

## The Year Everything Changed

Released in 1983 as a more affordable alternative to the flagship eight-voice Jupiter-8, the six-voice Jupiter-6 nevertheless staked out an essential position in the history of analog polysynths. Though similar in appearance and feature set, the Jupiter-6 stood apart from the Jupiter-8 in its sound and capabilities. Unlike earlier Roland polysynths with lowpass filters plus a rudimentary non-resonant highpass filter, the Jupiter-6 featured a true multimode filter with 24 dB/oct lowpass, 24 dB/oct highpass, or 12 dB/oct bandpass modes. This versatile filter design lent a more aggressive sound than previous Jupiters, making the Jupiter-6 a natural for cutting-edge techno and electro styles.

Though something of a "hidden feature," the Jupiter-6 VCOs supported multiple simultaneous waveforms, and its two LFOs and oscillator cross mod capabilities provided extensive modulation possibilities. Its earthshaking solo and poly unison modes enabled massive lead and bass sounds, and it was notably one of the first synthesizers to include the then-new MIDI protocol.

Although often praised for its harmonic complexity and ability to cut through a mix, the cost-cutting in the Jupiter-6 design resulted in some disadvantages. Output was mono only and it was limited to six-voice polyphony. The Jupiter-6 had an impressive (for the time) split keyboard and patch preset storage functionality, but this six-voice maximum hampered its potential. And though it was considerably less expensive than the Jupiter-8, its timing was ill-fated when the digital revolution was ignited by the release of Yamaha's revolutionary DX-7 FM digital synth the same year.

Despite its noteworthy character, the Jupiter-6 is not one of those synths immediately identified with recognizable sounds from hit songs. Nevertheless, it was the Jupiter-6 behind the bass line of Ray Parker Jr.'s classic "Ghostbusters," and it found purchase in the work of Human League, Tangerine Dream, Thomas Dolby, Trans-X, Vangelis, and Devo. In a testament to its staying power over the decades, its popularity grew in genres such as big beat, house, and techno through The Chemical Brothers, Moby, and The Crystal Method. Electronic music duo Orbital has been a vocal proponent of the Jupiter-6 and, more recently, it has been a significant part of the sound of Daft Punk and Junkie XL.