# Propellerhead
# Europa £134

**Leo Maymind** looks at Propellerhead's first AU/VST, offering wavetable synthesis with spectral filtering and much more...

**CONTACT WHO:** Propellerhead **WEB:** www.propellerheads.com **KEY FEATURES** Three oscillator engines with 34 possible sources. Two 'modifier' modules per engine, as well as Spectral Filter per engine. Multi-stage, loopable envelopes. Three syncable LFOs with Delay Onset. Six re-orderable effects

## THE PROS & CONS

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Very flexible wavetable-featuring sound engines with an intuitive layout

**The ability to load user samples to be used as oscillator waveforms expands the creative potential**

Ability to preview Europa in your web browser is forward thinking and fun

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**Browsing and sorting through presets can be a bit tedious and slow**

Some knobs are a bit small and can be hard to grab

**There's a bit of volume jumping between the presets**

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## Europa feels capable of handling any sound design task

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Propellerhead's Reason was, for a long time, a closed system with a bespoke set of tools, but that changed with the public release of the DAW's workhorse, the wavetable-based Europa synth, now available as a VST/AU for any DAW (free to current Reason users). So, how does Europa stack up against the big boys? Well, not too badly as it turns out, because Europa indeed manages to stand on its own while bringing a few unique tricks.

Starting with the red and white layout, there's something immediately classy and intuitive about the GUI. Essential knobs are given a more 3D-presence, while lesser-used knobs are depicted with 2D graphics. The signal flow of the 16-voice synth is also mirrored in the layout; it fits entirely in a single window, so navigation is incredibly fluid.

Under the proverbial hood, Europa pairs three separate engines of wavetable synthesis with a spectral filter, a unique 'harmonics' section, a flexible analogue-modeling filter (of which there are 24 varieties), four envelopes, three LFOs, and a series of six effects. Each oscillator has the choice of 33 wavetables, as well as a Karplus Strong plucked-string emulation mode. There's such a wide array of sources – from the standard analogue-modelling triangle, square, and saw wave to more interesting

varieties like noise sweeps and formant wobbles – just a flick through the choices shows how much breadth Europa holds. The wavetable position for each oscillator is controlled by a shape knob, and can be modulated via envelope, velocity, or LFO, further allowing the timbral possibilities to stretch into the multitudes.

One of the most interesting parts of Europa is how the oscillators feed into the spectral filter, which boosts or attenuates partials of the signal and has options for comb and resonator varieties. The resulting host of textures is impressive and unflinchingly modern. The filter itself is also unique – there's a plethora of curve shapes, including user-drawn shapes from envelope slots 3 and 4.

From there, the signal moves into an analogue-modeling filter, itself with nine modes and a very usable overdrive. The fact that you are able to select which oscillators go into the filter is a nice touch and greatly aids in programming drum hits. The envelopes come with a nice selection of pre-drawn shapes, though there's also the ability to draw whatever

envelope shape you'd like. Additionally, the envelopes have a loop mode, effectively allowing them to function as LFOs as well. The modulation matrix below is well thought out. Combined with the six different effects available at the end of the chain, Europa feels capable of handling any sound design task.

Most importantly, Propellerhead are to be praised for creating something that will potentially let more people dive into the worlds that Europa offers. **FM**

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**FM** VERDICT

# 9.0

**Wavetable synthesis for the masses – simple and comprehensive. You can imagine entire albums flowing out of it in future**