

REVIEWS: IN BRIEF



ROLAND SH-201

Back in the 1980s Roland produced a mono synth called the SH-101. The ultra cheap addition to Roland's collection provided a simple and inexpensive introduction to the world of synthesizers. In that tradition, Roland has produced another affordable hands-on synth, the SH-201. Like the 101 the SH-201 is meant to be fun, and meant to be *played*.

The SH-201 is a 10-voice polyphonic synthesizer featuring two meaty analogue modelling oscillators, including Roland's famous 'Super Saw', two multi-wave LFOs with multiple destinations, resonant filter, saturation control, and more. Other features include an arpeggiator, dual effects (reverb and delay), Roland's D-BEAM for real-time modulation and a stereo audio input for external sound sources.

The 201 features a USB connector to take advantage of Roland's sound editor and librarian software, effectively turning your keyboard into a VSTi. There are 32 ROM and 32 user presets, plus you can quickly access more with the additional software.

After unpacking the SH-201 I was a little thrown by the overall look. My first reaction was 'gee there's not much going on here'... and there's not! Not even an LCD. It's a case of 'back to basics' with the 201, which is not bad thing. After toying with the preset sounds and creating a few of my own, I soon realised this synth does pack a punch. All aspects of the signal path sound good and with minimal effort you can whip up all manner of cool sounds. As for the lack of visual feedback, well, it didn't take long to appreciate that lack of reference – it was an old-school case of 'tweak and listen'.

I'm always a fan of any piece of equipment that will accept external sound sources. So try sending some audio (CD/MP3 etc) into the keyboard and playing around with that... Sweet.

Users new to the synth world will appreciate the general layout of the keyboard with its ease-of-use signal path starting from left to right. Anyone looking for a foothold in the world of analogue-style synths should definitely check out the Roland SH-201 – a great starting point or a great point to return to. – *Adam Ellis*

Price: \$1495

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LATCH LAKE MUSIC MICKING

Latch Lake Music is a small company from Minnesota, USA that's best known for its guitar slides. It's now branched out into the production of the micKing microphone stand. The micKing is best described as a new solution to an age-old problem: holding up heavy microphones such as large diaphragm condensers and ribbon mics. Traditionally, huge boom stands with large counterweights were regularly used to carry mics safely and securely high into the air or across the recording room of large studios. But most project studios are usually too small to house these old behemoths. Enter the micKing.

The micKing has an ingenious and suitably heavy base with wheels that project sideways off one end so the stand can be tipped and wheeled around easily. The stand's base weighs approximately 13kg and the main boom counterweight 4kg, so even a heavy stereo combination of two Coles 4038s, for example, is easily and adequately suspended.

The rest of the stand is made from chrome telescopic tubing and there's also a stainless steel, forged mic attachment stem that is undeniably strong and bend proof – and is more reminiscent of something typically found on a drumkit than a mic stand. The micKing extends from 1.2 metres to 3.2 metres vertically and the boom arm extends from one metre to 2.9 metres. Probably the most notable aspects of the stand are the alloy clutches that tighten (and release) the moving components. These have adjustable steel screws so each one can be set at the desired tightness. The 'brake pads' that provide the grip at the point of contact are made of a carbon-based material, which makes for an incredibly sturdy lock and stops any scratching on the boom arms. There's also an optional second boom arm that attaches to the main stand, which works well and provides a great multiple miking solution from the one stand.

The micKing held up Neumann 47s and 67s with ease (and even an old RCA 44 ribbon mic that I normally hang from a combination of three stands!). The mechanisms are easy to get used to and gentle on the hands – a great (albeit expensive) stand that will help protect your valuable mic from hitting the deck, client or priceless grand piano! – *Calum Orr*

Price: \$1300; Xtra Boom \$200

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