

# Technosaurus Microcon II | £495

Can this little monosynth find a new lease of life post-Acid era? *Marc '01'* bangs the box



## WHAT IS IT?

A portable single oscillator analogue monosynth

## CONTACT

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Juicy Acid-style filter
- 2 Extra sub oscillator beefs it up
- 3 Built to a high standard

**T**he mighty Technosaurus name has been around since 1996 when they released the rather epic Selector analogue

modular system. A year later, they came full circle and produced the bite sized Microcon. Acid music was at an all-time high and everyone wanted the sound of legendary 303, so it's no surprise that the synth they chose to build this time had a similar set of features. The Microcon II takes the original and adds a handy MIDI port for studio integration.

## Bleeping with dinosaurs

Microcon's circuits are housed in a solid metal case with a black and white

silk-screened top panel. The dials are stuck strong and there's definitely no chance of these wobbling or snapping off at any point in time.

Initially they feel a bit stiff to turn, but they speed up after a few sessions. The switches are all two-position types, the same kind you tend to find on DJ mixers and for the most part, their low profile keeps them out of the reach when tweaking the knobs.

MIDI gets plugged in the left side with a standard DIN socket, and since there is no Thru port this will have to be the last stop on the chain. To change the channel it receives on, you will need a small flat head screwdriver to twist the little recessed selector to one of its 16

positions. The 12v DC PSU is plugged in over on the right side, next to this is a slot for a stereo quarter-inch jack. The tip and ring of the stereo jack are used separately so that one cable can be used for the regular mono audio out, and to route a mono signal back in to feed the VCF. If a normal mono or unbalanced cable is plugged in, then this will carry the audio out signal only.

## The CV era

There are two more sockets on this side, these are both balanced mini-jacks and work the same way, with each one carrying two separate signals. The first outputs CV1 and CV2 to patch into





### Cyclocon & Effexon



Technosaurus produced two matching boxes to compliment the Microcon, a sequencer called Cyclocon, and an effects unit known as Effexon.

The sequencer features CV and Gate outs with 16 steps and one knob per job functionality.

Effexon extends the sound palate by adding a Ring Modulator, a two-band parametric EQ and an overdrive stage at the end of the chain.

The internal VCO is similar to the one found on the Microcon but is dedicated to the ring modulator. It offers square

and triangle shapes, but if you prefer, you can use an external signal instead.

Effexon also has a bunch of CV inputs for modulating stuff, and this includes the pitch of the VCO for variations in klang, and the amount of overdrive applied.

The combination of all three boxes creates a nice little system modular mind set.

### Oscillator rex

The panel starts from left to right with the control section. Here you'll find a dial to adjust the Glide rate, another for tuning, and a little red trigger button so you can hear the sound. The VCO section begins with the analogue oscillator. This can be switched between square and saw shapes, while another switch drops it up and down by two octaves. The raw sound is reinforced with a sub oscillator set to a square.

to control the cutoff point over MIDI, and can be used over three-quarter of the filters full range.

### Opinions

There's no denying that the Microcon packs a sweet analogue sound into a tiny space. Sound-wise there's nothing new here, but what it does do, it does well – especially those funky Acidic bleeps. Certain limitations need to be accepted such as the lack of PWM, but other

features like the velocity-triggered accent envelope may strike the balance for some users. Compared to 1997, it faces some stiff competition chiefly from Doepfer, MFB

and DSI, all of which come in cheaper than their Swiss counterpart.

While the latter units might not match the build quality, they are on par with the sound quality. Some idiosyncrasies such as the use of stereo tip/ring cables to double up on signals makes it less convenient to work with than individual sockets for everything, but it does help to keep the size compact. **FM**

### SPECS

- Polyphony:** Mono
- VCO:** Square / Triangle
- Sub osc:** Square wave one octave below
- Filter:** 12dB/24dB switchable low-pass
- LFO shapes:** Square / Triangle
- LFO destinations:** VCO Pitch, VCF Frequency
- Inputs:** MIDI, CV / Gate
- VCF input:** ¼ stereo jack tip or ring
- Outputs:** Audio Out – ¼" stereo jack – tip or ring.
- Dimensions:** 365 x 195 x 80mm
- Weight:** 1.8kg

### ALTERNATIVES



#### Doepfer Dark Energy £395

This classy little analogue mono synth is at home on the desktop, or ready to be assimilated into a modular setup through its array of CV and audio patch points. [doepfer.de](http://doepfer.de)



#### DSI Mopho £275

This sturdy yellow box is a real bargain for analogue shoppers. The characteristic sound on the Curtis chip filter, alongside multiple envelopes, LFOs and sequencer comes with full MIDI control.

[davemsmithinstruments.com](http://davemsmithinstruments.com)



#### MFB Nanozweig £200

It's compact, portable and analogue like the Microcon, but it has it out-musled with extra features. [mfbberlin.de](http://mfbberlin.de)

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A mix control sets the levels between them, while the pitch can be modulated via the LFO. Microcon offers square and triangle shapes, on a switch naturally and a dial to set the speed.

The two-page manual doesn't list the speed range, but it goes from around eight secs at the slow end, to fast enough to produce some nice buzzing, metallic FM tones. Sandwiched in the middle of the box is the ENV section. This is the only envelope onboard, so this means the VCA and the Filter have to share it.

### Velocifilters

The VCF section features a switchable 12dB/24dB low-pass filter with resonance control. The 12dB filter has a slightly brighter, buzzy, grungier tone to it that provides a nice contrast to the regular 24dB sound. Mod sources include the LFO, ENV and CV, which switches on key-tracking for the cutoff point. The Mod wheel can also be used

**FutureMusic VERDICT**

**BUILD** [Progress bar: 10/10]

**VALUE** [Progress bar: 8/10]

**EASE OF USE** [Progress bar: 7/10]

**VERSATILITY** [Progress bar: 9/10]

**RESULTS** [Progress bar: 10/10]

**Squeaky Acid and fat bleeps in a tiny form factor. More rivals now than version one, though.**

