CONTACT

For review samples please e-mail:
jonathan@millermusicandmedia.com

For XILS-lab info contact:
contact@xils-lab.com

xils lab

www.xils-lab.com

PolyKB II

XILS-lab updates PolyKB soft synth plug-in

Grenoble, France: XILS-lab is proud to announce availability of PolyKB II, an updated, improved version of its PolyKB soft synth plug-in as of December 4, 2010…

PolyKB II is a Mac (OS X 10.3.9 and later; Audio Unit, VST, RTAS — Pro Tools 7.0 and later) ***and PC*** (Windows 7, Vista, and XP; VST, RTAS — Pro Tools 7.0 and later) ***compatible virtual recreation of the rare RSF Polykobol II***, a 1983-vintage French programmable analogue polysynth based on two waveform-morphing, aliasing-free oscillators, and a self-oscillating four-pole low-pass filter… superficially similar-looking to Sequential Circuits Incorporated's infamous Prophet 5 — the world's first fully-programmable polysynth — by virtue of its beautifully finished woodwork (purportedly by Michel Lâg-Chavarria of LAG Guitars fame); whereas SCI shipped around 7,500 Prophet 5s during an impressive three revision, four-year production run, sadly, Serge Fernandez's RSF SA. Synthétiseurs managed a mere 30 Polykobol IIs before running into financial difficulties — hardly surprising given its technical complexity (500-plus parts), attendant weighty price tag (equivalent to 6,500€) and general weightiness (22kg), all of which were hardly in keeping with the-then 'art nouveau' digital age of dominating desirable FM synthesis from Yamaha's considerably cheaper, MIDI-equipped DX7. This was a real shame since ***an amazing-sounding analogue feature unique to the Polykobol II is its continuously modulated waveform — modulated waveform morphing of sorts, allowing users to always alter the sound of the oscillators.***

Times and tastes change, however, and, thanks to today's technological advances, XILS-lab CEO ***Xavier Oudin*** — himself no stranger to soft synth development — ***has successfully made this beloved analogue behemoth fit for the 21st Century in the graphically-driven, ear- and eye-catching form of the PolyKB II*** — a virtual RSF Polykobol II for the masses with a more pocket-friendly price (149€) to boot! But why choose to emulate the RSF Polykobol II? Oudin claims he first thought about doing this over ten years ago: ***"With its non-standard waveforms, which can do such wonderful pads, as well as deep basses and leads, it was too attractive, and, after developing the XILS 3 [EMS VCS 3 emulation], there was no other synth I wanted to do! I began by using the BLIT [Band Limit Impulse Train] method of creating an oscillator in the digital domain — stretched it, and, after much work, achieved my goal: the PolyKB oscillators can morph smoothly from a triangle to a pulse wave, passing through a sawtooth wave with a clear and deep sound, without that digital noise called aliasing."***

Moreover, Oudin also achieved another Polykobol II *coup de grâce* — namely, hard synchronisation between those two oscillators: ***"I stretched the algorithm, turned it on its head, and, finally, magically, it was done: the first hard synchronisation between two oscillators, generating PWM morphed sound, was born."*** *Voila*! A virtual Polykobol II. That unique French sound so favoured by the likes of Kate Bush, Vince Clarke, Depeche Mode, Peter Gabriel, Jean-Michel Jarre, Vangelis, and Hans Zimmer lives again. *Vive la RSF synthétiseurs*!

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While **PolyKB II** retains the uncompromising state-of-the-art analogue characteristics of the original PolyKB (V1), it **includes a lot of additional features that were not available on yesteryear's sought-after classic hardware synths to combine the best of both worlds** — vintage and modern:

- **Existing modulation has been enhanced in the three modulation matrices** — all can now have a negative value applied (V1 always being positive), while an additional Velocity Control Mode allows for a huge dynamic range.

- **A number of new modulation sources and targets have been added**, including Monophonic LFOs (allowing for Mono and Poly LFOs in the same patch); Mod Wheel; Envelope parameters; Noise and individual Oscillator Levels; Global and Individual Pitch; Phaser and Chorus Rates; Delay Times; and Glide — all combining to open a creative doorway to highly-expressive sound design.

- **A unique Time Multiplier system now allows all envelope times to be multiplied by x2, x3, or x4** — all with a simple click.

- **Two new effects: Phaser and Dual EQ**, with a unique and musical-sounding Contour function.

- **The arpeggiator now includes a Polyphonic Mode, as well as Gate and Swing parameters**, making it far more versatile, while its Octave function has also been enhanced.

- **The proprietary DynaMYX (Dynamic stereo Modulation YX) pad tools now benefits from two never-before-seen dynamic modes**, allowing a controlled motion between the points with visual control, so users can quickly create very complex dynamic stereo scenes.

- **The proprietary PolyMYX (Polyphonic Modulation YX) pad can now send negative modulation amounts**, allowing notes to sound different each time they are played — kiss goodbye to boring, static sounds forever!

- **The easier-to-operate PolySequencer now has a magnification tool and Shift Step function** — very handy for real-time recorded patterns.

- Responding to user feedback, **PolyKB II benefits from an ergonomically- and cosmetically-revamped GUI, viewable in three sizes** (Small, Medium, and Large) to make for a more pleasurable working experience — especially for those running smaller displays, such as laptop users.

- **An improved, intuitive management system is based around a powerful dual-hierarchical filtering concept**, allowing users to quickly find whatever patch they are looking for.

PolyKB is a free update for all existing PolyKB (V1) users, and, as such, **it comes fully loaded with 250 patches created by some of the best sound designers around**; while most of these patches are new, the majority of V1 presets have been enhanced to include mod wheel and/or pressure action. Of course, the new sound library takes advantage of all these features — almost all new presets react to mod wheel, for example, yet should some users want to expand their sonic horizons further still with more new patches, **two affordable soundsets will be available soon**.

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XILS-lab PolyKB II is available from December 4 for 149€ (including VAT for EU countries) from the XILS-lab Store (www.xils-lab.com/categories/synthesizers) or through the following resellers (to name but a few):

www.audiomidi.com **www.dontcrack.com** **www.jnr.be**

www.keyfax.com **www.proaudio-plugins.com** **www.smart-distribution.co.uk**

About XILS-lab (www.xils-lab.com)

*Based in Grenoble, France, **XILS-lab** is a new music software company, founded by Xavier Oudin. Having developed some of the best-known virtual instruments and effects plug-ins in the market for various companies over the last 20 years, Oudin believes that a virtual effect or instrument is not only a mathematical algorithm, designed by and for PhD engineers, but a musical machine for musicians. XILS-lab likes to make virtual instruments and effects that inspire its users!*