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Mellotron

The Machine and the Musicians that Revolutionised Rock



A history of one of rock's mythical keyboards — by Nick Awde

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The Mellotron changed music forever when it appeared in the 60s. Long before the advent of synthesizers, this extraordinary keyboard revolutionised rock and pop music. For the first time, it brought a potentially unlimited range of sounds to a musician's fingertips. As the world's first sampler, its pre-recorded tapes included everything from a symphony orchestra and church choir to samba combo and rock'n'roll drum rhythms. The result is an insight into the social history of British pop and rock music—in particular progressive rock—and explains some of the reasons why British music came to rock the whole world.

Top musicians, songwriters and producers chart their careers with the Mellotron, the first sampler keyboard whose eccentric mechanism led to it being affectionately called "The Beast": **Tony Banks** (Genesis), **Mike Pinder** (Moody Blues), **Ian McDonald** (King Crimson, Foreigner), **Woolly Wolstenholme** (Barclay James Harvest), **Greg Lake** (King Crimson, Emerson Lake & Palmer), **John Wetton** (King Crimson, UK, Asia), **Nick Magnus** (Autumn, Steve Hackett Band), **Martin Orford** (IQ, Jadis), **Roine Stolt** (Flower Kings, Transatlantic, Tangent), **Jakko Jakszyk** (Level 42, 21st Century Schizoid Band, Tangent), **John Hawken** (Renaissance, Strawbs), **Doug Rayburn** (Pavlov's Dog), **Tony Clarke** (Moody Blues), **David Cross** (King Crimson), **Dave Cousins** (Strawbs), **Blue Weaver** (Strawbs, Bee Gees), **Robert Kirby** (Strawbs), **Robert Webb** (England), **Dave Gregory** (XTC), **Andy McCluskey** (Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark). **Bill Bruford** (Yes, King Crimson) provides a drummer's view of working with four classic Mellotron bands, and there are perspectives from **Geoff Unwin**, the first Mellotronics demonstrator, **John Bradley & Martin Smith** of Streetly Electronics, the original makers of the Mellotron, and Planet Mellotron's **Andy Thompson**.

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