

The Story About ODC 2800

Alan R. Pearlman's company, ARP Instruments, launched its first analog synthesizer, the ARP 2500, in 1970. They followed this with their second product, the ARP 2600, in 1971. However, the 2600 initially struggled to gain traction among musicians due to its complexity and reliance on patch cords. In response, ARP introduced the Model 2800, a simplified synthesizer known as the Odyssey, in 1972.

In comparison to the 2600, the Odyssey featured a white control panel, a 37-key keyboard, only two voltage-controlled oscillators (VCOs), and internal pre-patching. But it was celebrated for its immediacy and unique sound, largely due to its stable oscillators that delivered sawtooth, square wave, and pulse waveforms, as well as pulse width modulation. The Odyssey also offered features like oscillator sync and a ring modulator, which were not available in the Minimoog Model D at the time. Its design would have a significant impact on synthesizer design in the years that followed.

Moreover, the Odyssey included extensive sound-shaping capabilities, such as pitch modulation, sample-and-hold, and two filters. Its innovative keyboard-scanning system made it the world's first duophonic synthesizer, and it boasted a 2-pole (12 dB/octave) state-variable filter that further contributed to its sound and character.



In 1975, ARP released the updated Model 2810 Odyssey, or "Mk II," which featured a striking black and gold faceplate. These models initially used a 4-pole 24 dB/octave Moog-style ladder lowpass filter, but this was later replaced with a non-infringing filter of ARP's own design. In 1978, ARP launched the "Mk III,"

known as the 2820, distinguished by its black and orange color scheme. This model incorporated ARP's improved 4-pole 24 dB/octave filter and introduced proportional pitch control (PPC), using three pressure-sensitive buttons to control bend up, bend down, and vibrato. Sales of the Mk III continued until ARP Instruments declared bankruptcy in 1981.

The Odyssey remains one of the most impactful synthesizers in music history, making its mark from ABBA to Zawinul. Countless renowned artists have harnessed its power, including Herbie Hancock, George Duke, Chick Corea, Kraftwerk, Nine Inch Nails, Deep Purple, Billy Currie of Ultravox and Visage, Gary Numan, John Foxx, and Yellow Magic Orchestra. In 1980, Peter Howell of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop prominently showcased the Odyssey in the groundbreaking synthesized reimagining of the "Doctor Who" television series theme.