



Roland JU-06A \$399

Roland revamp their Juno-inspired Boutique with a new arp and expanded sound palette. **Si Truss** investigates...

CONTACT WHO: Roland **WEB:** roland.com **KEY FEATURES** Analog Circuit Behavior synth based on the Juno-60 and Juno-106. Includes 16-step sequencer, three-mode arpeggiator and 16-type chord mode. **I/O:** USB, 3.5mm main out, 3.5mm headphone out, 3.5mm audio in, MIDI in, MIDI out, USB (power, MIDI, audio)



THE PROS & CONS



Gorgeous, authentically 'Juno' sound

Arp and Chord modes are great additions

Analogue clock input is a handy tool



Monophonic sequencer

Boutique form factor is still a little fiddly



Like many of Roland's classic analogue instruments, the Juno-60 and 106 remain highly sought after, despite being, essentially, simple instruments. With just a single oscillator, filter and amp, neither Juno was exactly all-bells-and-whistles, even in its day. Yet the warm, rich sound they created has made them classics, and the Junos remain some of the most widely-used synths in electronic music even now.

Roland clearly realise how highly prized these Juno sounds still are, as the Juno-106 was one of the first instruments to receive the Boutique recreation treatment back in 2016. Now that Boutique, the JU-06, is the first to get an updated version, becoming the JU-06A and adding a variety of features that expand its appeal significantly.

First, a quick recap. As with the original JU-06, the primary synth design here is effectively a straight copy of that found on the Juno-60 and 106. From left to right we have

oscillator, hi-pass and low-pass filters and an amp section, flanked at either end by an LFO and ADSR envelope for modulation. As before, the synth is powered by Roland's digital-aping ACB technology, which emulated the behaviour of the original instruments' circuitry, with the only major difference being a reduction in voice count from the originals' 6 down to 4.

The oscillator section has buttons for engaging pulse and saw waves as well as a sub oscillator, the latter of which has its own level control, as does a white noise generator. There's pulse-width modulation that can be routed from the LFO, envelope or be controlled manually.

Of the two filters, the low-pass is the only resonant one. It's also the only filter to have modulation options, routable from the envelope or LFO using individual level sliders. Both the filter and amp sections have envelope inversion switches, so it's possible to have the ADSR modulating the amp and envelope in opposing directions.

The signal flow is finished off with chorus and a simple delay effect. The chorus is an ACB recreation of the famous dual mode

chorus from the original Junos; a gorgeous, noisy effect that's great for adding width and animation.

This new version, however, builds on the original JU-06 by incorporating various elements of the Juno-60 alongside those from the 106. The most notable of these is the arpeggiator – hence the 'A' added to the name – which has a three-octave range and up, up/down and down modes. There's also a mode switch, to the bottom right of the unit's interface, for switching between Juno-60 and 106 behaviour. This affects both the filter and the envelopes, engaging the punchier and more percussive sound of the Juno-60.

There are other upgrades here too. Most notable is a new Chord mode, which can make use of 16 fixed chord shapes. The 16-step sequencer from previous Boutiques is present here again, and as with previous iterations, this is still mono-only. It can, however, be used in conjunction with the Chord function, which can result in some really excellent Detroit-style chord patterns. Combined with the arp, it makes this latest Boutique a particularly good tool for inspiring

THE ALTERNATIVES



Roland JU-06

\$299

The original Juno Boutique can be picked up second hand, and cheaper if you can live without the arp and the expanded sound palette

roland.com



Behringer Deepmind 12

£650

Not a straight clone, but Behringer's Deepmind synth takes design cues from Roland's classics

behringer.com



Roland Cloud

\$19.99 per month

Roland's cloud-based software suite offers Juno emulations alongside a ton of other classic sounds

rolandcloud.com



KEYBOARD: Hold and Chord modes are great when combined with the arp and sequencer

ARPEGGIO: The arp here is based on that found on the Juno-60, with three modes and a three octave range

SLIDERS: The Boutique interface is still a little compact, but the sliders do have a decent amount of travel

60/106: Switching the modes alters the behaviour of the low-pass filter and envelopes

classic house and techno licks. It's perhaps a slight shame not to be able to fully sequence all four polyphonic voices, but, if anything, the need to work around this limitation is going to make the JU-06A a more characterful creative tool in the long run. There's also now an analogue clock input added to the synth's front panel, which is a great addition for those wanting to clock the arp or sequencer to a modular system or wider hardware setup.

The trade off for squeezing in those extra features is the loss of the pitch and mod touchstrips from the

left of the front panel. Personally, this doesn't bother me – I've never really used those all that much on other Boutiques I've tried, so I'd rather have the additional sequencing tools and edit controls.

In all, I really like this latest Boutique. While there are debatable differences between these ACB recreations and the originals – particularly in higher frequencies – there's little denying the fact that they sound excellent in their own right; richer and fuller than most virtual analogue synths, and certainly capable of ticking all the boxes you'd

expect from a Juno emulation. The 60/106 switch is more than just a gimmick too, offering both punchier Juno-60 sounds that really suit the arp and the fuller, more open sounds of the later 106.

I still have misgivings about the Boutique form factor in general; the mini-jack main output isn't ideal, and cramming the full interfaces of classic synths into a 30cm desktop module can make for fiddly editing. Still, given the simple nature of the Juno architecture and classic slider-based design, this latter issue is nowhere near as bad for the JU-06A as for some of its siblings.

If you're looking for a convenient, well-priced source of classic Juno sounds – particularly for those wanting the classic club sounds of Detroit and Chicago – this may well be the best option out there. **FM**

BOUTIQUE BUSINESS

The JU-06A is built into Roland's now well-established form factor, and all the standard features of the range are present. The synth comes in 'module' form but can be clipped into a K-25m case to add two octaves of mini keys. Power comes from either four AA batteries or USB. I/O is provided by two 3.5mm outputs for headphones and main output, plus a 3.5mm input for sending audio through the synth. There are also full-sized MIDI in and out ports along the rear panel. As well as handling power, the USB port can also be used to send MIDI to and from a computer, and also facilitate audio over USB by letting the JU-06A operate as a 24-bit, 44.1kHz audio interface.

FM VERDICT

9.1

The JU-06 was already up with the best Boutiques, and this update is a winner all-round. A must-try source of classic sounds