



Sequential Take 5 £1229

Sequential have taken the core ingredients of the Prophet-5 and repackaged them into a more compact and contemporary synth. But, **Andy Jones** asks, does it add anything new?

KEY FEATURES 5-voice analogue polysynth with digital control; 44-note semi-weighted Fatar keyboard with velocity and aftertouch; two VCOs and a sub osc per voice; Prophet-5-lineage 4-pole analogue filter; Vintage knob for increased instability; two LFOs (1 global, 1 per-voice); two ADSR+delay envelopes; extensive modulation; 64-step polyphonic sequencer; multimode arpeggiator; two effects generators (dedicated reverb + multi-effects); 128 factory programs, 128 user; **I/Os:** stereo out (2 x 1/4-inch jacks), headphone out, MIDI in/out/thru, USB, footswitch and pedal; **DIMENSIONS:** 635 x 324 x 112mm; **WEIGHT:** 7.71kg



THE PROS & CONS



Fantastic, compact design and build

In-depth modulation features, sequencer and arpeggiator give it a modern feel

Neat Low Split feature allows you to extend the keyboard range

Quality Prophet-5 ingredients allowed to blossom with newer features



Five voices will not be enough for some

Pre-release, the Take 5 was rumoured to be a cheap Prophet-5; then when the first models arrived, we heard that it was a Sequential in Novation clothing, the first product to arise from the purchase of Sequential by the Focusrite group, which also own Novation. The truth is, it's none, and all of the above...

Take 5 has analogue ingredients with digital controls and effects. With

its name, five notes of polyphony, two analogue VCOs and a Prophet-5 style filter, you can understand the comparisons with the latest Rev 4 of Sequential's classic Prophet-5 line. But Take 5 grabs that greatness and is unconstrained by any reputation, so it's doing what the heck it likes with it, creating a synth very much for the 2020s rather than emulating one from the late '70s. It really is its own synth, then, and for a very decent price all things considered.

I certainly wouldn't have had a problem if Take 5 indeed was a cheap

Sequential in a Novation case, but it actually feels very much like a four-figure synth – very solid and well made. There's a mix of incremental pots, easy to turn for distinct parameters like BPM, effect type, arpeggiator and octave, and continuous controllers for options like envelope and filter parameters. These are somewhat stiffer, but I'd expect them to loosen over time.

There's a fabulous large Filter Cutoff dial in the centre of the synth which demands, and will receive, full attention. Pressing down some of the

buttons – for preset selection, for example – does press the whole front panel down a little too much in my book, but otherwise this feels like a high class synth. Looks-wise it reminds me more of an Access Virus or, more obviously perhaps, a Novation Peak and I'd certainly put it up there with either in terms of attitude and feel.

Take 5 is definitely a modern synth albeit with classic ingredients. The 5-note polyphony will surely lead to a 10-note or expansion option. Then there are the two VCOs and a

THE ALTERNATIVES



Novation Peak

£1,350

Another synth that very much bridges both analogue and digital albeit with extra wavetables and three more notes of polyphony. Peak has as many varied and quality sounds but will cost you just that bit more.

novationmusic.com



Sequential Prophet-5

£2899

More classic sounds and architecture, an arguably bigger and brighter sound and most definitely a bigger footprint. And you'll pay a lot more for it.

sequential.com



Korg Prologue

£1,399

8-voice analogue synth with effects. Really easy to program and sounds great. Just one of many choice polys in this crowded sector of the synth market.

korg.com

sub per voice. Both VCOs feature a continuously variable waveshape going through sine, saw and pulse options and Osc 1 will sync to Osc 2. There's also a variable pink to white noise generator in the mixer section.

While the filter on Take 5 is the same as the 4-pole analogue, self oscillating resonant filter from the Prophet-5 Rev 4, and both synths feature a Vintage knob to introduce more unstable analogue elements to your sound, the similarities between the two synths start to dwindle from here on in as you discover Take 5's many other features.

In terms of additions, Take 5 has two LFOs (P5 has one), a feature-packed arpeggiator, 64-step polyphonic sequencer, two DADSR envelopes, an FM switch for classic bells and whistles, an extra Overdrive control and two effects generators, one a reverb, one a multi-effect with chorus, delay, ring mod and more.

While P5 has the quite glorious Poly Mod feature where you can

introduce simple but dramatic modulation in an instant – one of my favourite features of the synth – Take 5 has more modulation options that will cover that, albeit perhaps not so easily and quickly to implement. There's certainly more flexibility and depth available, which handily brings us to said sounds...

You can't avoid Take 5's roots as you go through its factory presets – it boots up with one called 80s Cal Dreamin, a big fat, clean lead straight from that decade – but the synth very much drags you forward beyond that. There are eight banks of 16 Factory sounds accessed with a dual-button

combination to access the bank and then each of the 16 sounds within it assigned to its own button.

