

FutureMusic®



GEAR OF THE YEAR

— 2022 —

From synths to software, monitors to modular
— all of 2022's must-try gear in one place.



The state of software in 2022

AI and Spatial Audio might be the future, but we all still love a retro synth or two...

> Spatial Audio and Dolby Atmos were the key buzzwords for software at the start of 2022, and sure enough, Logic's 10.7 update came packed with plenty of immersive options, and all implemented with the ease that only Apple can muster. But as to the future of Spatial Audio/Dolby Atmos, there are probably as many producers currently flying the flag for it as there are those lowering it.

In terms of orchestral music production, the big guns of Spitfire Audio, EastWest, Heavyocity and Orchestral Tools have already released just about every kind of title you can imagine, so what was left for 2022? Spitfire took more maudlin and ambient paths with titles like Heirloom and Resonate, while OT travelled organic and atmospheric roads with Habitat and Drones. Heavyocity simply destroyed the orchestra altogether with Symphonic Destruction, and EastWest went off world and back in time in search of their alternatives with Forbidden Planet and String Machines.

Of course the world of the software subscription expanded further in 2022 – SSL, NI, UVI and many more are onboard – but UA now have one of

the best in the form of Spark and a subscription which doesn't require their hardware. But we wonder how much the cost of living crisis will cause people to reconsider what's dripping out of their accounts each month – it all adds up.

What you really need instead of a subscription is a DAW that delivers everything in one package, but big updates on this front were thin on the ground in 2022. Bitwig did a few dramatic point updates (the less said about the rollout of Spectral Suite, the better), and Logic too added some points and that Spatial Audio. But it was left to PreSonus (Studio One 6), Tracktion (Waveform Pro 12) and Steinberg to do the biggest and best releases – with Cubase 12 being one of the strongest updates in recent times.

The award for the 'seemingly coming out of nowhere' developer goes to BLEASS who might insist on their name being capitalised but also produce great plugins. Dragonfly was their first of the year, a £25 understated modulator, and Phase Mutant, an innovative FM distortion plugin, soon followed. But Megalit, which closed the year, is the monster wavetable synth that could put the company on the map in 2023.

AI continues to make inroads in music production. On top of all of the assistance that anything iZotope makes will bring, developers like Mastering The Mix (Reso) and Mixed in Key (Live) are just two with the word 'Mix' in their names that help you, well, mix. And while Audiomodern's Playbeat 3 and EZdrummer 3 both boot your

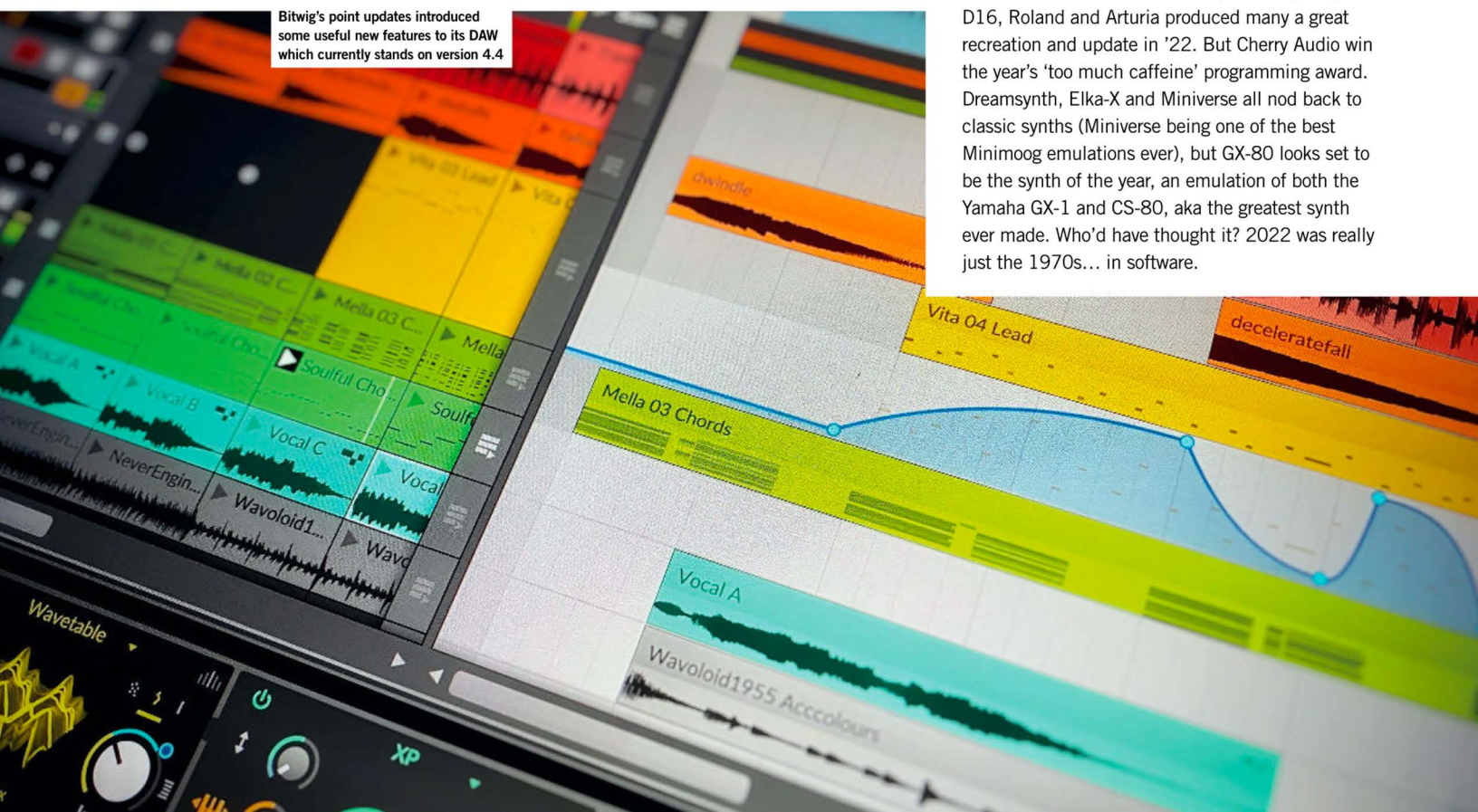
drummer out of the band forever, AI, perhaps thankfully, hasn't completely taken over our productions just yet. And if we're honest, it's still the great big synth releases that impress us more than anything AI, and thankfully 2022 had plenty...

