



UNLEASH YOUR INNER ROCK GOD

GET INTUITIVE

Forgive the rant, but something's been kinda bothering me lately. I spend a lot of time on guitar forums (don't we all?) and I've noticed a bit of a trend developing - an affliction, if you will - over the last two or three years. Let's call it 'settingsitis.'

This is the horrible malady by which a player becomes so concerned about the settings of the amp or signal processor that they lose any sense of connection to how it actually sounds.

The most facepalm-inducing example was on a forum recently where a player asked everyone for new pickup recommendations. They were already using a pickup that they were very happy with, and they wanted something that sounded exactly like it except with slightly less low end, because they found that they had to back the bass knob down to about 7 or 8 on their amp in order to get the perfect response out of the pickup.

Did you catch that? They were upset because they had to back their bass knob back from 10 to 8 in order to get a sound they were happy with.

What on earth is that? Do you lose cred if you have knobs that aren't on 10 or zero? I just don't get it. If the sound is perfect when you set the bass knob at 8, set the bass knob at 8 and enjoy your perfect tone!

Another example was a player who was having custom pickups wound. He wanted them to be like the stock pickups he'd been using, except with a small bump at a specific frequency. The reason? He was using a digital modelling device for his tone, and he'd been programming that bump into his patches as the first step in the signal chain, but he wanted to delete that part of his patches. Now, a case could be made for

wanting to minimise the number of patch cords and pedals in an analogue rig, but in the digital domain, within a single device?

A third example: I play a Marshall DSL50 amp. It has a lot of character in the midrange, especially if you leave it in regular mode instead of pressing the Tone Shift button. And the midrange knob doesn't seem to have a wide range of influence: it goes from a lot of midrange to even more midrange. I was setting up for a gig once and the sound guy came over to mic up the amp. He looked at my settings (with the mids on about 4) and said, "That's going to sound shit. You've got no mids." You'd think a sound guy of all people would know to listen with their ears, not their eyes, huh?

Rather than setting your amp with your eyes, try closing them and turning each knob until you hear what you want to hear. Sometimes this can lead to some pretty surprising settings. At the moment my amp settings look utterly bizzarkers: Presence: 0, Treble: 2.5, Midrange: 10, Bass: 0, Mid Shift: off, Bass Boost: On. But when you hear it in the context of a band mix, there's plenty of mids to cut through, just enough treble to provide some attack (remember that a close-mic'd cabinet will give you more treble than you will hear simply listening to the amp in a room), and just enough bass for a bit of fullness, but not enough to clash with the kickdrum or bass player. If I'm playing



around the house for my own amusement I'll increase the Presence, switch the Bass Boost off, turn the Bass up to about 6 and back the Midrange off by about a quarter turn, because I'm no longer trying to find my place within a mix. Really what it should all come down to is, does it

sound good? If the answer is yes, then your job is done. If the answer is no, that's when it's time to make some changes or buy some new goodies.

BY PETER HODGSON



CLASSIC KEYS

YAMAHA CS-80

There are a few keyboards over the years that have really left their mark in music. Certain manufacturers come to mind all the time and it seems, others get forgotten about. One such synth that never really got the credit it deserved, perhaps due to its poor timing in release, or price tag at the time, making it less popular than other synths in 1976, was the CS-80 by Yamaha. That said, those who know the CS-80 and those who have used it really do understand the power of this instrument and some even cherish the ability to say they own one of these beasts.

I think most of you reading this will have at some stage seen Blade Runner at least once. I think I have seen it about 40 times and listened to the soundtrack hundreds of times. I am always taken aback by the hauntingly beautiful themes delivered by Vangelis in the soundtrack and I know those sounds owe a lot to the CS-80. With its 8 voice polyphony, it may not seem like much these days, but it was a huge development from Japan in the mid '70s. And when I say huge, I mean it. This thing weighs around 100kg. It really was a great studio tool, but not the sort of keyboard you would take on the road with you.

The CS-80 featured two analogue oscillators per voice and a really rich and creamy VCF with ADR envelope and a pretty nasty sounding ring modulator to name a few features. Visually, it is difficult to miss, built into a giant wooden chassis inside a road case with wheels at one end for transport and some of the most vibrant and ugly coloured buttons and fader to ever be placed on a keyboard. But the CS-80 was not designed to win a beauty pageant; it was purely about the sound. And one man who really understood how to get the most from these hard to programme synths was Vangelis. Not only did he conquer, but he tamed this ugly brute and was able to really harness the sounds within it. He creates some stunning string and horn sounds with the CS-80 that have a richness in character to

them that not even the real instruments he was emulating could encompass. This synthesiser truly was a breakthrough in analogue synthesis, led by the developers in Japan, giving a greater step to recreating really sounds from a synth engine, rather than just creating unworldly tones.

These days, you would be lucky to come across a working CS-80 on the second hand market. Most of them are being kept by hoarders and collectors and when they do come up for sale, they never go cheap. Nor do the freight costs to get them delivered either. But, the good news is you can still work with the sounds of the CS-80 as Arturia have faithfully recreated the synth in software form, with added features making it easier to program and (obviously) additional preset storage capabilities. Plus, the CS-80V only weighs about 500g boxed up, nowhere near the 100kg of the CS-80. If you fall in love with the soundtracks of films like Blade Runner and Dune in the 80's, you will just love the sounds of the CS-80 or the software counterpart, the CS-80V.

BY ROB GEE



Vangelis composing on a CS-80 at Nemo Studios in the late 70's