Frap Tools Magnolia



Having opened eyes and ears with Magnolia pre-production units ultimately stealing the show at SUPERBOOTH25, May 8-10, FEZ-Berlin, Germany, before bringing the 8-VOICE ANALOG THRU-ZERO FM SYNTHESIZER in its final form to Buchla & Friends 2026, January 24-25, C&I Studios, Los Angeles, CA, USA, Frap Tools, hitherto known as a manufacturer of Eurorack modules and accessories alongside professional audio compressors in the 500-Series format, announces that it is shipping its inaugural instrument - thereby taking it to the musical masses as a polyphonic, bi-timbral analogue synthesizer that, besides classic analogue polysynth sounds, allows for programming some less conventional timbres closer to the world of modular synthesizers, especially those of so-called ‘complex oscillators’ - as of January 29…

Musically, Magnolia brings modular synthesis techniques to the world of analogue polysynths - with all the latter’s advantages: immediacy of use; polyphony, obviously; powerful sound; and all those little unpredictable details, known affectionally as ‘analogue warmth’. With its expressive 61-key keybed from fellow Italians FATAR featuring velocity and polyphonic aftertouch, it is evident from the outset that this is a highly-playable instrument. Indeed, it is meant to be played and, as such, offers users many ways to dynamically interact with the sounds that they make. Many physical access points are built into its well-thought-through design, including PITCH and MOD (modulation) wheels, a MACRO knob (assignable to every parameter) and a MORPH knob (to gradually transform the sound from the

Phoca PDF

settings of part A to the settings of part B), plus two expression pedal inputs.

Above and beyond all that, there are a total of 16 MODULATION SOURCES and 38 modulation destinations - all equipped with an LED (Light Emitting Diode) to indicate whether they are active, three LFOs (Low Frequency Oscillators), three envelopes, and, most importantly, POLYMOVE to be getting on with; the latter is actually a refined random generator that creates a random control signal for every voice and every destination within that voice - anyone seeking a quick way to animate their sounds, from subtle variations to complete chaos, need look no further!

FM (Frequency Modulation) - to which the enthralling 8-VOICE ANALOG THRU-ZERO FM SYNTHESIZER wording tastefully incorporated into Magnolia’s fetching front panel (partly) owes its existence - is often regarded as carriers, operators, and formula weirdness. While this is arguably an accurate depiction of the most refined FM implementation - popularised by many Eighties era digital synthesizers, such as the Yamaha DX7, the Japanese giant behind that super-seller single-handedly successfully commercialising the FM synthesis algorithm developed by American composer, inventor, musician, and professor John Chowning at Stanford University, CA, USA back in 1967, it should not be forgotten that, at the end of the day, FM synthesis itself is simply an oscillator modulating another one at audio rate to create complex sounds. Though this is what is found on Magnolia - albeit its two oscillators per voice beautifully blend an ‘East Coast’ oscillator with PWM (Pulse Width Modulation) and a ‘West Coast’ oscillator with linear TZFM (Thru-Zero Frequency Modulation), wavefolder, and flip sync - alongside an orange TZFM knob to tweak things, it is a more raw and in-your-face way of doing FM without precise ratios and indices, and an approach that its creator guarantees is incredibly fun to play with. Wondering what thru-zero means? It is really a label that only makes sense when talking about analogue oscillators, tantamount to saying, Hey! I’m an analogue circuit, but I can do real FM!

“Well, we made Magnolia because we wanted to offer our iconic modular analogue sound in a more straightforward instrument that could play chords and other 12-note music right away.” So says Frap Tools Product Designer and Founder Simone Fabbri, before ending on several high - and also thankful - notes: “Inside, we put all our signature sound tools - analogue triangle-core oscillators, thru-zero FM, wavefolders, analogue distortion, and a wild, resonant filter. It’s a powerful instrument, capable of a wide gamut of sounds that range from soft, glass-like pads to earth-shattering distorted leads. And a hands-on modulation matrix allows you to connect 16 modulation sources to 32 modulation destinations by just pushing a button and twisting a knob. Needless to say, we always design every single circuit from scratch, and Magnolia is no exception to this as an actual shrunken version of our popular Eurorack modules - without any stock ICs [Integrated Circuits] whatsoever! We at Frap Tools are all thrilled - and even a bit jittery - by Magnolia's release. It’s been a long journey, and we faced many challenges, but it’s rewarding to finally see it in stores. We would like to thank all our supporters for sticking with us, and we hope that it will be loved by many musicians!”

Magnolia is available to buy at a price of €4,199.00 EUR via Frap Tools’ growing global network of resellers, with worldwide distribution by Alex4 Distribution.

www.frap.tools
www.alex4.de

Phoca PDF