

# ARP The Worlds No. 1 Synthesizers

Over the past couple of years, you've probably read enough about synthesizers to keep you going for the next couple of years. But reading about them — and even hearing them played on record (by just about every major act on the rock scene) — ain't the same as seeing them "live." Lots of people, including many an amateur and semi-pro musician, haven't really had the opportunity of taking a good, long, close-up look at a synthesizer. And

partly because of that, there are still a number of misconceptions buzzing around in people's heads. For instance, the biggest mistake you can make if you ever think about buying a synthesizer is to be lured by the lists showing how many oscillators, filters, etc. it contains. The less-glamorous aspects of the instrument, like where certain knobs are placed on the panel, can be much more important to a musician than how many oscillators or ring modu-

lators he has.

Anyway, Boosey & Hawkes — the British distributors of the American ARP synthesizer range — tell me they're setting out to dispel some of these synthesizer myths by arranging, from the beginning of next year, a whole series of "play-ins" devoted exclusively to the subject. By the end of 1974, there should have been some of these held in every major town and city in the country.

Venues will include

at the play-ins, putting three models — the Pro-Soloist, the Odyssey and the 2600 — through their paces, together as well as individually, according to Andrew. The play-ins should last about one to one-and-a-half hours each, and you'll have an opportunity to ask questions, play the instruments, have a drink (albeit a Coke) if someone's feeling generous, and generally see whether you think synthesizers are worth their price. There will probably

whose Cosmic Furnace LP on Atlantic (SD 7251) is supposed to be the first commercial jazz/rock album to be created entirely on synthesizers. He used the ARP 2500 primarily for percussion effects on the record, with the Soloist and Odyssey for lead lines. It hasn't been issued in this country yet — Atlantic has yet to be very adventurous these days — but it might be worth checking out the import stores for a copy.

## STEVIE WONDER FEATURES ARP 2600

Roger Powell has done a whole batch of play-ins and concerts for ARP dealers throughout the States. Over there, of course, the educational market is also very important for synthesizers. In fact, colleges and universities were the synthesizer industry's first customers — from about 1965 to 1970 — when the market was only worth about \$150,000 (the cheapest model you could buy then was around \$5,000!). Now, many more US educational institutions use synthesizers for teaching music theory and composition, arranging and orchestration. (Can you imagine schools in Britain laying out cash so the kids can learn music on a synthesizer. It's a beautiful idea, but — no way.)

### HUMAN ENGINEERING

ARP talk about getting musicians involved in synthesizer design, and they seem to mean it. Jimmy Page, for example, is one of the musicians who's cooking with ARP. He plays a 2500 Studio model, apparently, plus an Odyssey, which is going to be spotlighted on a forthcoming Led Zeppelin album.

ARP, the synthesizers that B&H handle, began to boom in America back in 1971, the same year the Minimoog came out. (As a writer in one of the US rock papers accurately pointed out Moog — like Kleenex and Coke — has become something of a generic



# Who's Arp?

term for synthesizers, the name most commonly used to describe them. But ARP is the most popularly-featured synthesizer in rock, probably because it is aimed at the working musician. The 2600 model, for instance, is especially favoured by rock acts because its combination patch cord and slider system of operation make it equally at home in live performance and in the recording studio.)

In 1972, the year that both ARP and Moog came out with low-price, easy-to-use models, synthesizer sales in the States approached the \$14 million figure. When statistics for this year become available, that figure should be doubled.

One of the other reasons why ARP have done so well — and this ties in with the "working musician" angle — is probably what they

dramatically call "human engineering." They say it's the least talked-about side of synthesizer design, and it refers back to my earlier point about misconceptions. Human engineering determines what the synthesizer will actually look like — as opposed to what sounds it'll make. You know: where the knobs will be, what colour the switches will be, what typeface to use for the panel graphics, how far the keys must be depressed and so on.

That's human engineering, then. Put a bunch of engineers around a drafting table and you can forget about actually playing the synthesizer they come up with (unless you're planning to disappear into a laboratory). Get Jimmy Page and guys like him around that table, and it's a whole new ball game. Adam White



ARP 2600  
The professional portable synthesizer

ARP ODYSSEY  
The ultimate musical trip

ARP PRO-SOLOIST  
It's a one hand band

local clubs and halls, and advance notice will appear in newspapers, on posters, and so on. Free tickets, I'm told, will be available from dealers in the region of each play-in.

Andrew Terry, Boosey & Hawkes' electronics sales manager, says the play-ins are "to give as many people as possible a chance to see and hear in person what synthesizers really are and what they can do." Someone, somewhere, in B&H probably hopes you're going to buy one of those things, too, but that's only natural.

A guy called Alan Townsend (no relation) will be the demonstrator

be album prizes on ticket numbers, too — you know the kind of thing.

Synthesizer clinics in the States have always been very good (and very successful, from all reports), and there's no reason why the home-grown variety shouldn't be just as worthwhile. Boosey & Hawkes have already run a few "pilot" play-ins — in London, Liverpool and Manchester (maybe you got along to one of them) — and they went down well. Involved was a demonstrator, Mike Brigida, from ARP in Massachusetts, USA.

In the States, ARP's demonstrators are people like Roger Powell,

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