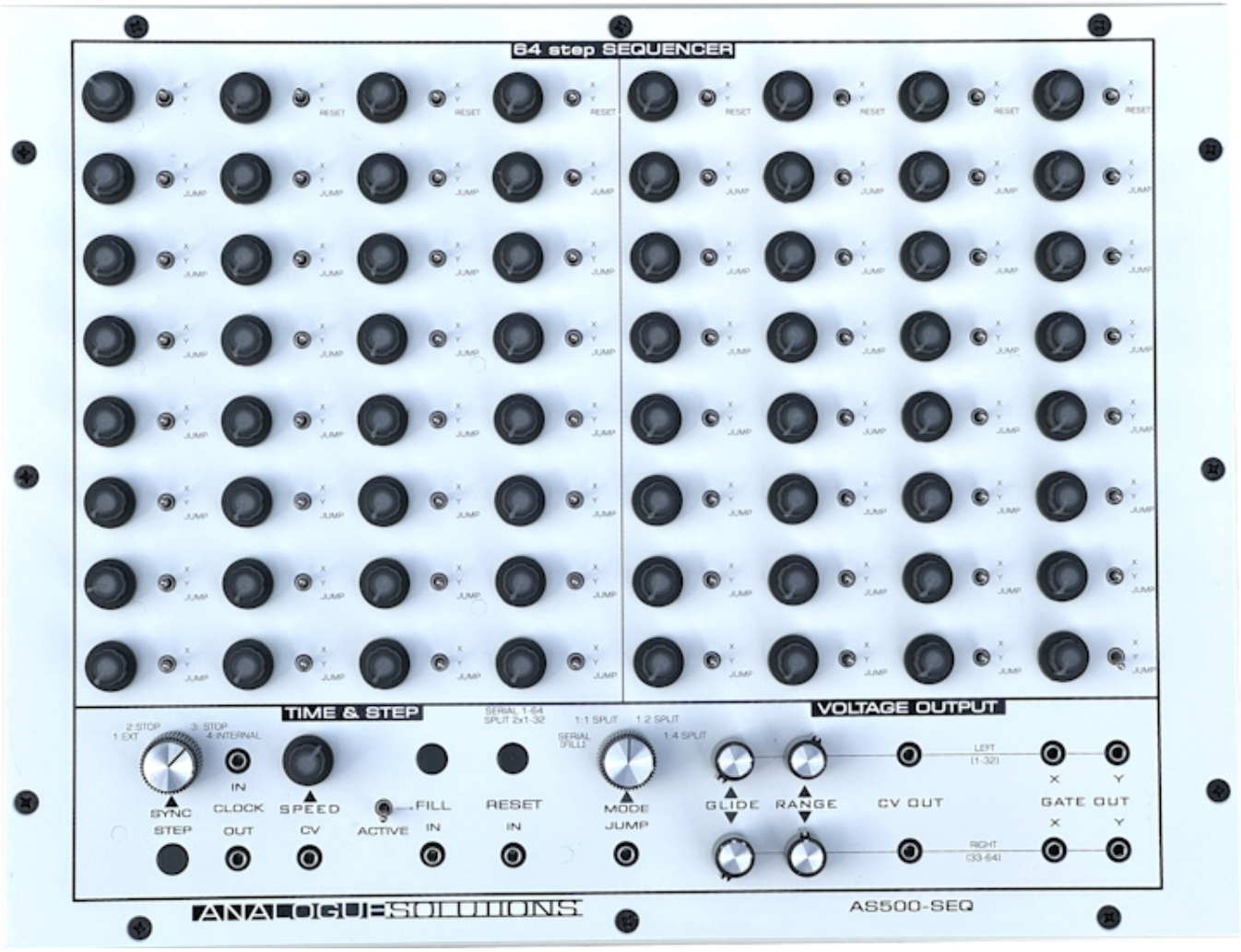
Analogue Solutions AS500-SEQ



Having made its public debut earlier this month at Knobcon Number Twelve - held just outside Chicago, IL, USA as a one-of-a-kind synthesizer convention now in its twelfth year - with a successful soft-launch showcase, British boutique electronic instruments innovator Analogue Solutions showcases its AS500- SEQ standalone 64-step analogue sequencer - announced as an almost identical ‘reboot’ of its legacy Megacity, readily re-engineered to incorporate some general enhancements

and internal improvements into a space-saving, desktop-friendly design with a smaller form factor that is also anchored around a host of unique features that sets it apart from others - somewhat closer to home at the self-explanatory SynthFest 2024 in Sheffield, UK on October 5, with wider availability as of September 18…

Megacity made a splash in the hands-on electronic music-making world when intriguingly introduced as a so-called TEAR DROP STEP SEQUENCER - alluding to its unique matrix-style arrangement of tear drop-raining LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes) - several years ago. Analogue Solutions stated that it was formatted and operated differently to other step sequencers since they traditionally run horizontally from left to right, then loop back to the first step - shorter patterns are possible, but, beyond that, not much else is generally on offer. On the other hand, however, Megacity's 64 steps ran downwards vertically in columns and as the last step of each column was played the next column to the right would then start playing. But better still, switching Megacity's unique JUMP system to the ON position on any column meant that any remaining steps would be bypassed as the sequencer 'jumped' straight to the next column to the right. "These two features in particular are familiar enough ways of working to be intuitive, but different enough to force you to work and think in a slightly different way," was company founder Tom Carpenter's contemporary thinking behind that - some might say - brave design decision, adding at the time: "The end result is you will get sequences and patterns that you might not have created otherwise."

