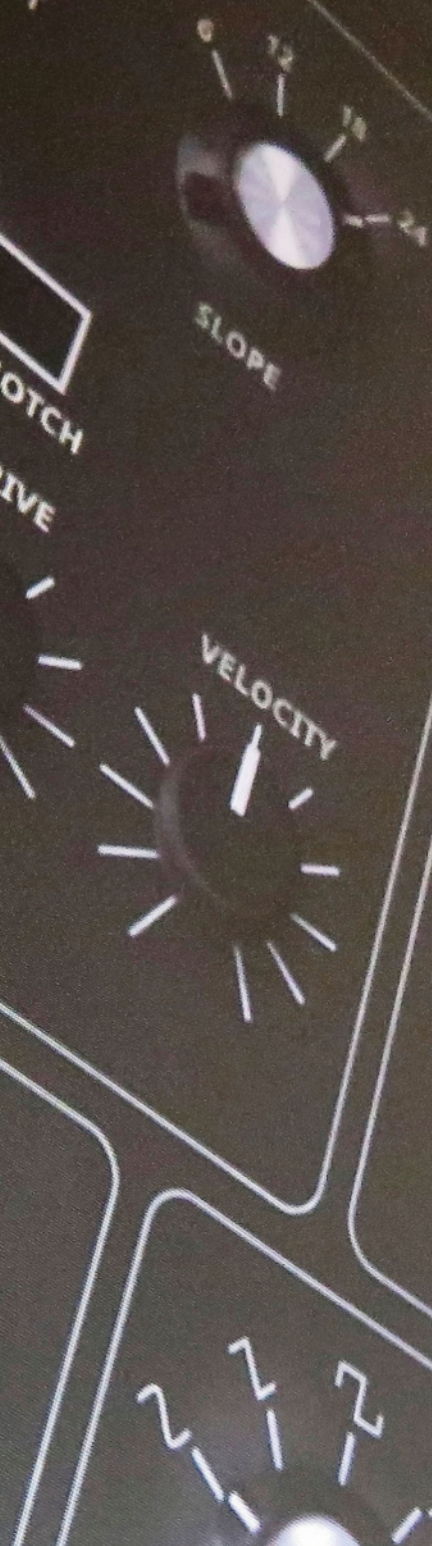




IK Multimedia Syntronik €299

This hybrid instrument claims to replicate 38 iconic synthesizers. **Si Truss** sees if it's too good to be true...

CONTACT WHO: IK Multimedia TEL: +44 (0)1447 765765 WEB: www.ikmultimedia.com **FEATURING** Alesis Andromeda, ARP 2600, ARP String Ensemble (Solina), Elka Rhapsody 490, Moog: Micromoog, Minimoog Model D, Modular, Voyager, Multimooog, Polymoog, Oberheim OB-X, OB-Xa, SEM, PPG Wave 2.3, Roland: Juno-60, Jupiter-8, JX-10, JX-3P, JX-8P, Sequential Circuits: Prophet-10, Prophet-5, Yamaha: CS-01II, CS-80, GX-1 & MORE



THE PROS & CONS



Based on a generous library of meticulously sampled synth sounds

A huge selection of quality, useable preset sounds

Can layer up to four sounds with separate effects



Emulated filters aren't necessarily authentic to the original instrument design

Limited sound design capabilities

Installation of the download version is a bit of a pain

OFF THE RACK

Along with the synth instruments themselves, Syntronik comes stocked with a library of 35 effects processors. These are largely lifted from IK's T-RackS and AmpliTube, with a few custom additions such as a Juno-inspired chorus. The presets generally use these to shape and tone the classic synth sounds, and the results are generally very effective. There's a broad selection of modulation, dynamics, reverb, delay, EQ, distortion and amps sims, most offering approximations of classic hardware. As with the instruments themselves, effects are added individually to each of Syntronik's four layers.



the case for the Minimod, which features sounds from the Moog Model D, Voyager and Modular, or String Box, which combines multiple string synths from the likes of Elka, Roland and Hohner. Elsewhere, the collection takes in a pleasingly broad spectrum of classics, from analogue titans like the CS-80 and ARP 2600 to digital classics such as the PPG Wave 2.3 and the FM-powered section of Yamaha's SY99, with Junos, Prophets and Oberheims in between.

All of the instruments share a common filter section. This features modelled recreations of four classic analogue filter circuits: Moog's ladder filter, Roland's IR3109 chip, the Curtis CEM3320 and Oberheim SEM. There are also digital formant and phase filters along with a fairly vanilla, all-purpose multimode filter. The filters do a good job of replicating the character of those they're based on, although they arguably lack a bit of analogue gnarliness when pushed to extremes.

Obviously, given the broad range of synths Syntronik claims to replicate,

IK are working in fairly broad strokes when it comes to matching filter emulations to sample sources – there are multiple instances where an oscillator source is fed through a filter emulating a design similar to that used in the original synth, but not aiming for an exact emulation of the signal path. Most patches from the 303 clone, for example, make use of the OTA-style IR3109 emulation in -24dB mode, not strictly accurate to the design of the original, which used a transistor ladder filter. However, it's worth noting that many of the source sounds have been sampled with filter resonance or cutoff already applied, so these emulated filters are often there to apply additional filtering to an already filtered sound.

