

A Framework for Intentional Synthesizer Evaluation

What sort of relationship do you have with each of your synths? Use this to help you understand.

Getting Started

Guiding Principle: The value of a synthesizer emerges from the relationship between the musician and the tool — not from consensus, cost, or category.

Usage: Consider the questions below when ruminating on synths you have or desire. Try to understand the value of the synth based on the relationship you estimate you will have, or have had with it. This page is a quick reference - for a detailed explanation of the concepts outlined here visit [the essay / video](#).

1. Musical Intent

- What do I want to explore musically right now?
- Sound design, performance, composition, experimentation?

2. Functional Profile

- **Inputs:** How do I interact with it?
- **Players:** Does it generate or transform ideas?
- **Wave Sources:** How much raw material is available?
- **Shapers:** How does it transform sound?
- **Modulators:** How alive can sounds become?
- **Outputs:** How does it integrate into my setup?

3. Engagement Profile

- Does this invite flow or friction?
- Is the cognitive load energizing or draining?
- Will novelty inspire me — or distract me?

4. Constraint Potential

- What constraints would I choose with this instrument?
- Does it reward focus or endless tweaking?

5. Bias & Responsibility Check

- Am I responding to hype, nostalgia, or status?
- Can I afford this comfortably?
- Will I actually engage with it?

This framework is available as a [PDF](#).

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