

Korg Opsix MkII

£699

There's little exciting about its MkII update but, says **Si Truss**, Opsix remains an all-time-great FM synth

KEY FEATURES 64-voice 'altered FM' synthesiser. **KEYBOARD:** 37 keys (velocity and release-velocity sensitive). Arpeggiator and 16-step sequencer with motion sequencing



Korg's 'altered FM' synth Opsix is the latest – and most underwhelming – update to the company's digital instrument range. Like the Modwave and Wavestate before it, Opsix hits 'mkII' and gains a boost in voice count along the way, growing from the original's 32 voices up to 64-voice polyphony. That's essentially twice as much for your money, nothing to scoff at. What's a shame, however, is that there's little in the way of new features beyond this. Whereas the Wavestate gained additional storage space with its upgrade and Modwave MkII expanded the capabilities of its LFOs – neither of which, admittedly, were exactly game-changing updates – the only other new 'feature' for Opsix MkII is a hint of green added to Operator Mixer section control knobs.

Does Opsix really need much in the way of upgrading though? It's debatable. The original was only released in late 2020 and remains one of the best digital synths on the market – and arguably the best hardware FM synth of all time. Key to its appeal is the distinct way it combines classic DX7-style FM with a variety of other synthesis approaches. Like the DX7 and its '80s stable-mates, Opsix features six operators – envelope controlled oscillators – which can modulate one another at audio-rates, dictated by a selection of algorithms that arrange the operators into chains of modulators and audio outputs.

Unlike the DX7, however, Opsix offers a number of variations for how these operators can be set to interact, allowing for ring modulation, wavefolding, audio-rate filter modulation and virtual analogue-style layering. Where traditional FM synths rely on the combination of simple sine wave oscillators, Opsix's choice of waveshapes also includes a host of virtual analogue, additive and noise generators. What's more, these multiple approaches can be combined within a single patch.

All of which is to say that Opsix is one of the most powerful digital synthesis engines out there. Naturally, as with most digital synths, some would write it off as just a 'plugin in a box' – literally true in



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this case, as Korg released plugin versions of the Opsix, Modwave and Wavestate engines in 2022. One of the hardware's standout features, however, is its colour-coded Operator Mixer, which makes the notoriously cumbersome process of editing FM synthesis patches feel surprisingly intuitive, a strong case for why Opsix still makes most sense as dedicated hardware.

There are certainly improvements to be made though. While the hardware UI is largely great, the keyboard is nothing to write home about, and still lacks aftertouch despite the fact that external aftertouch can be routed in the mod matrix. The lack of front panel controls for the multimode filter is a shame too. Moreover, now that Korg has upgraded the voice count, it's a real shame there's no option to create or control proper multitimbral patches.

Opsix Mk II is a fairly negligible upgrade then – the doubled voice count is nice, but I'd never found 32 voices a hindrance. Despite this, Opsix remains one of my favourite digital synths and in a wider context, it's impossible not to recommend. **FM**

FM VERDICT

8.7

A fairly underwhelming update to what remains a must-try synth. There's no real reason to upgrade from v1, but for new users this comes highly recommended

THE PROS AND CONS



Wonderfully powerful take on classic DX-inspired FM synthesis

Double voice count for the same RRP

Hardware interface makes adjusting complex digital sounds intuitive



There's little of note that's new here, aside from the polyphony

Keyboard remains a little underwhelming and still lacks aftertouch