

Farfisa and Vox Library

Barry's Notes

VOX

The Vox Continental was certainly the most recognizable 1960's combo organ. Its unusual reverse colored keyboard, curving chrome stand, and striking orange and gray finish were seen on televisions everywhere and looked especially good on those new-fangled color ones. Its sounds poured out of juke boxes, hi-fi's, and transistor radios all over the world as it was the organ of choice for most studios and most of the bands making the big hits. There were two versions of the Vox, the original four octave Continental and the top of the line, two-manual Super Continental. Both of these can be played on the Nord Vox model, and this is important because most of the Vox Continental's 'greatest hits' were performed on the original single manual version. You can get these sounds because the Super Continental's lower manual actually has the drawbars and sound of the original single manual Continental (albeit shifted up one octave) while the upper manual has an extra drawbar and has a slightly different sound.

On the Nord Vox model, the 16', 8', 4', II, and III drawbars create the sounds of the upper manual of the Super Continental. The II stands for the two pitches this drawbar controls: 5 1/3' and 1 3/5'. The III drawbar controls the 2 2/3', 2', and 1' pitches. The 8', 4', 2', and IV drawbars create the sounds of the Super Continental's lower manual and, when shifted down an octave, the sound of the original Continental. On the original Continental the IV drawbar controls the 2 2/3', 2', 1 3/5' and 1' pitches. As you can see, there is no way the Super Continental's 5 drawbars can create the exact same sound as the Continental's 4 drawbars; that is why we use the Nord model's lower set of drawbars to create the sound of the original Continental. We just have to be sure to use the octave select control to shift it all down an octave to get it in the right place. The remaining two drawbars are the same on both Continentals: the ~ drawbar controls a flute like voice and the M drawbar controls a bright reed voice at the pitches indicated by the other drawbars. You can mix the ~ and M drawbars to get a wide range of sounds. An added bonus of the Super Continental was that the lowest octave of the lower manual could be switched to play a separate bass voice. This effect is duplicated on some the Vox organ patches. As you can see, since all the drawbars of both manuals are available at the same time in the Nord model, it is possible to create 'Vox organ sounds' that could never have been produced on any Vox organ before. A couple of these 'fantasy' programs are included.

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Farfisa

While the Farfisa Combo Compact certainly had some hit records, it seemed to be more the choice of garage bands and teen-aged combos with lots of attitude. It showed up most often in noisy bars, high school gyms, and smoky basement clubs. It had a more workmanlike look and its rough, gritty sound fitted nicely in those bands that used it. There were basically 4 models of the Farfisa Compact series: the 4 octave Mini Compact, the 5 octave Combo Compact (which was the original Farfisa organ), the Combo Compact Deluxe (with some extra features and voices), and the top of the line two manual Compact Duo. The Nord models the Compact Duo, but it can create the sounds of all four of these organs. These four types of Farfisa Compacts and the two types of Vox Continentals mean that using the Nord transistor organ models actually gives the player an arsenal of the sounds of 6 different combo organs to choose from.

The original Farfisa Combo Compact had an array of voice tabs at 16', 8', and 4' ranging from soft flute voices to bright string voices. The later Deluxe and Duo models also featured the 2 1/3' tab. All of these tabs are included in the Nord Farfisa mode, giving the player a wide range of tonal choices. Another feature of all the 5 octave Farfisa organs was a split keyboard with reversed colored bass octave on the bottom and an optional octave of bass foot pedals. The black bass octave always played an organ bass sound no matter what voice tabs were used on the rest of the keyboard. All the Electro 3 Farfisa patches are set up that way. It is important to note that several Farfisa models had an octave of gray keys immediately above the bass keys; these gray keys could be switched to play either the bass sound or treble sound. This effect of a two octave manual bass can be obtained on the Electro 3 by simply shifting the split point up an octave. By the way, for those who play a C1 or C2, the bass synth can be programmed to play an outstanding and powerful version of the Farfisa or Vox bass sound. A great advantage of the Nord Farfisa model is that the original Compact Duo's lower manual only had 3 voice tabs that were only minimally useful (two 8' and one 4'). The Nord model includes a lower manual with all the tabs of the upper manual for a lot more flexibility and tonal possibilities. Of course, if you want, you can use only 8' and 4' tabs to recreate the effect of the original. The Duo also had its own separate preamp with a spring reverb built in. This reverb could become pretty heavy, so if the mood hits you, don't be afraid to crank up the Nord's own reverb! The Nord's reverb is located before the Rotary, so it is easy to get the exact same effect as plugging the Duo into a Rotary speaker (as it often was) with the organ's reverb on (as it often was)!