



Analog Days: The Invention and Impact of the Moog Synthesizer

By Trevor Pinch, Frank Trocco

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Though ubiquitous today, available as a single microchip and found in any electronic device requiring sound, the synthesizer when it first appeared was truly revolutionary. Something radically new--an extraordinary rarity in musical culture--it was an instrument that used a genuinely new source of sound: electronics. How this came to be--how an engineering student at Cornell and an avant-garde musician working out of a storefront in California set this revolution in motion--is the story told for the first time in *Analog Days*, a book that explores the invention of the synthesizer and its impact on popular culture.

The authors take us back to the heady days of the 1960s and early 1970s, when the technology was analog, the synthesizer was an experimental instrument, and synthesizer concerts could and did turn into happenings. Interviews with the pioneers who determined what the synthesizer would be and how it would be used--from inventors Robert Moog and Don Buchla to musicians like Brian Eno, Pete Townshend, and Keith Emerson--recapture their visions of the future of electronic music and a new world of sound.

Tracing the development of the Moog synthesizer from its initial conception to its ascension to stardom in *Switched-On Bach*, from its contribution to the San Francisco psychedelic sound, to its wholesale adoption by the worlds of film and advertising, *Analog Days* conveys the excitement, uncertainties, and unexpected consequences of a new technology that would provide the soundtrack for a critical chapter of our cultural history.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

The sleek digital synthesizer of today is so easy to play and so ubiquitous in the world of popular music that its presence is often taken for granted. In this well-researched, entertaining, and immensely readable book, Pinch (science & technology, Cornell Univ.) and Trocco (Lesley Univ., U.K.) chronicle the analog synthesizer's early, heady years, from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s. The authors give preeminent pioneer Robert Moog due prominence, but they also chart the achievements of other luminaries from this era, such as rival inventors Donald Buchla and Alan Perlman, composers Wendy Carlos and Pauline Oliveras, and rock stars Keith Emerson and Mick Jagger. American readers will be interested to learn details of a lesser-known British entry in the analog synthesizer field—the VCS3—which became the preferred tool of many rock stars of the 1970s. The authors are especially effective in exploring the cultural, sociological, and economic sides to the synthesizer revolution. Throughout, their prose is engagingly anecdotal and accessible, and readers are never asked to wade through dense, technological jargon. Yet there are enough details to enlighten those trying to understand this multidisciplinary field of music, acoustics, physics, and electronics. Highly recommended.

Larry Lipkis, Moravian Coll., Bethlehem, PA

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Review

[An] unusually intelligent and straightforward cultural history. (Sir George Martin, C.B.E.)

The sleek digital synthesizer of today is so easy to play and so ubiquitous in the world of popular music that its presence is often taken for granted. In this well-researched, entertaining, and immensely readable book, Pinch...and Trocco...chronicle the analog synthesizer's early, heady years, from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s...Throughout their prose is engagingly anecdotal and accessible, and readers are never asked to wade through dense, technological jargon. Yet there are enough details to enlighten those trying to understand this multidisciplinary field of music, acoustics, physics, and electronics. Highly recommended.
(Larry Lipkis *Library Journal* 2002-11-15)

How many retrrowavey, electroclash hipsters really know the true roots of the sound they're preening and prancing to? We're not talking about '80s swill like Human League or Erasure--we're referring to Robert Moog, the inventor of the eponymous sound-generating device that, more than any other single contraption, made the whole electronic-music world possible. *Analog Days*, penned by Trevor Pinch and Frank Trocco, is a richly detailed look at the early days of synthesized sounds, and is quite fascinating. (*Time Out New York* 2002-11-14)

On the subject of discovery, *Analog Days* covers with polished authority the invention of the electronic music synthesizer by Robert Moog and its usage, between 1964 and the mid-'70s by such sonic explorers as Wendy Carlos, the Beatles and Emerson, Lake and Palmer, as well as the work done by electronic music pioneers Morton Subotnik, Don Buchla and Vladimir Ussachevsky, detailing the battle to use or not use the keyboard which so affected popular music. (Brad Schreiber *Entertainment Today* 2002-11-08)

Pinch and Trocco interview the engineers and musicians who fashioned the new devices, and build up a satisfying picture of the one technology that caught the imagination of the "counterculture" of the 1960s and 1970s...[The authors] have a fascinating story to tell. Today, it is hard to recall what music was like when

sounds were restricted to those made by blowing, plucking or hitting things. Music is ubiquitous as never before, and so are synthesized sounds: the two facts go together. So *Analog Days* is more than a chronicle of an encounter between old arts and new technology: it illuminates a defining technology of our culture. (Jon Turney *New Scientist* 2003-01-11)

Through a series of detailed interviews with people associated with the Moog's development, ranging from Bob Moog himself to assorted technicians, sound gurus, marketing people and musicians who had input into the Moog's development, they reconstruct, with the care of anthropologists studying the habits of some obscure tribe, how exactly it was that the Moog became a significant force in musical culture in the 1960s. (Marcus Boon *The Wire* 2003-02-01)

[Pinch and Trocco] have a fascinating story to tell. Today, it is hard to recall what music was like when sounds were restricted to those made by blowing, plucking or hitting things. Music is ubiquitous as never before, and so are synthesized sounds: the two facts go together. So *Analog Days* is more than a chronicle of an encounter between old arts and new technology: it illuminates a defining technology of our culture. (*New Scientist* 2003-01-13)

In *Analog Days*, Trevor Pinch and Frank Trocco tell the story of how the Moog synthesizer came about. They discuss how synthesizers reflected and reinforced cultural aspirations for transformation and transcendence, which were so prevalent in the 1960s. And they explore how this particular synthesizer--developed by Robert Moog and colleagues in a funky storefront in Trumansburg, New York...managed to beat out a host of competitors for commercial success and popular acceptance...Pinch and Trocco have crafted an informative and entertaining account of the complex process by which new instruments and inventions come about, and they analyze the relationship among inventor, user, and general public that leads to widespread acceptance of a new medium or tool...The book is crammed with wonderful stories and details about the many colorful scientists, musicians, salesmen, and cult figures...whose lives intersected through the lure of new musical possibilities...This is a story well worth telling, and Pinch and Trocco do it well. (Tod Machover *Science* 2003-02-21)

A compelling narrative presented in a thoroughly readable style and told with real affection for its subject matter, the book tells the reader pretty much everything they could want to know about the topic, and if it didn't make even the most unmusical reader desperate to get their hands on an analogue synth and a set of patch cords, I'd be very surprised. (Jeremy Gilbert *Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* 2004-01-01)

Review

[An] unusually intelligent and straightforward cultural history. (Sir George Martin, C.B.E.)

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