

Stylophone

The **Stylophone** is a miniature analog stylus-operated keyboard. Invented in 1967 by Brian Jarvis,^[1] it entered production in 1968, manufactured by Dubreq.

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Mid-1970s Stylophone being played

Original model

It consists of a metal keyboard made of printed circuit board and played by touching it with a stylus—each note being connected to a voltage-controlled oscillator via a different-value resistor—thus closing a circuit. The only other controls were a power switch and a vibrato control on the front panel beside the keyboard, and a tuning potentiometer on the rear. Some three million Stylophones were sold, mostly as children's toys, but were occasionally used by professional musicians such as Rolf Harris and David Bowie.

The Stylophone was available in three variants: standard, bass, and treble, the standard one being by far the most common. There was also a larger version called the 350S with more notes on the keyboard, various voices, a novel 'wah-wah' effect that was controlled by moving one's hand over a photo-sensor, and two styluses.

In the mid-1970s a new model appeared which featured pseudo-wood on the speaker panel and a volume control. This was shortly before the Stylophone ceased production altogether in 1975.

The entertainer Rolf Harris appeared for several years as the Stylophone's advertising spokesman in the United Kingdom, and appeared on many "play-along" records sold by the manufacturer.^[2]

2007 revival

In October 2007, 28 years after the Stylophone went out of production, toy company Re:creation, in conjunction with Dubreq Ltd (re-formed in 2003 by Ben Jarvis, the son of the original inventor), re-launched the Stylophone, having it manufactured in China. The new model, officially called the S1, is a digital copy that closely resembles the 1960s original but has a volume control and features an audio throughput function, as well as sporting two new sounds.^[3]

Stylophone S2

In December 2012, Dubreq released the Series 2 Stylophone, a British-made, true analogue synthesizer.^[4]



2007 relaunch Stylophone from Re:creation

Stylophone Beat Box

This model strays from the normal box-shaped stylophone. It is a mainly round case that has a circular keypad containing 13 contact areas. It offers 3 different sound banks and a tempo control. It also features a basic record/loop function.

Stylophone Gen X-1

In January 2017, Dubreq released details of the Stylophone Gen X-1 portable analogue synthesizer.^[5] It was designed and manufactured by Dubreq^[6] and retails at £59.99 or €69.99.

Stylophone GEN R-8

In 2019 Dubreq announced the Gen R-8, a limited edition, full-analogue, metal-cased stylophone. This version has features seen on more expensive analogue synthesizers and is considerably larger than the standard model. An initial batch of 500 has been released.

In popular culture

- A Stylophone solo is present on "Donkey Rides, A Penny, A Glass", a song by the Small Faces which was released as the B-Side of their single "The Universal" in 1968.
- John Lennon played a Stylophone during a rehearsal of the George Harrison song "Old Brown Shoe" on 28 January 1969.
- David Bowie is credited with playing the Stylophone on his 1969 debut hit song "Space Oddity" and also for his 2002 album Heathen track titled "Slip Away,"^[7] as well as on the song "Heathen (The Rays)".
- Tony Visconti played Stylophone on the Sparks 1975 album Indiscreet, and on Richard Barone's 2010 album Glow.
- Kraftwerk's 1981 song "Pocket Calculator" uses the Stylophone. It is one of the main instruments on this track and a 'Stylophone solo' ends the song.
- The 1999 track "Style" (and its several other versions) by Orbital takes its name from Stylophone, which is used extensively on the track.^[8]
- American alternative rock group They Might Be Giants made use of the Stylophone on their 2007 album The Else.
- BBC film critic Mark Kermode played a Stylophone on the 8 January 2010 instalment of his and Simon Mayo's film review programme. Kermode described recently learning how to play the instrument.^[9]
- On the 5 March 2010 edition of his Kermode Uncut vodcast, Mark Kermode played a rendition of Richard Strauss' Sunrise on the Stylophone in homage to Duncan Jones' film Moon.^[10]
- Richard Barone uses the Stylophone on numerous recordings, including "Glow" and "'Girl'" on his 2010 album Glow. On the latter song it is played by his producer Tony Visconti.

- The Stylophone is used as a main instrument by Russian rock group Gromyka.^[11]
- British band Pulp use the Stylophone prominently in their song "Styloroc (Nites of Suburbia)", which appears on their 1992 Babies single and 1993 compilation album Intro – The Gift Recordings.^[12]
- British YouTuber and BBC radio presenter Daniel Howell is known for playing the Stylophone.
- British comedian Brett Domino is a well known user of the Stylophone, featuring it in many of his YouTube videos.
- Electronic musician Moiré features Stylophone in many of his tracks.^[13]
- The 2017 film Baby Driver features the Stylophone.^[14]
- British electropop artist Little Boots uses the Stylophone extensively.
- As part of the promotion of his album EUSA, french pianist and composer Yann Tiersen organized a contest to find the best and most interesting interpretations of tracks from the album. Mari Dangerfield's Stylophone cover of "Porz Goret" won the first prize in the non-piano category.
- Evangelist pastor and Universal World Church co-founder Velma Jagers played the Stylophone (referred to as a "hand organ") in the 1976 television special Ms. Velma's Most Incredibly Magnificent Christmas Week.
- Flaming Lips multi instrumentalist Steven Drozd used a stylophone on StevenSteven's 2017 album Foreverwhere.
- On **Infinity Train** Book 4, Min-Gi plays a stylophone while his friend Ryan plays guitar. Creator Owen Dennis also uses a Stylophone^[15] on a promo he uploaded to social media.

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