XILS-lab The Eighty

XILS-lab launches The Eighty - effectively acting as a virtual Vangelis soundalike homage to an iconic Seventies-vintage synth classic that the Academy Award-winning Greek musician, composer, and producer of electronic, progressive, ambient, and classical orchestral music made into his signature sound, thanks to its exceptionally complete performer expression features (such as a layered keyboard that was both velocity- and pressure-sensitive in action, albeit, unlike most keyboards of the time, that aftertouch could be applied to individual voices, and a ribbon controller allowing for polyphonic pitch- bends and glissandos), faithful to the original and enhanced for the future as the latest entry into the audio software company's lengthening lineup of virtual instruments par excellence - as of January 14...

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It is fair to say that Bladerunner - the now-classic Ridley Scott-directed sci-fi film from 1982 set in a dystopian future Los Angeles of 2019 - is, for many, inextricably linked with Vangelis' BAFTA- and Golden Globe-nominated score, showcasing his superlative skills with that iconic Seventies-vintage synth classic that was arguably as ahead of its time as that trailblazing score to which its sound subsequently became inextricably linked in itself. Much missed, Vangelis left this mortal coil in 2022, sadly, while the relatively few remaining fully operational examples of Yamaha's CS-80 synth - supporting true eight-voice polyphony, with two independent synthesizer layers per voice each with its own set of front panel controls, in addition to a number of hardwired preset voice settings and four parameter settings stores based on banks of subminiature potentiometers - that musically meant so much to him are highly coveted by high-flying collectors, commanding eye-watering prices extending into high five-figure territory, putting them well beyond the reach of mere musical mortals... not that many could comfortably carry one anyway as they weigh in at a back-breaking 100kg/220lbs (including built-in hard case), regardless of how deep their pockets may well be!

Fast forward to today, though, and XILS-lab's The Eighty virtual instrument is inspired by the iconic Yamaha CS-80 as a meticulously-crafted software emulation, faithfully recreating its distinct sound and character. It includes the original presets and integrates various performance features to mirror an authentic CS-80 experience while offering new enhancements. Enter the two main synthesis signal paths inspired by the CS-80, featuring the linked HPF (High-Pass Filter) and LPF (Low-Pass Filter) that contribute to its iconic sound, while a third synthesis signal path can additionally be blended through an innovative 2D mixer for expanded sonic possibilities.

Put it this way, though: those meticulously modelled zero-delay 12 dB resonant high-pass and low-pass filters are implemented in each synthesis signal path to maintain an analogue-like sound without digital artefacts, while the meticulously modelled oscillators also include unique CS-80 characteristics such as saw wave creation with short pulses, thereby ensuring distinctive tone and texture.

The Eighty offers polyphonic aftertouch, keyboard followers, and velocity sensitivity, allowing players to shape sounds with nuanced expression - albeit whether they can match that which was demonstrated on so many memorable musical occasions by Vangelis is down to how well the player in question can actually play! Performance options additionally include the SUB OSCILLATOR and RING MODULATOR sections, designed to enhance live playability. And as if that was not enough to be getting on with, the sophisticated ARPEGGIATOR supports cyclical modulation and muting, going beyond simple up-and-down chord patterns to breathe life into arpeggiated sequences.

Furthermore, four integrated effects - DEL (delay), PHA (phaser), RVB (reverb), and EQ (equalisation) - with independent routing options duly deliver a warm and deep sound. Meanwhile, MOD (modulation) options include that RING MODULATOR section with ATTCK (attack) and DEC (decay) envelope control, as well as CHORUS

for TREM (tremolo), vibrato, and ensemble effects.

An advanced, single-window preset manager facilitates speedy access to The Eighty's sounds, with over 500 presets from renowned sound designers - including the original 12 presets that helped shape iconic tracks by the likes of Stevie Wonder and, of course, Vangelis. Ultimately, users can manage, tag, and organise presets efficiently to streamline sound selection. Surely Vangelis - were he still with us - would approve of XILS-lab so successfully recreating the tools that musically shaped Bladerunner and many more cultural milestones.

The Eighty is available to purchase as an iLok-protected virtual instrument plug-in (including computer-based authorisation), priced at a time-limited introductory promo price of only €89.00 EUR until January 31, 2025 - rising thereafter to its regular price of €179.00 EUR - directly from XILS-lab here. The Eighty is downloadable in 64-bit AAX (native)-, AU-, VST2.4-, and VST3-compatible formats for macOS (10.13+) and 64-bit AAX (native)-, VST2.4-, and VST3-compatible formats for Windows (7/8/10/11). A time-limited full version of The Eighty can be requested for pre-purchase evaluation purposes.

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