

Boss SY-300 Guitar Synthesizer | £549

Polyphonic guitar synthesis that doesn't require an ugly pickup? **Robbie Stamp** parks his luddite guitar habits to join the 21st century

INCLUDES AUDIO

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WHAT IS IT?

Polyphonic guitar synthesizer

CONTACT

Who: Boss (Roland UK)
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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Flexible signal architecture
- 2 Fast and accurate polyphonic tracking
- 3 Comprehensive range of waveforms, modulations and effects

SPECS

AD/DA conversion: 24-bit, 44.1kHz

Input impedance: 2.2M
(Input), 220k (Return)

Output impedance: 2k
(Main and Sub)

Nominal I/O levels: -10dBu
(Input, Return, Main & Sub)

Connectors: 1/4" TS (Input, Thru, Return, Main outputs R, Sub Outputs L&R), 1/4" TRS (Output L/Phones, EXP/CTRL 4,5), Din 5pin (MIDI In and Out), USB Type B, DC In jack

Dimensions:

255 x 191 x 70mm

Weight:

1.75kg

Guitar synthesizers have always been a Roland/Boss thing, from the late '70s GR-500 to the present day.

The SY-300 marks a departure as it's their first to do away with any special pickup/converter, instead working directly from the guitar signal.

The SY-300 has four foot switches that provide the basic functions: effect on/off and three control switches, which by default include patch up/down and tuner access. Flanking the central LCD are rotary Select switch and navigation buttons, and the Output Level knob, which accompanies the Synth/FX architecture access button, Blender (see below) and Write buttons.

The rear panel is packed. The analogue side features the instrument/line input, Thru (ie back to an amp/pedals), Return (eg from pedals), main stereo outputs (Left can drive headphones), and a pair of sub outputs. The non-audio connections provide MIDI I/O, USB 2.0 connectivity (SY-300 = audio/MIDI interface), and expression pedal input.

The SY-300 is simple and intuitive to navigate. The signal flow starts

with the three oscillators, after which almost any conceivable arrangement of the four effects/processor blocks and sub-mixer/router can be applied.

Parallel to this 'synth' signal path is the Thru/Return which can be used to run a stomp box set-up or add an alternate signal. The Sub output can be moved to anywhere post-oscillator, for separate external processing or amplification.

The Oscillator blocks are the real meat and bones of the SY-300. The polyphony is such that each oscillator can translate six voices from the incoming audio signal (ie a full guitar chord). The tracking is fast and accurate: bends, mutes, harmonics, etc., are translated with ease. Each Oscillator has a waveform (sine, triangle, saw, square, PWM, detuned saw and noise), as well as a dry input setting, with plenty of pitch and modulation controls. To further dress the basic synth sound, each Oscillator block contains two LFOs, a filter (HPF/BPF/LPF/Peaking), a 16 step sequencer and overall pitch range controls. Considering there are three of these, this adds up to a hell of a lot of variables.

There is no mistaking the digital nature of the oscillators, though the character of the guitar (and player) is unmistakable through all but the Noise waveform. The filters help contour this characteristic and, with all three oscillators running, a huge range of tones and textures can be carved out. The effects blocks provide good quality renditions of pretty much every conceivable effect type, making for an impressive sonic sculpture toolbox, even without the oscillators running synth waveforms. A final word on functions: the Blender allows the user to mix and match oscillators and the signal chain from other presets, which is a great way to explore/randomise sound creation.

If you want to synth up your guitar/bass, there is no easier way than the SY-300. There is so much range available and it's deceptively easy to use considering the range of functionality it possesses. The USB, MIDI and external control make it a flexible and easily integrated tool that can slot into a larger set-up and, even when not being a synth, it makes a mean effects box. **FM**

FutureMusic **VERDICT**

BUILD



VALUE



EASE OF USE



VERSATILITY



RESULTS



An excellent guitar synthesizer and effects/tone toolbox for dedicated guitar/bass sonic explorers.

