Arturia Pigments

€199

Arturia's first original synth plugin combines wavetables and virtual analogue approaches. **Greg Scarth** takes a look…

CONTACT WHO: Arturia **WEB:** arturia.com **KEY FEATURES** Twin virtual analogue and wavetable synth engines; 8 x filters; 3 x envelopes; 3 x LFOs; 13 x effects. Sequencer/arpeggiator. Powerful modulation options

THE PROS & CONS

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Wavetable and virtual analogue approaches combine well to create a very versatile synthesis engine

Nice balance of original ideas and elements borrowed from classic synths

Visual feedback and clear user interface make it easy to understand what's going on

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Relatively CPU-hungry

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t takes a lot to stand out in the hyper-competitive world of synth plugins. Arturia know this better than most, having made their name by specialising in licensed emulations of iconic vintage synths. They still produce some of the best takes on classics like the Minimoog and Jupiter-8, but over the last few years they've also branched out into slightly unpredictable territory: hardware synths and drum machines, sequencers, controllers and audio interfaces. Pigments sees Arturia return their attention to the world of plugins, albeit in a slightly unexpected way.

There are a number of notable features of Pigments. Rather than being modelled on a vintage model, it's been built from the ground up based on the company's experiences over the last 20 years.

At its heart, Pigments combines wavetable and virtual analogue approaches. These come in the form of two highly versatile synth engine sections. Both can toggle between wavetables or virtual analogue, with deep and powerful sound design options. Multilayer synths can sometimes feel a bit on the disjointed side, but Pigments successfully manages to avoid this pitfall, integrating the layers seamlessly and allowing the two approaches to complement each other.

The filter section follows a similar dual-layer approach, with 'modern' filters alongside emulations of classic filters from V Collection instruments. Given the effort they've put into their emulations in the past, it's no surprise that there are elements of classic synths hidden under the surface. Pigments would be decent enough if all it could do was mix and match these classic oscillator and filter modes, but the multi-layered approach with wavetables alongside analogue emulation and dual filters puts it on another level. Combine that with versatile modulation routing plus an excellent sequencer/arpeggiator and it's immensely capable.

This kind of ultra-versatile approach could easily get confusing, but thought has clearly gone into keeping things simple to use. This is most obviously apparent in the layout and detail of the plugin's user interface, with graphical representation of a number of key features making the sound sculpting process user-friendly, speeding up your workflow. You'll find real-time visualisations of 23 parameters spread across a strip in the lower half of the plugin window. What's arguably even more useful is the ability to watch a wavetable evolve in real time as notes are held down, either in 2D or 3D (the only minor quibble being that you can't view Engine 1 and Engine 2 simultaneously).

It's hard to pinpoint Pigments' specific character simply because it depends how you use it. Mixing all the various options together, you can cover a huge range of sounds, making Pigments an all-rounder, much like the other go-tos in this area of the synth plugin market. Think NI Massive, Xfer Records Serum or LennarDigital Sylenth1; Pigments is good enough to be discussed alongside the big hitters.

Arturia playfully describe Pigments as a 'polychrome' synth. Whether you buy into that kind of marketing buzzword or not, there's no denying it can turn its hands to a range of tones. By now we know to expect the unexpected from Arturia. Pigments is the kind of bold, colourful synth that stands out from the pack. **FM**

FM VERDICT

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A strong return to the world of plugins from a consistently reliable brand. Pigments looks like it'll quickly become a go-to