

WHAT'S THAT SOUND? KEYBOARD

KEYBOARD COVERS

This past month I have spent a little too much time trawling that wonderful haven of procrastination some of you like to call YouTube. Yes, we all get caught in the trap every now and then, watching endless amounts of videos featuring stupid pet tricks, drunken guys hurting themselves and cute kittens being, well, cute kittens. But, there is also a wealth of musical talent to be found there too, I wasn't just watching Maru, the Japanese cat. No, I got caught up in a number of keyboard players' videos that showcase some truly amazing talent that until recently the world would never have been able to see or hear. But now we have the internet.

Those of you who have already come across Viktoriya Yomolyeva online will know exactly what I am talking about and those of you who haven't; you probably should go and check out www.vkgoeswild.com once you are done reading this. The Ukrainian born, classically trained pianist, studied at the Tchaikovsky Music Academy and won numerous awards for her classical performances, but tired of this and eventually turned her talent to rock music. She has made it clear that she does not really want to produce her own original music, but is instead focussed on reproducing great rock songs in piano and keyboard covers that really leave you speechless when watching. Viktoriya has the ability to take just about any great rock, pop, metal or blues song and recreate it on the piano with incredible detail and stunning precision that has to be heard to be believed.

What she does is not just attempt to play a piano part for any of the songs she undertakes, but to try and capture each and every element of that song and have the keyboard tell the story. You get the vocal melodies, the guitar solos, the bass lines and even the percussion and drum parts interpreted into a spectacular display of dexterity and dynamic control that left me wondering why any rock band ever really needed a guitarist in the first place. Or even the rest of the band, come to think of it.

There are many people out there that do beautiful covers of all sorts of music, often they are looked down upon because they are seen to be simply copying other people's art and not creating anything of their own. Well, I challenge to watch just one video on the "vkgoeswild" site and tell me that she isn't creating a completely new piece of work and totally rewriting how



each and every song she tackles can be enjoyed. This is not a keyboardist who is there to support the band, to lay a groundwork with the rhythm section for the guitars and vocals to rally over. No, this is an artist that takes it all one and isn't afraid to let anything get in her way when compiling her cover versions. Just listen to how much detail is expressed through the keyboard and try and pick all the different elements. It truly

is amazing and will have just about any musician keen to hear more, no matter what instrument you play.

By Rob Gee

See www.vkgoeswild.com to inspire your playing.

CLASSIC KEYS

VERMONA PERFORMER

There was a time when all the great synthesizers and keyboards on the market were solidly built, analogue monsters. Sure they went out of tune from time to time, or more often than not, all the time but they sounded great when they did work. Unfortunately, they did weigh a lot and cost more than most people were prepared to pay, but that is the price of quality really. Then the onset of digital keyboards and modelling technology saw less and less analogue synths getting made as the almighty dollar drove the business decisions. When software development got in full stream, many companies discontinued analogue synthesizers altogether due to the cost of development and poor sales. But a few companies have stuck with it, striving for a quality level of tone that only analogue synthesis can give you. One such company is Vermona, and probably their greatest design to date was the Performer.

German synth and effects manufacturer Vermona gave the world a truly amazing gift in 2002. When most of the market was straying away from hardware synthesizers and looking towards the greater development of software instruments, Vermona took the bold step of releasing not only a monster of a hardware synth, but an all analogue one at that. And so, the world was given the Performer, a four voice true analogue synthesizer that really gives the



user plenty of control and creativity when build rich bass sounds, spacey pads and eerie effects. As the name suggest, it is four separate voice channels that can be blended into one for a really rich timbre, split to be used as four singular sounds or patched into one another for amazing results. It has a semi-modular design that allows the user to patch in and out of the voices but also allows you to combine the voices internally, joining separate channels. You can even use it for an FM style of synthesis where voices one and three do not actually produce an output sound, but instead are used to modulate voices two and four, making this quite a remarkable analogue beast.

Although technically not a keyboard, given that it is built into a desktop style rack mountable unit and features 74 knobs and not a single key anywhere, the Performer has what it takes to

get into the realms of many classic keyboards, just not the keyboard itself. When used with a MIDI controller, or with the optional CV/Gate controls, you can turn the Performer into a dynamic instrument that really sings. It does have some drawbacks, you do only get one oscillator per voice, although there is the option of six different waveforms to use and one filter per voice too, but it really is a ripper, so you don't need any more. Unfortunately, being an all analogue device, with no digital control, there are no memory settings available, so where you set the knobs is what you get. This means charting out patches the old way with a pen and paper and recording the knob positions if you want to ever be able to recall a sound in the future. Or, setting the four voices once and never changing them again, which is a little bit limiting. Being a classic VCO design, the Performer does benefit from being

allowed to warm up for about ten minutes before use, to achieve consistency with the tuning, but tends to be quite stable after that. You are not going to need to crack open the hood to air cool it just to get a long session out of the Performer, the Germans build these units well and they build them to last. So, I have the feeling that the mighty chrome rack of synthesis is going to be kicking around for many years to come.

By Rob Gee

For more information on the Vermona range of products contact Aweave ib (03) 98131833 or visit www.awave.com.au. NSW readers contact Rhythm Active on (02) 4322 7715 or visit www.rhythmactive.com.au