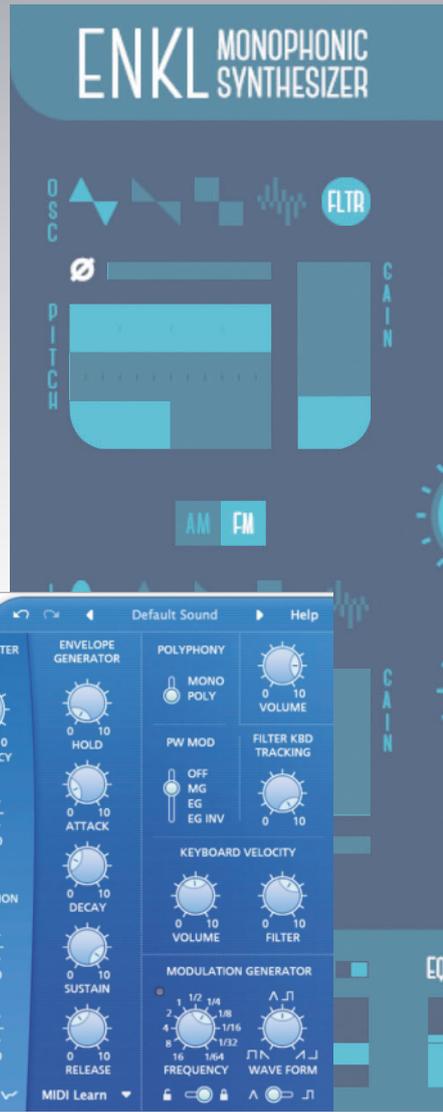


SYNTHS UNDER £50

Cheap and cheerful or cacky and dismaying? Are these full-version plugins up to the job?



AudioThing miniBit €20

An excellent resource for chiptune sounds, miniBit offers up (appropriately) a single oscillator with a choice of 18, with the ability to construct new oscillators in the Editor (eight slots are available). The oscillator's control set gives you tuning, finetuning and volume, and you can dial in a sub oscillator at a level of your choosing. Those 18 sound sources alone should put you in mind of your favourite classic console as soon as you crank down the downsampler and Bits knobs, and there's basic envelope and LFO controls to get things moving.

miniBit's filter is another simple affair with cutoff and resonance dials, plus a high-pass/low-pass switch. There's a delay effect and that all-important crusher effect to

bring the sound down in quality. There's also an eight-step sequencer that can take command over pitch, volume, resonance, wave, downsampling, etc.

miniBit is great for crafting chiptune-style sounds, with enough control for the synthesist to dial in exactly what they're after. Some niggles in operation, such as modulation and glide not resetting until you note-off all notes then note-on one again, make it a little pernickety, but it's a great source of tweakable low-bit fun!

audiothing.net

VERDICT 8.2

FabFilter One £44

A simple one-oscillator synth with all the basics of synthesis and a sound that's hard to argue with, FabFilter One gives you a choice of four waveforms: triangle, saw, square (with pulse width) and noise. These lead into a filter (cutoff and resonance) and an HADSR envelope. Simple, but effective – and yes, that filter is indeed fab.

The modulation is where it's at, with the same envelope signal and a 'Modulation Generator' (an LFO) being applicable to the osc's frequency (for vibrato), the filter's cutoff, and pulse width. Global controls include velocity and keyboard tracking, plus portamento and polyphony.

One is a very basic synth that feels like the base for a whole bunch of synth patches. If you're just looking for super-simple tones or to add an extra layer to an existing line for some stability, it's a great option. There's more bang for your buck elsewhere in this round-up though.

fabfilter.com

VERDICT 8.8

**FM | MUST HAVE!**

Klevgrand Enkl \$40

Built from the ground up as a monophonic synth, Enkl has a great set of in-built sounds to get your musical juices flowing. Two oscillators (left and right) let you choose triangle, saw down, square and noise waveforms, with control over tuning and gain. The two oscillators' signals can be added together, subtracted or multiplied.

One very interesting thing about Enkl is the combination of its envelope and LFO generators into one unit – you can play a note whose modulation is controlled by the ADSR parameters of the same joint unit, making for some cool effects. Each oscillator can be modulated for its amplitude (tremolo) or frequency (vibrato) – nice and versatile.

In legato mode, you can press two keys, release one and the other note will play, making Enkl a dab hand at playing complex, interesting lines. There's also an arpeggio feature to get more out of the monophonicity on display. Add a basic EQ and delay, plus a few more tweaks to your sound, and you've got a synth that's truly different – and sounds pretty amazing.

klevgrand.se

VERDICT 9.2

FM | STUDIO ESSENTIAL!

Rob Papan Go2 €49

The most animated synth in this collection, thanks to its XY pad that acts as a modulator source. This lets you draw or record in a movement in 2D space across time, and hook the signal up to oscillator parameters like Spread, Symmetry and the blend between your two oscillators; plus four destinations (filter, unison, amp, effects, etc). There are over 100 waveforms, and you choose which two to blend together as the sound source.

As well as the expected synth parameters (filter, envelopes, LFO), the arpeggiator can play chords, control velocity, tie steps and create slides; and onboard effects processors are chorus, flanger, phaser, delay and reverb.

For a budget-end synth, Go2 can't be beaten in terms of its feature set. Its sound is very impressive but not infallible – but the versatility of results makes this a great low-cost option for those starting out.

robpapan.com

VERDICT 9.0