

nord®



The Hohner Pianet N



Background and history by **Barry Carson**

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The Hohner Pianet was one of the most popular electric pianos of the 1960's. From the instantly recognizable into to the Kingsmen's "Louie Louie" and the unforgettable solo in the Zombies' "She's Not There", to the opening of the Guess Who's "These Eyes" and its film role in the Beatles' Help, the first generation of the Hohner Pianet was ubiquitous in the '60's.

Developed by Ernst Zacharias, the inventor of a number of instruments including the famous Hohner Clavinet, the original Pianet used an ingenious system in which rough finished accordion reeds were plucked by adhesive pads made of leather and foam. The original Pianet came in a number of models. These samples are taken from probably the most famous, the Pianet N.



Vintage instruments are loved because of the imperfect and unpredictable nature of their sounds, and the Pianet certainly has its fair share of idiosyncrasies: each of the 61 reeds can have its own individual sound and decay time, and the reeds come in a number of different sizes, each size having its own timbre. On top of this,

the volume of each reed can be slightly different and the mechanical sounds of the instrument are picked up when certain keys are played. In order to preserve these characteristics, every note of this Pianet N was sampled for the duration of its envelope creating a very realistic playing experience. To add to the realism, some Pianets had a tremolo circuit, and use of this effect on the Nord instruments is completely authentic. The Pianet was also slightly velocity sensitive (as are these samples), and volume was often controlled by a volume pedal, just as can be done on your Nord keyboard.

Unfortunately, the original Pianet had a fatal flaw. The leather and foam adhesive pads that plucked the reeds had a finite life span, and by the '80's all had disintegrated and become useless, rendering thousands of these instruments unusable. Hohner had come out with a new model Pianet in the late '70's that replaced the foam and leather pads with rubber suction devices and the rough accordion reeds with smooth reeds. This new Pianet T had a very pleasing sound and would last forever, but the magic quality of those rough reeds and foam pads was gone. New pads have been manufactured for the original Pianets, but most players prefer the sound of the original pads to the harsh sound of these new pads.

At this point in history, the only way to get the true original Pianet sound is to handcraft authentic recreations of the foam and leather pads. Luckily for us this is exactly what David Robertson, Australian musician and instrument restoration expert has done. He has fully restored a vintage Pianet N that was built in Germany, sold in the United States, and finally found its way to Australia. Not only had he brought this instrument to its original playing condition, he graciously offered to share the sounds of this marvelous Pianet with me and I was able to create this set of samples for Nord users, most of whom otherwise would never have the opportunity to play and hear an original Hohner Pianet as it is meant to be heard.

So, load these samples into a nearby Nord instrument and have some fun! Now, what were the words to "Louie, Louie" again...

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