GForce OB-E £150

Imagine an 8-Voice Oberheim synth faithfully recreated as a plugin. **Chris Hughes** doths his cap

CONTACT **WHO:** GForce Software Ltd **WEB:** gforcesoftware.com **KEY FEATURES** Fantastic sounding soft synth meticulously modeled after the legendary Oberheim 8-Voice analogue synth. 600+ factory presets, MPE support

GForce Software is no stranger to meticulously modeled analogue softsynths. Their legacy stretches back two decades with popular offerings like the impOSCar and the Oddity.

After a few years of laying low, they've launched the exciting OB-E Octaphonic synthesiser. GForce actually modeled the OB-E after their own Oberheim 8-Voice synthesiser, which is a rare and highly sought-after analogue synth.

Staying true to the original, the OB-E has eight voices that can be triggered in a round robin fashion in polyphonic mode. You also have mono, mono legato, and unison modes, all doing as you'd expect.

Mono uses one voice panel, unison stacks all eight. You can also "split" the keyboard and have the top four voices dedicated to the top half of the keyboard, and the bottom four on the bottom half. This allows for a unique multi-timbral approach to patch creation.

GForce is labeling the OB-E an Octaphonic synth, which is rather unique for a soft synth. Each voice gets a dedicated panel allowing you to make variations to everything from the VCOs, filter, envelopes, or even panning and mixing.

It's a modular approach at heart, which is what made creating polyphonic patches on the original a daunting task. Luckily, GForce has created workflow tools to make patch creation and adjustments speedy, while maintaining the original spirit.

The Group button allows you to edit all eight SEMs at the same time, allowing for fast polyphonic patch creation. The Offset button allows for SEMs to be adjusted while retaining relative values of each parameter.

Each voice has a front panel and 'rear' panel. When you click ZOOM, the associated voice gets blown up to full size and reveals all the controls available. The rear panel reveals a new VCO3 that can also be used as an audio rate LFO, in addition to a noise generator or third oscillator.

You also get access to a range of performance controls for velocity, polyphonic after-touch and MPE control. When making adjustments you'll see coloured outlines representing the modulations in action, which is a nice touch.

Lush, creamy, vintage synth vibes with the SEM sound abound

Now all the features in the world won't matter if the sound quality isn't there but the OB-E knocks it out of the park. Lush, creamy, vintage synth vibes with the SEM sound abound. It also comes loaded with more than 600 factory patches.

You can also lock several of the SEM voices that'll prevent them from changing even during patch loading, creating patch hybrids really fast.

While I appreciate the adherence to the classic look of the original, I do think a more modern approach would have benefited the OB-E.

I tested the OB-E in Ableton 11 on a M1 MacBook. One instance was taking anywhere from 10-20% of the CPU. So it's not light on your system, as you'd expect from a meticulously modeled analogue synth.

I also noticed the interface was sluggish and in GarageBand, the resizing controls did not work – hopefully this will be addressed.

One major flaw with the OB-E release is that it's currently only available on the Mac, not Windows. GForce has stated that they wanted to release the Mac version first and see the reception before embarking on the Windows development. Apparently they've rebuilt a lot of core components in the development pipeline for the OB-E, which will require some dedicated time for a Windows version to take form.

All is not lost for Windows users, however it could be some time before we actually see it. FM

FM VERDICT

7.9

For those seeking an authentic Oberheim polyphonic experience in software form, OB-E delivers in spades

THE PROS & CONS

+

Lush, dreamy SEM sound faithful to the original hardware

600+ factory presets

Smart patch programming tools

–

Mac only (for now)

Fairly heavy on CPU

Interface can be a bit sluggish