

# Access Virus TI2 | £1,894

Featuring a new engine and added software features, version 2 of the Virus' TI range promises more thrills. *Jono Buchanan* gains Access...



## WHAT IS IT?

A hardware and software update to the TI range

## CONTACT

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 More notes!
- 2 New FX sound great and open new worlds of sonic possibility
- 3 Lighter-weight keyboard of benefit for live users

## PRICING

Virus TI2

Keyboard  
£1,894

Rack  
£1,427

Polar  
£1,956

OS3 update:  
Free

Over the past few years, I've been lucky enough to see various incarnations of the Virus TI pass through my door. Having had the original TI module on review back in 2005 and the wonderful Snow model about this time last year, I've been able to watch over the Virus range as it has developed and grown. So, it's with great interest that I'm now able to bring you news of TI2, which somewhat predictably manifests as Version 2 of the TI family.

This update is both hardware and software oriented and mostly affects the keyboard, desktop and Polar models of the TI range, though there are benefits for Snow users too. A touch confusingly, version 2 of the TI hardware coincides with the release of version 3.0 of Access' own Virus Control software editor. So what's new?

## Hard knocks

Dealing with the hardware first, this is the first revision which sees an update to the physical structure of the TI range itself. The new Virus range is built from

tougher yet lighter materials, so that both the Polar and keyboard versions of the TI range drop in weight. The front-panel layout is unchanged, but the housing update means the new Viruses are better looking and 'cleaner' in appearance. They stand out a little more and despite the first TI incarnations being built like tanks, these are even tougher, despite their weight-loss. Perhaps more significant is the physical



transformation inside the units, as TI2 sees an update to the Virus' motherboard, offering a 25% increase in processing power. Rejoice, as this means that polyphony is now increased, which should go some way to pacifying Virus enthusiasts' top update request.

The printed spec suggests that up to 110 voices are now simultaneously playable, though this is of course reduced depending on the number of oscillators and effects running in any given patch.

## OS3 revealed

Alongside the physical benefits of the new TI range, Virus Control OS 3 has arrived too and there are benefits here for Snow and TI users. First and foremost, upon download, you'll be faced with installing the software and updating the firmware on your Virus if you're an existing user (though TI2s will, of course, ship with OS3 installed), the latter process taking about 15 minutes on the keyboard model I reviewed. The principal sound-making benefits of the new OS come in the

## Distort Me Good

Virus fans have often raved about their onboard distortion effects but far from resting on their laurels, Access have overhauled this section for OS3. There are now eight separate distortion types, namely – Wide Distortion, Soft Bounce, Hard Bounce, Sine Fold, Triangle Fold, Sawtooth Fold, Bit Reducer and

Rate Reducer. Additionally, Treble Booster and High Cut options are available to allow for guitar-lead type effects, or softer, less screaming distortions respectively. Apparently, one of the top five Virus user requests has been that the Virus software be configured to allow for sidechain inputs from

within a host sequencer. OS3 delivers this, which means that you can assign an audio input to act as an in-DAW feed to the Virus itself. So, any stereo source can be processed through the Virus' effects, used as a vocoder input signal, or shaped using the Virus envelopes. Is that the sound of whooping I hear?





The new FX interface in the Virus Control software

effects section, which has now been split in into FX1 and FX2 pages within Virus Control. The new effects are a wider set of Tape Delays, significant revisions to the Distortion plug-in (see the *Distort Me Good* box) and an all-new Frequency Shifter. The Tape Delay revisions provide three new variants –

possible to take any part and keep it echoing for ages, while tweaking the filter settings to the delay's right, to keep the part moving timbrally. Also new is the Frequency Shifter, which allows Ring Modulation or Frequency Shifting to be added to your sound. These are welcome and open new

original mode 'Analog Boost', three 'Vintage' settings recall classic synths from yesteryear, while other settings like 'Lead Enhancer' or 'Stereo Widener' speak for themselves. Each setting features a range of tweakable controls and good things can happen even when you choose an 'inappropriate' setting for the sounds you build.

For instance, I got some great results on lead sounds while using the 'Pad Opener' setting. I'm always a bit twitchy when I see that a new operating system is at Vx.0.0 but in fairness to Access, OS3 is still at the public beta stage and they have a proud tradition of presenting the Virus user base with regular updates. I'm reliably informed there will have been at least a couple by the time you're reading this. While Snow users won't benefit from the

hardware 'upgrade' to the TI, OS3 is fully compatible with the Snow, so the new effects are all yours.

### Conclusion

If you're a fan of

the Virus concept to the extent that you've already bought one of the TI modules, I can officially announce that Christmas has come late for you this year. Get to the website, download OS3 and upon installation, you'll discover that your unit has suddenly spawned some very tasty new effects. For those who have admired the Virus from afar but haven't quite summoned the enthusiasm and/or wedge to commit to a purchase, the arguments for not doing so have grown even fainter. **FM**

Even with high send levels and regenerating feedback, the delays don't over-saturate

alongside the original tape delay (now re-branded 'classic'), you'll find Tape Free, Tape Clocked and Tape Doppler. These are self-explanatory but none the worse for that.

What's great is that even with high send levels and regenerating feedback, the delays don't over-saturate, so it's

worlds of sound design possibility, from heavy industrial clangs, to vibrant, bell-like overtones. Also new is the 'Character' option, which allows the signature sound of several classic synths to be 'applied' to your Virus patch, by shaping the output tone of the sound you're building. Alongside the

### SPECS

- > Polyphony 25 to 110 voices depending on complexity of patch
- > 61 semi-weighted keys
- > Use with VIRUS Control Software or standalone
- > Refined Multi Mode
- > 16 delays
- > 16 reverbs
- > 6 slot bigger modulation matrix
- > Pure semitones
- > Knob quantise
- > Programmable arpeggiator
- > Dual DSP System
- > Digital I/O and USB 2.0
- > SP/DIF (44.1kHz/48kHz) digital I/O
- > Liquid crystal display (128x32 pixels)
- > 512 RAM patches and 2048 ROM Sounds
- > 192kHz studio grade D/A Converters (+4dB balanced output)
- > 24-Bit A/D converters
- > Quicker mod matrix navigation
- > Simplified user interface
- > Sample-accuracy timing with a delay-compensated audio/MIDI connection

### Dimensions:

995 x 115 x 370 mm

### Weight:

13.8kg

### ALTERNATIVES



**Waldorf Blofeld Keys**  
£699

Reviewed last month, the *FM* team has been really impressed by the keyboard incarnation of one of our favourite sound modules. Not as versatile but substantially cheaper.

[waldorfmusic.de](http://waldorfmusic.de)



**Clavia Nord Wave**  
£1,395

The original Nord Lead was a classic and this is a Lead plus tons more. A bit unsung in the hero stakes and yet a great-sounding instrument.

[nordkeyboards.com](http://nordkeyboards.com)

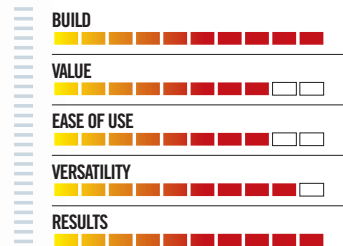


**Access Virus Snow**  
£775

Featuring more limited polyphony and less hands-on knobbery-pokery, the Snow is nevertheless a Virus under-the-hood. A much cheaper alternative to the full TI range but still a pretty penny...

[access-music.de](http://access-music.de)

### FutureMusic VERDICT



More addictive and deadlier than ever – one Virus that you won't mind catching.