On the face of it, AS500-SEQ is an almost identical 'reboot' of Megacity, built by hand in the UK of solid steel and aluminium construction, featuring two true analogue sequencers that forsake encoders in favour of high-quality, sealed CV (control voltage) potentiometers and analogue CV circuits. At any rate, it is readily re-engineered to incorporate some general enhancements and internal improvements into a space-saving, desktop-friendly design with a smaller form factor measuring merely 382mm (W) x 292mm (D) x 85mm (H) when set against the legacy Megacity's more generous 430mm (W) x 140mm (D) x 306mm (H) proportions - albeit, admittedly, the latter's loftier 7U height was specifically designed to accommodate optional rack-mounting ears originally designed for Analogue Solutions' same-sized Telemark, a semi-modular monosynth that is also no longer in production, while optional wooden side panels originally designed for that same synth alternatively allowed for upright positioning of Megacity for desktop operation - while weighing in at only 2.2kg, exactly half that of Megacity. Make no mistake, though: the readily re-engineered AS500-SEQ is no half-pint offering.

As a standalone analogue sequencer, each of AS500-SEQ's 64 steps has its own CV level control, though these are not quantised as — unlike Megacity — AS500-SEQ is a purely analogue affair, meaning MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) connectivity is not present this time. There are also toggle switches for X, Y, and JUMP functionality per step, selecting whether a trigger will be sent to the GATE OUT X 3.5mm mini-jack sockets or GATE OUT Y 3.5mm mini-jack sockets, or whether the SEQUENCER order will 'jump' to the start of the next column to the right or,

alternatively, ‘jump’ to the first step of the first column (if pressing the RESET button at the same time).

Again, avoiding falling into the trap of many other step sequencers that can quickly start to sound somewhat repetitive and dull due to the same pattern usually looping endlessly, AS500-SEQ - like Megacity - allows its users to effectively split the SEQUENCER in half by switching out of SERIAL (FILL) mode, whereby the SEQUENCER runs as a single 64-step sequence, and into one of three SPLIT modes: 1:1 SPLIT - SEQUENCER runs as two 32-step sequences, the LEFT (1-32) and RIGHT (33-61) channels playing together in parallel at the same tempo; 1:2 SPLIT - SEQUENCER runs as two 32-step sequences, the LEFT (1-32) and RIGHT (33-61) channels playing together in parallel with the latter playing at half tempo; and 1:4 SPLIT - SEQUENCER runs as two 32-step sequences, the LEFT (1-32) and RIGHT (33-61) channels playing together in parallel with the latter playing at quarter tempo. AS500-SEQ also allows its users to split the SEQUENCER in half and use the RIGHT (33-61) channel as a fill-style pattern to add variation - much like vintage drum machines - by simply switching the SEQUENCER into SERIAL (FILL) mode and turning on FILL functionality with the associated ACTIVE switch. As a result, the SEQUENCER will loop the LEFT (1-32) channel sequence while the RIGHT (33-61) channel-played fill pattern/sequence is activated by pressing the FILL push button or sending a trigger pulse to the FILL IN (input) 3.5mm mini-jack socket. Saying that, the FILL pattern/ sequence can play for a specific number of times by repeatedly pressing that same button or sending multiple trigger pulses correspondingly, though the FILL pattern/sequence plays after the current LEFT (1-32) channel loop has finished playing a whole bar regardless. Whatever way anyone chooses to use them, the LEFT (1-32) and RIGHT (33-61) channel sequences each have their own GLIDE - adds portamento to the CV output - and RANGE - sets the range of the VOLTAGE OUTPUT - controls for further flexibility, with dedicated CV OUT 3.5mm mini-jack sockets for the LEFT (1-32) and RIGHT (33-61) channel sequences.

CV connectivity continues - ensuring Eurorack compatibility, while AS500-SEQ also lives together in perfect harmony with most CV/gate-equipped analogue synths, vintage or otherwise - courtesy of self-explanatory CLOCK IN (input) and OUT (output) 3.5mm mini-jack sockets and a CV input 3.5mm mini-jack socket for changing the clock SPEED (tempo), plus a RESET IN (input) 3.5mm mini-jack socket for resetting the SEQUENCER to the first step on the following clock signal. It is also possible to manually reset the SEQUENCER to the first step at any time by pressing the RESET push button, while pressing the STEP push button advances the SEQUENCER one step forward. Finally, SYNC selects from four available sync sources: 1: EXT - external clock from CLOCK IN (input); 2: STOP - the SEQUENCER will not run; 3: STOP - the SEQUENCER will not run; and 4. INT - internal clock.

Clearly, then, Tom Carpenter’s contemporary thinking behind Megacity also applies to its almost identical ‘reboot’ as AS500-SEQ: sequences and patterns that users might not have created otherwise will, without doubt, duly flow forth for anyone to hear. Anyone attending SynthFest 2024 - itself originally created to give companies

of all sizes an opportunity to showcase their synth products in front of the public - on October 5 at The Octagon Centre in Sheffield, UK can see and hear AS500-SEQ in action, where Tom Carpenter himself will be showcasing it as his namesake company’s latest creation alongside the recently released Maximus 4V, a four-voice (eight-VCO) version of Analogue Solutions’ spectacular eight-voice (16-VCO) Maximus AS300 semi- modular stereo polysynth that surely stole the show at SynthFest 2023 with a successful showcase soft-launch that opened eyes and ears to its maximal size and sound.

Limited quantities of AS500-SEQ are already available to purchase directly from Analogue Solutions via its dedicated webpage, while stock will soon be arriving at selected dealers.

www.analoguesolutions.com