Many presets are tied to the arpeggiator for obvious impact that will have you reaching for the Filter Cutoff dial to increase the drama. Others worth auditioning include AnalogFM (106), a sound that perhaps not surprisingly morphs between an analogue lead and electric FM piano – and is far better than how I've described it. FreewayDrivin (111) is perhaps Sequential's arpeggiated take on Autobahn (grab that Filter dial again); Gnarly Tenths (115) really

You can't avoid Take 5's roots but the synth drags you forward beyond that

COMPARING TAKE 5 WITH A PROPHET-5

OK, so Take 5 is a quite different proposition to a Prophet-5 in many ways, but it does share a similar core architecture and, of course, that filter, so we're almost duty bound to make comparisons. I don't think they are aimed at the same markets – just look at the price and feature differences – but you still can't deny that Sequential have launched Take 5, for better or for worse, with a kick up its backside from the P5.

Comparing raw tones, you can quite easily reset both synth presets back to a raw waveform ('Basic Preset' on the P5 and 'Basic Program' on the T5) and then tweak each to match parameter values. Honestly, I could tell little difference with the raw waveforms; both synths were swapping



around, sounding brighter or duller than one another on occasion, but broadly identical. It's pretty much what you'd expect given the similarities at the core level, with the P5 perhaps displaying slightly more grit and dynamic range but very marginally. Take 5 excels on sounds with more movement, built-in arpeggiations and modulation; sounds the P5 can do but does rather less of as it focusses on bigger, classic voices. Each has their own character, then, even if they share core values.

demonstrates extreme aftertouch, a clean lead that becomes filtered and filthy the harder you press.

Indeed it's these other-worldly sounds that make the odd real sound (Koto, 216, and UpFrontBrass, 302) initially sound out of place. JustAnother808 is huge, anything but 'just another' 808 kick, it displays the dynamic range of Take 5, and it's not entirely sure if it's a kick or a bass sound but is massive either way. Just as vast, Abyss (513) takes you on a cavernous film score journey – and it must be said that Take 5 is as such a composer's dream.

As with Prophet-5, there are plenty of big and deep electric piano sounds (515) made all the more characterful with the Overdrive knob which I found a little more dramatic than the Drive option in the filter section that is best used with the Resonance control to deliver more subtle bass oomph. There are basses and leads more suitable to bigger dance genres scattered throughout (particularly in bank 6 and do check out the likes of AnthemArp, 807) although perhaps not as many as you might like. That said, the hands-on controls – one action per knob – and the easy arpeggiator make it super simple to create your own to save in one of the 128 slots.

Dual effect options

I should also touch on the effects here which can really change a sound beyond recognition. I've mentioned the dedicated Overdrive control, but over on the right are two Effects blocks. The lower one is a dedicated reverb while the upper one allows you to step through delays, tape, chorus, flanger, distortion, speaker and phaser effects. Both have a few major parameter dials to tweak and neither effect is particularly subtle – big, filthy distortions and huge, messy reverbs are very easy to achieve – but you can have a lot of fun here. They are, like everything else on Take 5, direct, up there with my favourite features on the synth.

Overall there is a huge range of sounds: deep, rounded basses and gloriously big pads. There are less of the 'real' sounds but these often excel with FM richness and there are plenty of moving (literally and emotionally) sounds that make use of Take 5's extensive modulation features. And these are so very easy to explore: you assign sources (from 19) and



KEYBOARD: Low Split is a fantastic addition, allowing users to extend the keyboard range.

FILTER: The large, central cutoff knob demands hands-on tweaking – and many presets make the most of it.

BUILD: Take 5 is sturdy and modern looking, although perhaps not as portable as Sequential claim.

EFFECTS: Excellent effect processors can alter sounds beyond recognition, for some real sound design fun.

destinations (from 54) with the dedicated buttons and the Select dial, and you're away.

You get a lot of synth with Take 5. Big, ballsy analogue sounds, crunchy and lush digital effects, modulation options aplenty, arpeggiation and sequencing, the latter as easy as hitting Record and playing up to 64 notes. There's also a Chord Memory option where single notes can trigger chords using the Unison option to memorise notes. Better still is the genius Low Split keyboard switch that shifts the lower end of the keyboard down by up to two octaves for more extreme keyboard playing and recording. This affords Take 5 a smaller footprint, ideal for tight studio spaces, although I'm still not

convinced it's quite as portable as Sequential sell it to be.

The synth is also simple to use, and sounds more contemporary and certainly more soundtrack-friendly than the classic Prophet 5, yet still retains that characterful Sequential sound – lush, dreamy, and gritty when you want them to be.

And by now, you should perhaps have realised that we shouldn't really be comparing it too much with the P5 as Take 5 has come out of this review as being very much its own synth, launched under the ominous shadow of the Prophet but actually with none of that classic machine's constraints. Almost like Sequential said to its developers, 'take its core ingredients and make them fly'. And it really

does. It's taking those best bits and the Sequential message to a new audience, and in that respect it really does deserve to be listened to. **FM**

FM VERDICT

9.2

Take 5 is very much its own synth trying to make its own way in the world. And it'll do just that. A compact poly with fantastic sounds