



Erica Synths Fusion System II €1,950

The Latvians are back with three new vacuum-tastic modules. **Rob Redman** gives them a go

CONTACT WHO: Erica Synths **WEB:** ericasynths.lv **KEY FEATURES** MODULES: 2x Fusion VCO 2, Fusion VCF3, Fusion VCA-Waveshaper-Ringmodulator and FusionDelay/flanger/vintage ensemble



THE PROS & CONS



Solidly built

Lots of patch points

Lots of analogue warmth and growl



You can't get the sterile clarity of other units

Delay effect is not what you might have been expecting

delay driving the detune effect, which sounds wide and glorious (or subtle if that's your thing). They've also embedded a Valve into the circuit, visible through a cutout on the fascia, nicely lit by an orange LED for that vintage glow. It looks cool and sounds better. The more you engage the Tube Crunch control, the more grit is invoked. Further personality can be added by cranking the FM knob, which also sets an upper level when using CV.

Sitting between the two VCOs is the Filter module, a 24dB valve/vactrol-based circuit, that also includes a buffered mult and a three-channel mixer. Sweeping the filter presents a less wild result than you might expect, although the resonances scream into self oscillation. The trick here is the big button. Pressing this starts the module recording your control voltage changes, so you can preserve mod setups. As a creative tool, this is inspiring as well as downright fun, which sound design tools should be. It should be noted that audio range mods aren't applicable here due to the limitations of vactrol circuits.

Jump the second VCO to land on the modulator module, a larger device that is home to multiple mod sources. Two looping envelope generators (with a manual trigger button) kick things off, their attack, on, delay, off rotary controls. These are both unipolar and bipolar together, with CV control over the decay time. These twin EGs are core to the module; however, the fun begins with the clockable sample & hold section, that means creating melodic drones and pitched textures is a breeze, although there is no quantisation on offer, so you might want to think about an external solution to that. It's based on the module's noise source which has its own output and sounds great; more red noise than white. Patch points are in abundance, across the lower part of the fascia (nice to see them grouped for control access when cable clutter can block the way).

This brings us to the combo VCA/Waveshaper/Ringmodulator, this time with two miniature pentode valves on show. This module operates in two simultaneous circuits, allowing you to patch dual CVs for the amp. In practical terms you can use the frequencies of VCA and ring mod as waveshaping systems, in turn giving you complex and versatile, yet

Following in the tradition of many Erica Synths modules and full systems, the first thing you notice with the Fusion 2 is the solidity of the physical object. It ships in a 104hp skiff, with textured end cheeks and, although the case is thin bent metal, it feels tough enough to give you confidence for live work.

The fascias similarly show typical Erica Synths stylings, reminiscent of something you might see in the prop

cupboard of a B-movie about a mad scientist. Knobs and switches all feel robust, with good resistance and the patch points are well seated.

Erica Synths have a history with aggressive modules that pack a punch but nothing as yet has quite the degree of warmth and grit as these new offerings. Fusion isn't a new thing to Erica, however they have adapted, upgraded and evolved the concept so that sound designers can access a new palette of possibilities.

Let's look at this in terms of individual modules in the context of a

complete system – as that's how many people will buy them, with the skiff and power supply as a package.

For many, the journey starts with oscillators, in this case two single voice, three waveshape, Fusion VCO 2s. These have the tools you might expect, such as volts per octave and audio inputs, as well as CV jacks that include separate outputs for the -1oct sub and triangle waves and an input for modulating the pulse width. If that was all that was in place it would be a fine VCO, however Fusion 2 VCOs have a bucket brigade-based short

THE ALTERNATIVES



Makenoise Tape & Microsound Music Machine £2000

Though not quite aimed at the same usage, this system comes in at a similar cost. Its variety of modules play well together and offer a wide range of sound sculpting tools. The plus here is the sampler and Maths.

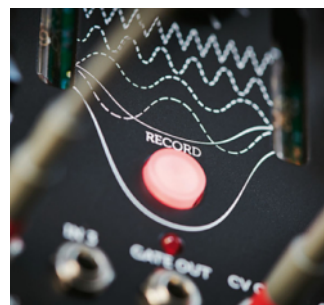
makenoisemusic.com



ALM Busy Circuits System Coupe £1900

ALM are the creators of some very popular modules, some of which (looking at you Pamela's New Workout) make their way, in special edition clothing, to this 84hp skiff. Like the Make Noise option, this is rammed with sound sources and modulation as well as a sampler. It's sound is crystalline, crisp and clear.

busycircuits.com



VALVES: The use of valve (aka tube) technology gives the Fusion modules their distinctive look and sound

DETUNE: The BBD-derived detune effect is great for adding thickness to sounds

RECORD: Hit the button on the filter modules to record CV multiplication and division

DELAY: The effects module creates ensemble-like modulation that can bring sounds to life

intuitive sound design options, all with the added juice of the analogue drive that is the hallmark of the Fusion system.

Last in the skiff is the flanger/delay/vintage ensemble effects module. If you have ever used a delay

or flanger unit you probably have certain expectations but you need to put them aside, as this unit will not fulfil them. What this module does is add breadth and movement to your sound. It has settings for long/short delay and a wet/dry mix. There are

also rotary controls for CV level when patched and fed back. This all sounds quite simple and it is but that doesn't do justice to what can be achieved with this unit. If you've heard a vintage Roland vocoder with the ensemble effect engaged, you'll have an idea of what this does. It adds a phaser type motion and width to the incoming audio, to which you can add tube grit, as this Fusion 2 device also has an analogue tube circuit.

Any of the modules in this system could happily find a place in someone's Eurorack system. They really make sense as a complete setup like this though and I highly recommend it to anybody with a hankering for a more warm output. The possibilities for drive abound, as do options for modulation and all in a package that delivers on aesthetics as well as tone. **FM**

Any of the modules in this system could have a place in someone's Eurorack system

MACHINE WARMTH

The Fusion modules employ valves as part of the circuit and this adds a rich warmth to the signal that some love.



Valves introduce subtle variation into a circuit, where fluctuations can add some 'life' that digital components typically don't. An integral part of the Fusion sound is that they can be overdriven easily, for characteristic Erica punch and growl.

FM VERDICT

8.9

With bags of personality and sonic opportunity on offer, Erica Fusion will deliver endless experimentation and, most importantly, fun