# Nord Electro 5D 61-Key | £1,299



Electro 5 is the biggest upgrade to the Electro range since its launch. *Dan 'JD73' Goldman* investigates

#### INCLUDES AUDIO

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#### WHAT IS IT?

Fifth incarnation of the Nord Electro, featuring EPs, pianos, organs, samples, effects and some tasty new features

#### CONTACT

Who: Clavia/Nord Tel: 01462 480000 Web: www.nordkeyboards. com

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Splitting and layering at last, plus more general flexibility
- **2** New OLED screen and Setlist modes are a welcome addition
- **3** Extra memory allows a much bigger range of sounds onboard

ince its launch in 2001, the Electro series has established itself as a solid, dependable and authentic-sounding

electromechanical piano and organ emulator, with Clavia adding sample-loading ability for 2009's Electro 3. The Electro 5 series comes in three models: the 5HP – a 73-note weighted model with LED drawbars; the 5D73 – a 73-note waterfall-action model with physical drawbars; and the 5D61 – the most compact model with a 61-note waterfall-action keyboard and physical drawbars, and which I'm reviewing here.

This latest Electro is bright red and it looks very similar at first glance to the Electro 4D. As with all current Nords, you get a full metal chassis/case and wooden end cheeks, sturdy rubberised knobs and tough selector switches. These boards really are built to last – they're proper gigging workhorses you can rely on. The Electro 5D61 is very portable and for most situations the

61-note keybed will suffice, though you can grab the 73-note version or the weighted HP model if you require extra range for piano performances. The waterfall keyboard feels great for playing pianos and synth sounds and seems to feel less spongy, more positive and less heavily sprung than the waterfall

keyboard on my Stage 2 SW73, which is a welcome improvement too.

Performance control-wise you'll need to budget for a Stage 2(EX) if you want a pitchbend, modwheel and aftertouch but you can connect a foot control pedal for volume changes on both parts and to control Effects block 1. Did I say both parts? Yes I did! This is the biggest change for the Electro 5. You now have two parts available at once that can be split and layered and addressed from separate MIDI channels. For example, you can place an organ on the left, and a piano on the right, (or layer them) or piano on the left and sampled strings on the right (or layer them). The benefits of this are huge and make the E5 a much more self-contained machine than previous models. You can also have an organ on both parts and address the upper manual from an external controller. I also tried connecting my Moog Minitaur

### **Samples And Effects**

Along with increased piano memory, the E5 now has a dedicated Sample Synth section and more memory (256MB up from 68MB) for samples from the excellent Nord Sample Library. There's a great range of samples onboard, including Mellotrons, acoustic sounds and analogue

synths but, using the Nord sample editor, you can also drop in your own additional samples.

There's a very comprehensive effects section onboard. This includes a powerful EQ with sweepable mids and plenty of modulation effects including Phaser, Flanger, Chorus, a new Vibe effect, plus Deep

modulation. Then there's Tremolo, Pan, Wah and Ring Modulation, which can all be controlled via the control pedal. All the effects are now stereo and have a great vintage mojo/warmth about them (like the Stage 2) – they sound superb throughout, though only one effect is available per part.

mode for deeper





to the E5 and setting it to the lower half of the keyboard (split) and running a Rhodes sample on the right split and that worked great - simply turn the part mix dial fully right, which mutes the left half of the split, enabling you to hear just the sound of the external instrument. Alternatively, you can mix the lower/upper internal part with the external MIDI instrument's sound.

Other newness includes a big OLED screen which is a huge departure for Nord boards but, true to Nord's ethos, there's still no menu diving so the focus remains firmly on hands-on tweakability. This screen allows you to view/select

quickly using the value dial/shift button. It all works very intuitively and is a big/ natural improvement over the old Electros (and the Stage) and I hope it also features on the Stage 3. In addition, there's Live mode (like the Stage) that continuously stores front panel tweaks to three locations.

The piano memory has jumped from 180MB to 1GB which now means you can load much bigger piano samples, including the lovely new XL Silver Grand and my favourite, the XL Bright Grand. Like the E4, we still have the long release and string resonance features which add much to the authenticity,

Yamaha CP80, Wurlitzer EP200 and six Rhodes samples showcasing different models. These all sound excellent for comping or solo work, though I'd still like some new XL Rhodes samples with tighter damper response and a more punchy mid to high range for upfront soloing. The Clavinet samples are still some of the best for authenticity of tone, though a muted sample and key on/off noise are still absent. The piano samples' velocity response curves have recently been overhauled for all Nord piano samples and this has made a huge difference to the playability of the AP and EP samples, especially from the

waterfall keybeds.

The organ section (which is still one of the finest Tonewheel emulations around) now has the 122 rotary speaker emulation

from the flagship C2D organ and you can select close-miked or distancemiked versions, plus tweak horn balance, acceleration and more to taste. In addition there's now a great Principle Pipe Organ (also from the C2D) and a really useful B3+Bass model which allows you to use the pedal drawbars for deep, growling bass - this is a real bonus for organ trio players and LH bass players, plus you can add the B3 bass alongside the pianos and samples too.

Add in the great effects, EQ and amp emulations and, without doubt, this is the best sounding and most versatile Electro yet - at this price it's pretty much unbeatable! FM

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patches more easily, shows drawbar graphics and also works great with the new Setlist and List/Organize features. Setlist allows you to line up four patches on each of the ABCD preset buttons for specific songs, while the List/Organize feature allows you to scroll through/organise a list of patches

although there's no support for the Nord Triple Pedal and pedal noise (as on the Stage 2). Regardless, I still find that Nord's piano samples are my favourites for sheer playability and authenticity. The same downloadable/swappable selection of EPs is available that you'll find in the Stage 2 including a great

nord electro 5 D

## FutureMusic VERDICT BUILD VALUE EASE OF USE VFRSATII ITY The Electro feels like a much more

complete instrument and has been improved in all the right places.

Keyboard: 61 (C-C) velocity sensitive waterfall keybed, Splits/layers Piano: 1GB memory, String Resonance, Long Release Sample: 256MB memory, Attack and Decay/Release control, Filter/Velocity Organ: Adjustable percussion/key click, Vibrato/Chorus, 4 Tonewheel

Effects: 2 Effect blocks plus master reverb and

delay I/Os: L & R jack outs, Monitor input, Control pedal, Sustain pedal, Rotary speed pedal input, MIDI Ín/Out, ÚSB

**Dimensions** 900 x 296 x 97mm Weight 8.1kg

#### **ALTERNATIVES**



#### Roland V-Combo **VR-09**

#### £549

Very much Roland's answer to the Electro series, the VR-09 is considerably cheaper and offers up organ emulations, EPs. splits effects and a two-manual mode, and it's very portable too

#### www.roland.co.uk



#### Nord Stage 2 EX Compact ) £2,189

A big jump up in price but vou get more memory, a comprehensive synth section with mod wheel/ pitch bender, aftertouch and lots more splitting and layering functionality/ general flexibility.

#### www.nordkeyboards.com



#### Korg SV1-73

#### £1,019

Korg's own electromechanical emulator features some authentic EPs, Clavinets, acoustic pianos, synths/strings and organs alongside vintagestyle effects. It also has a real tube to add warmth/ vibe and a weighted hammer-action keyboard.

www.korg.com