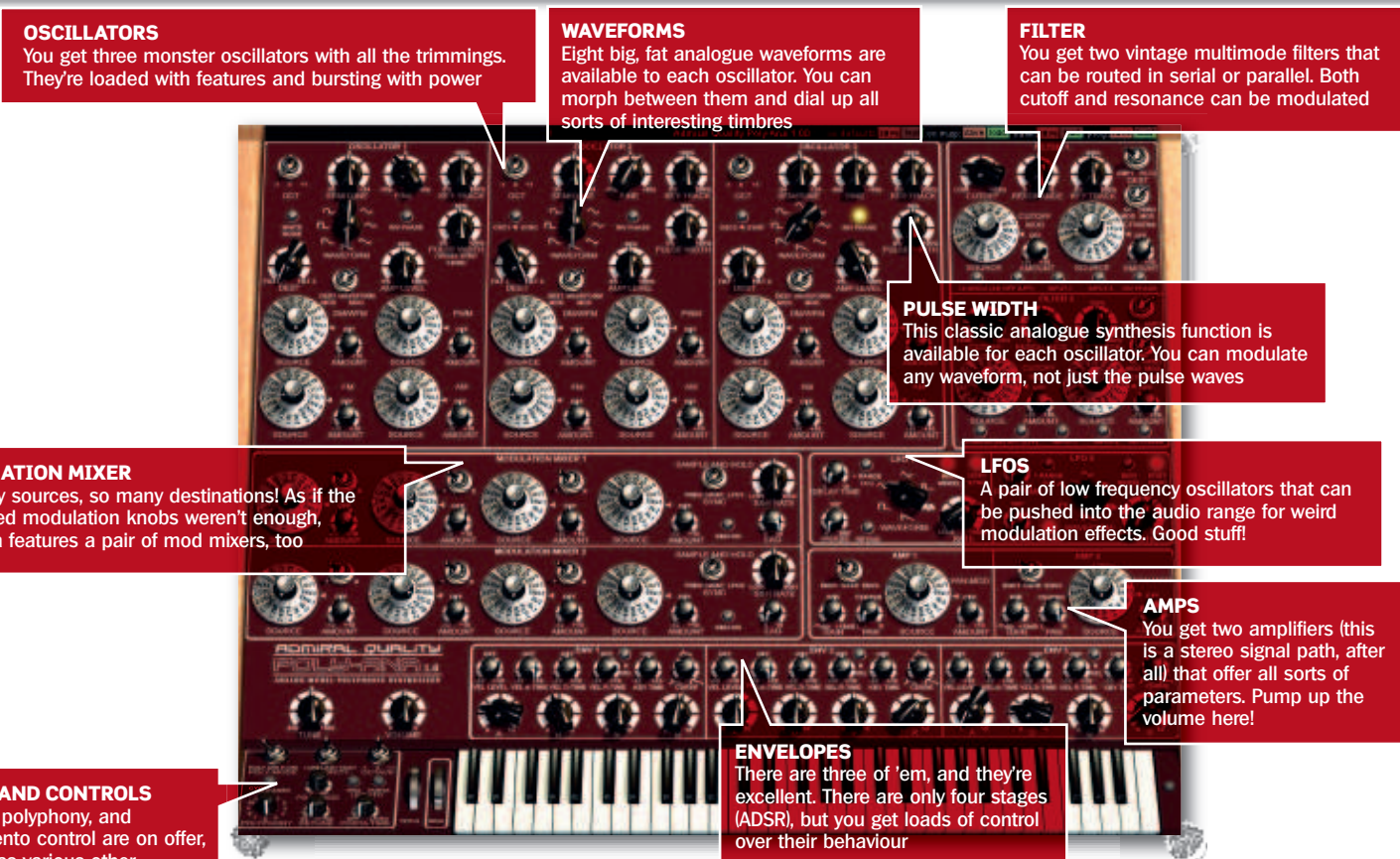


PC  What is it? A big, bold virtual analogue synth PRICE: \$129

CONTACT: info@admiralquality.com WWW.admiralquality.com



OSCILLATORS
You get three monster oscillators with all the trimmings. They're loaded with features and bursting with power

