TOOLS

How to use Splice's new Astra synthesizer

A long time in the making, Astra is a versatile software synth capable of achieving a wide range of unique tones.

When we set out to create this instrument back in 2018, we wanted to provide the widest possible range of functionality—pushing the technical envelope as far as we could go—without making it feel overwhelming or all-over-the-place. For me, the sweet spot with an instrument comes when the creative process is simplified, not overcomplicated with too many options or menus.

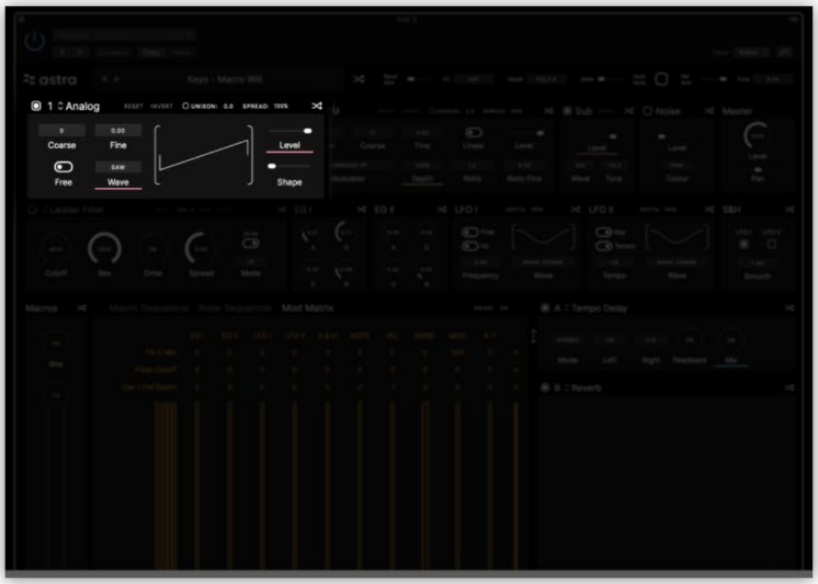
Ultimately, the speed at which the end user can come up with high-quality sounds is the single most important factor with Astra; cumbersome preset load times and slow interface graphics are nowhere to be found. Almost all of Astra's features can be viewed simultaneously in its open-ended interface, without the need to click into complex menus or multiple tabs. The interface can freely be resized by dragging the bottom right corner.

Astra has two main, identical oscillators. Each one is configurable to be used for virtual analog, FM, granular, sampler, or wavetable-based synthesis. There's also a sub oscillator, noise generator, multi-mode filter, two envelope generators, two LFOs, a sample & hold section, and a comprehensive effects engine. Below, let's dive into these features and more in a little more detail.

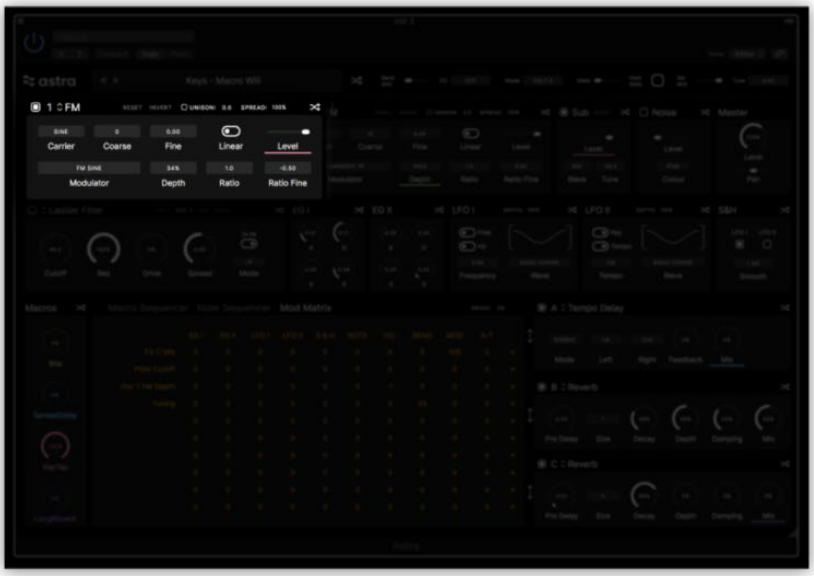
Explore Astra alongside a collection of other plugins and features via the Splice Creator plan.

The oscillators in Astra

Analog: The virtual analog oscillator has saw, square, triangle, and sine wave generators with level, shape, coarse, and fine tuning controls. This oscillator type can be synchronized with the sub oscillator to create old-school lead or bass sounds.

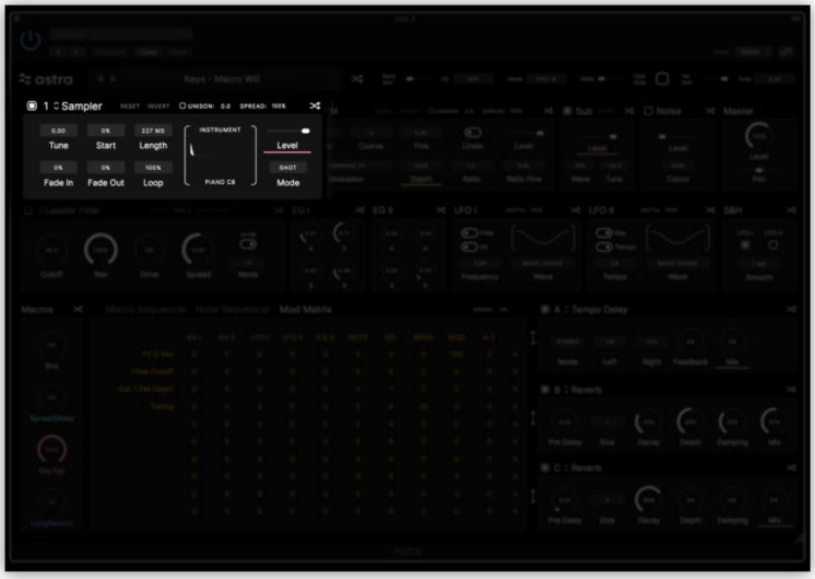


FM: The FM oscillator has four carrier waveforms, with a user-loadable main modulator waveform and switchable linear / exponential FM for a wide scope of sound design.



Granular: The granular oscillator allows small sections of an audio file to be looped to form their own unique oscillator. We offer a comprehensive selection of factory samples, as well as the ability for a user to add their own sounds.

Sampler: This oscillator features a basic sampler, which allows any sound up to 60 seconds in length to be mapped across the keys, looped, or reversed. The pitch can be fixed to its native note (which is useful when creating layered drum hits or beats) by using the RESET option.



Wavetable: The wavetable oscillator generates single-cycle waveshapes, either using our factory library (mostly sampled from my own hardware synths) or custom waveforms added by the user.