automation, transmission and reception, as well as the expected note-on/off and clocking. Firmware and pattern backup are also achieved via the ever-dependable DIN ports. On the rear you'll also find the main mono, headphone and individual sound outputs. Tapping into one of the seven instrument mini-jacks will remove the associated sound (or sounds, in the case of the TT-78) from the main mix.

The larger front panel knobs take care of Tempo, Volume and programming, whilst the smaller knobs control accent and instrument levels alongside a mysterious parameter labelled Tone. It is the latter of these that gives some indication of the units being far more flexible then they first appear. Each instrument (or 'sound') has one editable parameter which directly adjusts the circuitry of the underlying sound engine. For many sounds, this provides access to pitch or decay, although TT-606 Cymbal

Roland TR-8
£439

Roland's Aira drum machine comes stocked with digital recreations of the TR-808 and TR-909 but can be updated with added 707, 727 and 606 sounds via an upgrade priced $95.
www.roland.com

MFM Tanzmaus/ Tanzbar Lite
from £330

These analogue machines from Berlin are more inspired by the 808 and 909, but are gritty and punchy in a similar way to the Cyclone TTs.
www.mfberlin.de

Arturia Spark 2
from £149

Arturia's Spark suite models a host of digital drum machines, the CR-78 included.
www.arturia.com

has both (by using the Function key). The Snares have adjustable 'Snap', and some sounds also provide a range of starting timbres (pitching of the metallic component for hats and cymbal separately on the TT-78 for example). The Tone knob is used to adjust other parameters, so caution is required at times. Snapshots of tweaked kits can be saved in one of 32 Kit locations, accessed separately from Patterns and Clips.

Programming is based around the classic grid-based x0x system of Patterns (64 each with a Fill variant) and Tracks, with the option of real-time (Tap) recording. The Mode switch changes from playing to Writing (recording) without having to stop playback. The ability of the 16 backlit step buttons to display different colours means that introducing other tweaks such Accents, Flams and Rolls is pretty straightforward: Accents can be added per-instrument or on a global basis, as was the case for some older machines. In Play mode, step-based tweaks such as Rolls can be used as live performance tweaks in real time without altering the original patterns.

Rhythm patterns for individual instruments can also be stored as Clips (16 per instrument) ready for use in patterns at a later stage – a useful tool when compiling patterns for a complete track. Further inspiration can be found in the Mutate function that subtly alters existing steps for the chosen instrument.

One feature not found on classic analogue drum machines is

TONE Controls tuning or decay of each sound. There are different starting timbre choices available for the Cymbal and Hats

NUANCE AUTO-VARIATION Automates the Tone parameter per instrument, based on a range of LFO-style shapes

SEPARATE OUTS On the 606 only the Toms and Hats share outputs, but there's a bit more doubling on the TT-78

parameter automation. The Cyclone machines take this concept and provide a way of altering the Tone control for each Instrument automatically, based on a series of tempo-synced LFOs. This is surprisingly effective, and very easy to apply. Subtle timbre variations really add life to patterns, though utter mayhem is also possible if that's your thing.

No owner of an original TR-606 or CR-78 will claim that these boxes sound exactly like the real thing – my 606 is noticeably different in places. However, they still maintain that all-important analogue vibe. More importantly, the range of tones and programming system goes far beyond what the originals can do. **FM**

HEY THERE, WHAT'S THAT SOUND?

Roland's company origins lie firmly in the world of analogue drum machines. The TR-606, with its similarities to the legendary 808, had a punchier, cleaner sound than the somewhat fuzzier and less-refined tones of the CR-78, which harked back to an earlier era in terms of sound generation. Drum machines in the 60s and 70s made copious use of resonant inductor coil circuits (rather than those built from transistors), and were also pretty noisy beasts. The CR-78 only used inductors in the circuity for two sounds, though inside the TT-78 there isn't a coil in sight. The Cyclone versions add Clap and Rimshot tones to the 606, with the TT-78 staying somewhat closer to its origins.

FM VERDICT

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Two excellent drum machines that combine real analogue sound with modern features. Some may miss the lack of analogue trigger capabilities