WAVEFORMS
Eight big, fat analogue waveforms are available to each oscillator. You can morph between them and dial up all sorts of interesting timbres

FILTER
You get two vintage multimode filters that can be routed in serial or parallel. Both cutoff and resonance can be modulated

PULSE WIDTH
This classic analogue synthesis function is available for each oscillator. You can modulate any waveform, not just the pulse waves

MODULATION MIXER
So many sources, so many destinations! As if the dedicated modulation knobs weren't enough, Poly-Ana features a pair of mod mixers, too

LFOS
A pair of low frequency oscillators that can be pushed into the audio range for weird modulation effects. Good stuff!

AMPS
You get two amplifiers (this is a stereo signal path, after all) that offer all sorts of parameters. Pump up the volume here!

LEFT HAND CONTROLS
Detune, polyphony, and portamento control are on offer, as well as various other performance functions

ENVELOPES
There are three of 'em, and they're excellent. There are only four stages (ADSR), but you get loads of control over their behaviour

ADMIRAL QUALITY Poly-Ana



If weedy synths are leaving your tracks cold, Admiral Quality's pumped-up analogue tones might be just the thing to warm them up...

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

PC: Windows 2000 or XP, VST host application

TEST MACHINE

PC: AMD Athlon 64 3000+, 512MB RAM, Windows XP Home, Steinberg Cubase SX3 and Cubase 4, Cakewalk Sonar 6 Producer Edition, Xlutopt Chainer, M-Audio Transit

On the DVD

AUDIO DEMOS
As well as the usual samples, there's a demo recorded with a MIDI guitar controller too

As its name suggests, Poly-Ana is yet another attempt to model that most popular of subjects, the vintage analogue synthesizer. While some of you will, quite understandably, be asking if we actually need another retro remake, you can rest assured that there are lots of musicians who believe that truly convincing software analogue synths remain few and far between. Predictably, Admiral Quality are claiming that Poly-Ana is as analogue as they come. Sort of. Refreshingly, they're actually willing to admit that

their new synth sounds best within a certain (but very wide) note range, and sure enough, there is some audible aliasing towards the top of the keyboard. However, the developers also say that this is an inherent limitation caused by certain design choices that have resulted in a better overall sound within the optimum range. Basically, they're gambling that users won't mind this trade-off.

Nuts 'n' bolts
Poly-Ana is a Windows-only VSTi that has a familiar feature-set. There's a trio

of analogue-style oscillators, a couple of filters and LFOs and three ADSR envelopes per voice. Such a signal path might usually elicit a yawn, but Poly-Ana is a labour of love for developers dead-set on creating the ultimate analogue virtual instrument. Take the oscillators, for example: these don't simply spit out a handful of static square, saw and sine waves. Instead, you're presented with eight waveforms that are selected using a free-spinning knob. This enables you to dial up waveforms that sit anywhere between pairs from the given eight.

Oscillator sync is supported, but oddly, you can use sync even with the noise generator. What's more, pulse width modulation is always available, no matter what sort of waveform you select. Nice! Each oscillator can be routed to either of the two filters, and there are four modulation source knobs for each and every oscillator. These enable FM, AM, waveform morphing and more besides.

Dual personality

It should be noted that Poly-Ana's dual filters are indicative of the true, discrete stereo signal path that operates throughout the instrument. It's quite possible to create two distinct sounds in the same patch – one on the right channel and one on the left – and there's also the potential for layering.

Each filter offers 12dB and 24dB modes and both high- and low-pass operation. You can run them in series or parallel. One of our favourite (and often overlooked) tricks is on offer in

delay and release times. They have adjustable curves and key-scaling, too – this is powerful stuff!

The Poly grail?

After playing with Poly-Ana for a while, we've come to realise that Admiral Quality always intended this to be something of a 'dream' analogue. Synths have always been defined by the little features that have set them apart – from the Prophet 5's poly-mod section to the Minimoog's third oscillator and overdriven filter – and Admiral Quality have crammed just about every cool function from the most revered classics into a single package, and all on one page too – no tabs here. This makes the GUI a bit intimidating at first, but it gives Poly-Ana impressive levels of depth and power.

