

Test: Moog Muse

A polyphonic synthesizer from Moog is already something special. When it is also presented for the first time without advance notice in the Halftime Show of the Super Bowl, increased interest is certain. But can the Muse also meet the high expectations in practice, or was it just a lot of show about nothing? **by Jan Wilking**

In the long history of Moog, there have not been many polyphonic synthesizers, most recently the insanely expensive flagship Moog One. However, the predominantly analog constructed Moog Muse not only stands out with its eight voices but also with features that predestine it as an instrument for stage use. A generously sized and clearly structured panel as well as a variety of controls for direct access make it easy to create sounds and tweak during a performance. And assignable controllers, direct access to layers, splits, and chord triggers, as well as versatile sequencer and arpeggiator features, play right into the hands of the live keyboardist. And at a current street price of €3,499, it is even quite affordable by Moog standards and plays in a similar price range as Trigon-6 or Polybrute 12.

Classic design

Exteriorly, the Muse makes a mighty impression with dimensions of 99 x 42 x 11 cm, demanding appropriate space and a stable studio table or keyboard stand. With the slightly slanted control surface, the typical Moog knobs, high fader caps, and the narrow white pitch and modulation wheels, Muse is oriented towards old Moog classics like Minimoog, Prodigy, Rogue, and Polymoog, while the buttons at the bottom are a bit reminiscent of the Roland Jupiter-8. Only the OLED display reminds that this is a modern synthesizer and not a vintage legend. The craftsmanship is impeccable, the synthesizer is very robust and also reasonably heavy with a good 14.5 kg. The Fatar keyboard with 61 keys plays comfortably, but unfortunately only has monophonic aftertouch. Given Muse's extensive modulation capabilities and its conception as a performance synthesizer, polyphonic aftertouch would have been a great enrichment here.

USB, MIDI, CV - all included

On the back, you will find a stereo audio output through which the two sounds of the Muse can also be taken separately



in mono and processed with appropriate panning. Stereo individual outputs per timbre would have been even nicer, of course. Next, there are pedal inputs for sustain and expression as well as a rather rare feature in polyphonic synthesizers with two CV inputs and outputs for connecting to other analog equipment. Clock-IN/OUT was also considered, everything in the Eurorack-friendly mini-jack format.

MIDI control takes place via a DIN trio or the USB port, which also serves for importing and exporting sounds and operating system updates. The USB host port next to it is still dormant for now. It remains to be seen whether Moog will unlock it in the future as a mass storage device or as a connection for additional controllers.

Power is supplied via an internal power supply with a cold-device connection.

Warm-up time required

Speaking of gigs: Muse requires just over 50 seconds to boot after being turned on. In the studio, this plays less of a role as you can boot up the computer in parallel and grab a coffee in the meantime. However, if there were to be a short power outage on stage because, for example, the guitarist

stumbled over the power cable, this short minute can feel considerably longer.

Additionally, you should give the Muse a little warm-up time afterward, as it is not one of the most tuning-stable synthesizers. Fortunately, the Quick Tuning function, like almost everything on the Muse, is directly and easily accessible without much menu-diving but should also be used regularly at first.

A dream for tinkerers!

Which brings us directly to the topic of operation. Due to the generous dimensions of the surface, Moog was able to equip almost all important functions with their own knobs and faders, which are also pleasantly large and sufficiently spaced apart. This makes it really fun to tweak the sounds! In addition, each area has a small button in the upper right corner to jump directly into the appropriate menu and make more in-depth settings there. You can hardly solve the operation better, great praise to the developers at Moog!

2+1 oscillators, FM, Sync & RM

The basis of the purely analog sound generation is three analog oscillators. One

Features

- Polyphonic Analog Synthesizer
- 8 voices, Bi-Timbral
- 61 keys with velocity / aftertouch
- 2 oscillators per voice
- FM and Hard Sync
- Analog ring modulator and noise generator
- 2 Moog Ladder Filters per voice
- 2 LFOs, 2 ADSR envelopes, Pitch-LFO

Facts

Manufacturer: Moog
Web: moogmusic.com
Distributor: inMusic
Price: 3.499 Euros

- ▲ Flexible oscillators
- ▲ Complex audio modulations
- ▲ Direct operation
- ▲ Design and haptics
- ▲ Dual filter
- ▲ Intuitive routing
- ▲ Stereo options
- ▲ Arp/sequencer with many extras
- ▲ Very good stereo delay
- ▲ Chord memory per key
- ▼ No poly-aftertouch

Processing: ██████████
Sound: ██████████
Price/perf.: ██████████
Rating: ██████████

Alternatives

Sequential Trigon-6
3,329 Euros
sequential.com

Arturia PolyBrute 6/12
2,449 Euros
arturia.com

UDO Audio Super 8
3,499 Euros
udo-audio.com

» In terms of high-end sounding and flexible analog audio modulation, few other synthesizers can currently compete with the Muse. «