The upshot of the broad approach is that Syntronik as a whole offers a sonic variety that goes beyond slavishly replicating its inspirations, allowing users to mix and match oscillator sources and filter designs. Ever wanted to try out a polyphonic Model D run through a SEM filter?

With ROMpler stalwart SampleTank and amp sim empire AmpliTube to their name, IK Multimedia are certainly no strangers to either multisampling or modelling. Yet even for them, Syntronik seems like something of an ambitious undertaking. This hybrid instrument recreates the sound of 38 of the most iconic synths of all time, using a combination of multisampled

oscillators, analogue-modelled filters and what they're calling 'Drift' technology, which emulates the wavering (pitch modulation) inherent in classic analogue oscillators.

Rather than offering exact replications of all 38 instruments, Syntronik divides its source material across 17 familiar-looking virtual instruments. Some of these are straight replications of a single instrument – such as the 303-based T-03 and the Jupiter-inspired J-60 – while others combine similar sources into a single interface, as is

THE ALTERNATIVES



NI Retro Machines MkII
£59

NI's Kontakt library is based on similar source material, but it's far less extensive in terms of scope, library size or ambition.

www.native-instruments.com



Arturia V Collection 5
£209

If deeper sound design capabilities is a priority, modelling rather than sampling might be the way forward. Try Arturia's generous bundle.

www.arturia.com



UVI Synth Anthology 2 €149

One of the many sampled synth collections for UVI workstation, Synth Anthology 2 takes a more up-to-date approach, with the likes of the OB6 and Minilogue included.

www.uvi.net

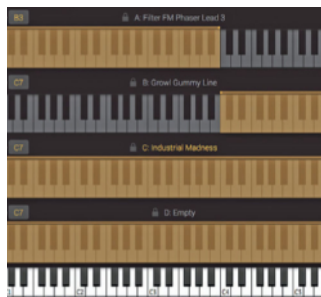
Now's your chance! In fact, many of the included patches take precisely this approach.

Speaking of which, it's the wealth of included presets that prove to be Syntronik's biggest selling point. There are over 2000 preset sounds across all of the instruments, covering a broad variety from basses to leads, pads, FX, percussion and more. It's pleasing to note that on the whole these forego over-the-top, show-off patches in favour of lots of classic, inspiring and highly usable sounds.

This preset collection is effectively the bread and butter of Syntronik. For all the talk of hybrid approaches, it remains resolutely a sample instrument at heart. Each instrument has the appropriately style UI, but the range of the controls for each remains unified across the whole range, offering tuning for two oscillators, glide and polyphony controls, the filter section, plus ADSR envelopes for the filter and amp.

It does have some tricks up its sleeve, though, such as a layering window that allows users to combine up to four sounds and set up keyboard and velocity layer splits. There's a handy sequencer/arpeggiator too.

How 'faithful' Syntronik is to the synths it claims to replicate is a bit of a mixed bag. The sampled preset sounds themselves are excellent; IK have clearly put a lot of work into creating and recording raw material that captures the best of these iconic synthesizers, and that shows in the resultant sounds. The 'Drift' feature is a good touch too, bringing these patches to life with a touch of authentic wobble – combined with the ability to detune Syntronik's two sampled



INTERFACE: Each instrument features a UI styled around its source inspiration, although the control set remains the same across the board

LAYERS: Syntronik features four instrument layers, which can be used to create keyboard or velocity splits, bulking up what the instruments are capable of

BROWSER: The heart and soul of syntronik. It's neatly laid out with descriptions of each sound and a 'favourites' system for recalling regularly used patches



oscillators, it can create convincingly rich, analogue-like results. At the end of the day though, despite Drift and the modelled filters, Syntronik is still a sample player with a few emulated elements attached, rather than a full emulation – don't go in expecting to be able to design sounds in the manner you would with the original instruments.

None of this is really a problem; while Syntronik perhaps doesn't end up feeling as revolutionary as some were hoping pre-release, it would be unfair to suggest IK have ever suggested it was anything beyond what it actually is. It remains a sumptuous and generous bundle of sampled synth sounds, quality effects and well chosen presets. If you go in accepting its limitations – and you can tolerate the laborious install process – Syntronik offers a great way to get access to a large selection of convincing and usable vintage synth sounds. **FM**

LIBRARY MATTERS

Installing the download version of Syntronik is a bit of a pain. It requires 50GB of sound files which need to be downloaded from IK's site after installation as 23 files that need to be downloaded, mounted/unzipped and installed individually. It's a laborious and slow process that will have you crying out for a download manager. A boxed version with USB drive is available for 30 euros more, as is a free version – containing its core engine and a minimal selection of sounds, to which users can add sound content as individual purchases, bought instrument by instrument, priced at 49 euros a piece.

FM VERDICT

8.2

Syntronik perhaps isn't all that revolutionary, but it remains a generous bundle of carefully created, quality vintage synth sounds