That said, the synth isn't without its problems. Poly-Ana isn't a CPU lightweight, and the manual is not yet complete. However, most users will never need to look at this: anyone with



▲ Poly-Ana comes with an extensive wardrobe of extra skins, including this fetching parchment ensemble

“ODDLY, YOU CAN USE SYNC EVEN WITH THE NOISE GENERATOR”

the form of modulatable resonance. You can modulate the cutoff, of course.

Additionally, there are a couple of dedicated mod mixers, each with syncable sample and hold functions. The LFOs, meanwhile, have six waveforms among the shapes on offer, along with delay time and phase.

Ostensibly of the four-stage variety, the envelopes possess extra oomph by way of velocity-controlled attack,

even a rudimentary knowledge of subtractive synthesis will be up and running in seconds.

As for the CPU... well, you can hear where every single drop of juice is going in the rich, textured sounds that are Poly-Ana's stock in trade. While a number of the presets are geared towards modern styles, there are just as many that could have been yanked out of any number of polysynths from

the 80s. With names like 'Go Ahead And...' and 'Little Red Chevette', you know what you're going to get before you play a note. And since they don't depend on built-in effects, the factory patches are refreshingly clear and dry.

One strange quirk is that, in Cubase 4, Poly-Ana only appears in the VST effects list. There is indeed an effects processing version (see the *In through the out door* boxout for more), but the main synth shouldn't really be here. This isn't such a big deal – you can still route MIDI to Poly-Ana – but it does mean you can't fire it up using a Cubase 4 instrument track.

We have to end by talking about the sound, though, which really is fantastic. There are a lot of VAs out there, but Admiral Quality's has the advantage of offering stellar quality at a reasonable price. If you love your analogues, it would be a crime not to experience what it has to offer. **cm**

▶ ALTERNATIVELY

LennarDigital Sylenth1
cm113 >> 10/10 >> €139
Another synth that's bursting with analogue-style warmth, LennarDigital's debut is a scorcher

LinPlug Albino 3
cm104 >> 8/10 >> £133
A firm favourite, and deservedly so. It has a good selection of Rob Papen presets and sounds great

VERDICT

- FOR**
- + Fantastic sound!
 - + Deep and complete architecture
 - + Dual discrete signal paths
 - + MIDI control galore
 - + Elaborate envelopes

- AGAINST**
- The GUI is a bit of a strain on the eyes
 - Only shows up as an effect in Cubase 4

We were promised a brutish analogue synth, and that's exactly what Admiral Quality have given us. Poly-Ana doesn't really offer anything new, but it rips and snorts just like it should

RATING



In through the out door

As you might reasonably expect, Poly-Ana can be used as an effects processor as well as a synth. This kind of functionality has been offered on hardware instruments for years: the Minimoog had a filter input (most users employed it to re-filter the output of the Mini itself), and everyone from Eno to Pink Floyd to Hawkwind shoved their gear through the EMS VCS 3.

Poly-Ana's handling of audio inputs is anything but basic. Not only can you route signals through the filters (and remember, Poly-Ana has a dual discrete architecture, so stereo signals will retain their separation), but audio inputs can be used as mod sources, too. This is great news if you want to create elaborate envelope-follower patches.

MIDI inputs are also accounted for. We're not talking plain old MIDI learn stuff, either (though this is also elegantly implemented). No, you can actually set the filters to respond to different MIDI inputs, enabling you to give your patches melodic subtexts. It's difficult to describe exactly how this feature works, but once you've tried it, you'll use it to death.

Finally, guitarists will appreciate the fact that Poly-Ana offers MIDI guitar controller support. Normally, you have to



▲ You can feed Poly-Ana all sorts of things – including MIDI and audio sources – and she'll merrily respond and react to them

open six different instances of an instrument (one for each string/MIDI channel) to make the most of these, but not here.