

four oscillator mono/poly synth combination

TRUE to its name, this new Korg is part mono-phononic, part poly-phononic. Like a mono synth it has filter, envelope generator and VCA controls, but it also has four separate oscillators each with its own tuning, waveform, octave and level settings. They can be split up to make a four-note chord, or packed together so one note contains many waveforms and frequencies.

We gave the MonoPoly complete with its total of 41 knobs and a three-language manual to Vince Clarke for

decay and sustain if you wanted a staccato sound you had to bring them right down to zero where on other synths you've got more leeway.

"There's a switch called Autodamp. I'm not sure what it's supposed to be, but when it's on, the polyphonic bit works as usual. When it's off you can play a chord, then as long as you've still got one finger on a key, that chord hangs on. It's good, because if you're not used to playing chords it gives you time to move your fingers into the proper position.

"What I did like were the LED indicators on the modulation and key sections. When they were alight you could tell straight away what the settings were. One of the switches in the key section—Unison/Share—was good because if you played one note all the oscillators came together, and as you played more they split up to make a chord.

"The arpeggiator covers one, two or four octaves; that's a good range, and it has a latching effect which will hold the arpeggio when you take

with the package, it could have been any synthesiser on that cassette.

"You can get some weird effects from all the different oscillators and modulation bits, but they can sound muddy and too complicated. The filter didn't seem very powerful, it didn't have a wide range and really you've got to have a good basic sound before you start affecting it.

"The manual's not very descriptive and it looks daunting when it first arrives. I fiddled around with all the knobs for ages, but it didn't seem to make any major changes.

"There are lots of outputs from the back, in fact the exterior controls are really useful. The keyboard felt okay and the multiple triggering meant you didn't have to worry about bad fingering, it worked every time.

"A lot of the time it sounded like a string synthesiser with a few more knobs on it. I couldn't get any edge to it. But it is light . . . for a polyphonic synth."

vince clarke

KORG MONOPOLY

£699

evaluation. This is what he said:

"The waveforms on each oscillator seemed really limited. There was sawtooth and triangular, but no preset square wave, just a pulse width. I prefer a normal square wave setting. The sawtooth and triangular forms were very stringy in sound but not very definite or strong—it sounded like four cheap synthesisers all playing together, watered down, like my first synth, a Kawai.

"The packaging is good, it's very compact for what it does, but I found problems understanding the modulation section. You set your various modulations, then bring them in by pressing one effects button. That's really good, I've never seen that before.

"And there was one good sound where two of the oscillators stay still and the other two glide up to them—that's very Ultravox, they use that all the time, for fleshy lead bits. I like modulation wheels that spring back to zero and these didn't.

"I was disappointed that when all the oscillators were in unison it didn't make much difference to the strength of the sound. Each one can be tuned apart for a chorusy effect and that's probably its best attribute. The pulse width modulation is good as well, there's a position on it for each oscillator. If you combine that with the detuning it gets a bit muddy.

"All the controls were fierce. For instance, on the

"One of the features is a chord memory, so if you play a major chord shape and store it, any new note you play will reproduce that whole chord in a new key. That was good but it could sound samey . . . somehow it seemed to stay in the same place. It wasn't very well explained in the book.

"There's all the obvious things like portamento, though not glissando, but it can be triggered externally by a footswitch and that's really useful *and* it's polyphonic portamento.

your fingers off the keys. It's a strict arpeggiator and will run up and down the keyboard. I prefer the type that don't automatically make an arpeggio for you but will just jump between two notes, if you hold them down.

"I thought all the controls made the MonoPoly much too complicated for stage use and it would be easier to use in the studio. It has no distinctive sounds of its own; you wouldn't recognise it on a record. Even listening to the demonstration tape that came

