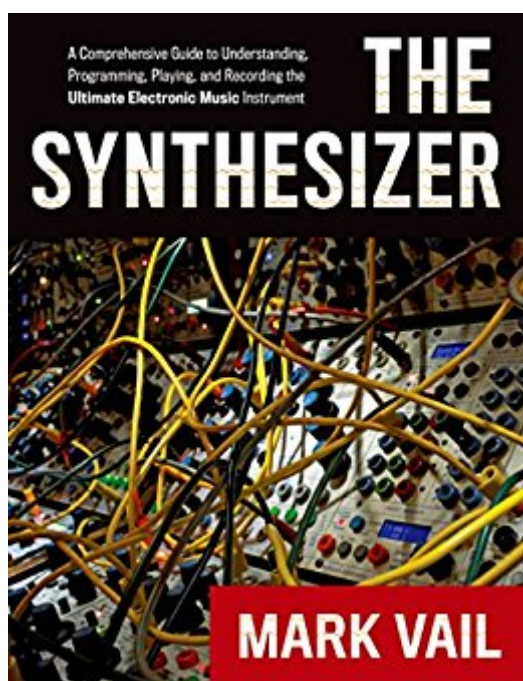


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The Synthesizer: A Comprehensive Guide To Understanding, Programming, Playing, And Recording The Ultimate Electronic Music Instrument



Synopsis

Electronic music instruments weren't called synthesizers until the 1950s, but their lineage began in 1919 with Russian inventor Lev Sergeyevich Termen's development of the Etherphone, now known as the Theremin. From that point, synthesizers have undergone a remarkable evolution from prohibitively large mid-century models confined to university laboratories to the development of musical synthesis software that runs on tablet computers and portable media devices. Throughout its history, the synthesizer has always been at the forefront of technology for the arts. In *The Synthesizer: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding, Programming, Playing, and Recording the Ultimate Electronic Music Instrument*, veteran music technology journalist, educator, and performer Mark Vail tells the complete story of the synthesizer: the origins of the many forms the instrument takes; crucial advancements in sound generation, musical control, and composition made with instruments that may have become best sellers or gone entirely unnoticed; and the basics and intricacies of acoustics and synthesized sound. Vail also describes how to successfully select, program, and play a synthesizer; what alternative controllers exist for creating electronic music; and how to stay focused and productive when faced with a room full of instruments. This one-stop reference guide on all things synthesizer also offers tips on encouraging creativity, layering sounds, performance, composing and recording for film and television, and much more.

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Customer Reviews

I bought this book recently with the intention of further augmenting my synthesis techniques. What I got was a pleasant enough read, but keep in mind, the title of this book is "A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding, Programming, Playing, and Recording the Ultimate Electronic Music Instrument". What it **SHOULD** have been titled is "A Comprehensive Guide to Technical Details of Gear That You are Unlikely to Ever Own". It's, basically, a coffee table book of synth porn for enthusiasts. Dozens and dozens of synthesizers, modular synths and other gear are listed, photographed, and technically detailed with breathless enthusiasm. But what kind of cords should I use to record my results? What are the steps to synthesize a snare drum? How can I use an LFO to add rhythmic variation to the timbre of a synth? The book answers none of these questions. Since I bought the book with the explicit purpose of "Understanding, Programming, Playing and Recording" a synthesizer and not to drool over gear, it turned out to be an expensive and useless waste of time.

Mark's book covers EVERY and I mean EVERY synth in the universe. Mark highlights all of the different synth techniques (subtractive, additive, FM, physical modeling, sampling, etc. etc.) as well and explains them nicely. Can you believe a synth can cost \$500,000.00? Yikes - you'll just have to get the book to find out which one. I love the references to the really early synth pioneers in Russia, the UK and the states. The things they accomplished with early electron tube technology was amazing. Plenty for the virtual synth and DAW crowd too. Tons of photos and stories and lots of synth history. I'm glad I bought it and I highly recommend it.

I have always had a fascination with sound timbre. As a young boy in early high school music class (1971) we were taken to the Adelaide University Music Department and I saw for the first time a Moog synthesizer. This thing was four boxes just filled with a matrix of 1/4 inch jack holes and an amp. On the back of the door were about 40 jack leads all draped over a clothes hook. The Professor of Music there took us through some of the sounds that this "thing" could make; various noises like white and pink, stuff like that. This particular "instrument" at that time cost the same as a house???? To a young boy this was an amazing amount of money but I was impressed by the

noises this instrument could make too. Fast forward about 45 years....I'm now retired and once again engaging in my passion for music and sounds. Of course synthesizers have come a LONG way since I was a boy and the instruments are now amazingly affordable and sound good too. As an interest, I'm immersing myself in, "all things "Synth"", so I bought a copy of this book from .com due to it's subject matter. This book is paper back and the pages are made of something akin to high quality "newspaper" paper. This is good because the pages don't gloss reflected light when you're trying to read it. There are many black and white images of the people important in the Synth industry like Bob Moog etc. and pictures of some of the most amazing Synths that you're ever going to see. Some of these things were worth \$500,000 thirty years ago !!!! Consider how much they would be worth today??? One of these pictured synths is patched up with what looks to be about \$10000 worth of patch cables alone. As some have mentioned about this book it is mainly about the gear that has been used over the last 80 years or so. This particular book I suppose is really about the culture of sound synthesis. If you want a book for actual guidance on how to make a patch this is not really the place to look; there are other books like, "Steal this Sound" and even that has its limitations. This book is an eye-opener into the amazing development of these machines over the last century and a tacit accolade to how fortunate we are today. The book also has a good bibliography in the back and a listing of lots and lots of "synth" sites on the internet. Of course the real thing with your Synthesizer is to get down in the weeds (the manual) and discover what makes it "tick" under the "hood" (data interface) and make some of your own sounds. You can gradually build your own home studio and have all this stuff plugged in together and make some "out-there" noises for your own music. This book will give some direction as to what to look for like a Moogerfooger which may lead you on to discovering a GSI Burn or other important "stuff". All great stuff to seek out, buy and plug in for your own personal music and sound appreciation. Have fun in the Synthesizer culture and this book will help you understand your place in the "Synthesizer Universe". Cheers!!!

The book is amazing. The only reason I didn't give it 5 stars is because the black and white only pages in the softcover edition are a let down. I wish I would've waited and purchased the hard cover edition - that is if it has a better paper stock and color photos. Other than that, it's so up to the minute I can't say a negative thing about it.

Liked reading about synthesizer basics and obscure gear, much to digest. A little scattered in approach, but still a good read.

Is not so much a guide as a catalogue of synthesizer brands over the last 40 years. There is terrific coverage here, but not much in the way of "guide".

This book appears to be primarily a survey of what's available today, with some interesting history. Not much in the way of technical detail or technique, but many nice pictures.

Great read, thought provoking and inspirational. Best parts are detailed explanations of artists' workflow and rationale for gear and patch choices

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