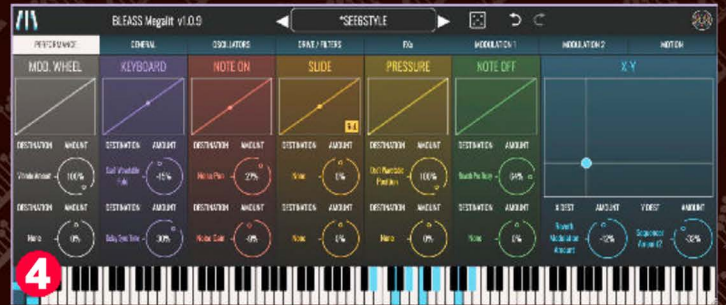
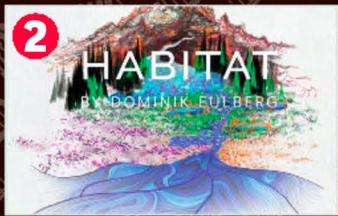
Old synths continue to be reimaged in software – will it ever end – and GForce, Softube, UVI,

D16, Roland and Arturia produced many a great recreation and update in '22. But Cherry Audio win the year's 'too much caffeine' programming award. Dreamsynth, Elka-X and Miniverse all nod back to classic synths (Miniverse being one of the best Minimog emulations ever), but GX-80 looks set to be the synth of the year, an emulation of both the Yamaha GX-1 and CS-80, aka the greatest synth ever made. Who'd have thought it? 2022 was really just the 1970s... in software.

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Bitwig's point updates introduced some useful new features to its DAW which currently stands on version 4.4





6 ESSENTIAL PLUGINS FROM 2022

DEVIOUS MACHINES INFILTRATOR 2

MAC/PC

1 An update to an already fantastic multi-effect (and a free one for v1 owners), Infiltrator 2 takes the modular effect ethos up a few bars, offering 56 effects modules to slot into up to ten available spaces. Outstanding features include extensive modulation and fantastic real-time controls, not to mention a 32-step sequencer for even more evolving sounds. Throw in some incredible filters, time manipulation modules, granular effects and heavy distortion, and this could well be the all-in-one creative toolbox you didn't know you needed.

deviousmachines.com

ORCHESTRAL TOOLS HABITAT

MAC/PC

2 Created by OT and music producer, biologist, conservationist, artist and author Dominik Eulberg, Habitat could be seen as a library of found sound recordings, but it's way more than that. Eulberg throws a Prophet-5, Jupiter-8, Moog One and

Deckard's Dream into the mix, and extensive controls allow users to create incredibly atmospheric textures that can sweep between natural and electronic. Not exactly an EDM monster, but if soothing textures are your mindful dream – and why not – then Habitat is where it's at.

orchestraltools.com

TOONTRACK EZDRUMMER 3

MAC/PC

3 EZdrummer lies in the heart of an enormous and growing ecosphere of sample expansion packs and MIDI files that can – given its girth – sometimes detract from the original software. But EZdrummer, and especially the latest v3 incarnation, can be not only your drummer but any band's drummer, turning whatever micro beat idea you have into a complete drum track in no time. Forget any drummer jokes – in fact just forget your drummer – because EZdrummer does everything you would expect and a lot more you wouldn't. Sorry humans, this is one-nil to the future.

toontrack.com

BLEASS MEGALIT

MAC/PC/IOS

4 BLEASS Megalit has a conventional subtractive architecture: three oscillators, noise generator, low- and high-pass filters, modulation options, plus effects. However, two of the oscillators deliver over 120 wavetables covering a huge range of sonics. Add a Fold function that allows you to alter wavetables, combine it with heavy modulation, and you have a synth capable of creating huge evolving and dynamic sounds. And while 2022 saw many recreations of classic synths, Megalit looks and sounds completely new.

bleass.com

BABY AUDIO CRYSTALLINE

MAC/PC

5 2021 was very much Baby Audio's year for software development, and this spilled over beautifully into 2022 with several releases including this algorithmic reverb. Where Baby Audio score is by removing some of the tech fluff, so the UI here might

not be as you'd expect, but the four main areas – Reflections, Depth, Clean-up and Transient – simply focus on the music in as easy to use a way as possible. Crystalline encourages tweaking but, most importantly, creates great sounds with the user always in control.

babyaudio.io

CHERRY AUDIO GX-80

MAC/PC

6 When Cherry Audio created a pastiche of *Blade Runner* as a teaser to their forthcoming synth, saying they were "synthesizing the greatest replicant of all time", there was only one machine they were (re)introducing: the Yamaha CS-80 employed by BR soundtrack legend Vangelis. Cherry's GX-80 combines parts of its forefather, the GX-1, and all of the CS-80 to create the ultimate software CS-80, a synth with surprisingly few software emulations (Arturia's CS-80 V being one). Our review is just in and, as you might expect, Cherry Audio have done a stellar job. This is the 'C-Beam' of synths, make no mistake.

cherryaudio.com