

# Korg Nu:Tekt NTS-1

## £99

Another mini synth from Korg, but this one's a bit different to what's come before. Ben Rogerson prepares to downsize

**CONTACT** WHO: Korg **WEB:** [korg.com](http://korg.com) **KEY FEATURES** A portable monophonic synth with one digital oscillator, a multimode filter, an envelope generator, three LFOs and three stereo effect processors (Mod, Delay and Reverb). You can load custom oscillators and effects, while connectivity includes MIDI In, audio in and a headphone out





Over the past decade, Korg have proven themselves to be the masters of the mini synth. First came the Monotron, in 2010, and this was followed in 2013 by the Volca range, which continues to grow in size.

The Nu:Tekt NTS-1 is more Monotron than Volca – certainly in appearance – but it's also very much its own instrument. For a start, you have to build it yourself, and its single monophonic digital oscillator is capable of loading custom oscillators that have been developed for Korg's Prologue and Minilogue XD synths. This feature alone should be enough to pique your interest.

Other features include a multimode filter, envelope generator, three LFOs, three stereo effect processors and an arpeggiator, and there's the obligatory built-in speaker (plus a headphone socket for audio output). Note input is via a ribbon keyboard, but MIDI In means that you can hook up a keyboard controller, and there's also an audio in so that you can process external sounds with the effects, which can also be customised by loading third-party offerings. Sync In/Out sockets complete the connectivity.

Given its tiny size, it might surprise you to learn the NTS-1 can't run on batteries; power is supplied over USB. This can be drawn from a power bank, though, so the synth's portability isn't compromised.

### Getting going

If the idea of having to build the NTS-1 fills you with terror, allow us to set your mind at rest. There's no soldering involved – it's basically just a case of screwing the thing together (you even get a mini screwdriver in the box). You might feel a touch of apprehension as you snap the bits of the chassis apart (they come supplied as one board), but it's nothing to have nightmares about. You should be done in well under an hour.

Once you're up and running, the NTS-1's many joys will quickly start to reveal themselves to users. Despite having just three knobs, the synth feels pretty tweakable, and it's surprisingly flexible. With sawtooth, triangle, square and VPM oscillator options, you can cover a fair amount



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of sonic ground here, and there are low-, band- and high-pass filter types. Notably, the envelope generator has a loop option, which enables some nice glitching action, and with juicy modulation, delay and reverb effects, the scope for sound design is considerable. The arpeggiator doesn't disappoint, either, offering various scale types and running modes.

### A mini cinch?

Because of its size, the NTS-1 does have some limitations. The ribbon keyboard is fine for triggering the arpeggiator (which can be latched, by the way), but not so great for actually playing anything (you'll be making use of that MIDI Input), and many features have to be accessed by holding down a button and turning a knob, so you'll need the manual to hand for a while at least.

When you consider the price, though, and the ease with which it can be customised with new

oscillators and effects (the companion librarian software should be available by the time you read this), the NTS-1 feels like a bit of a steal. With mini synths such as this, there's always a danger that the novelty will wear off and the instrument will end up in the back of a cupboard before too long, but the Nu:Tekt has enough about it to retain a permanent place in your studio. **FM**

### THE PROS & CONS



A 'DIY' synth that's easy to build

Surprisingly flexible and expandable with custom oscillators and effects

Excellent effects that can be used to process external sounds



Not the sturdiest of synths, and the ribbon keyboard isn't great to play

You'll need to consult the manual to learn how to use certain features

### FM VERDICT

# 9.1

Easy to build and fun to program, the NTS-1's flexibility and expandability make it a mini synth to be reckoned with