



# Kurzweil

## SP4-7

by Avi Hersch

I've been gigging with Kurzweil gear for years. I owned an original PC88, then an MX version, then a K2600, and my current rig relies heavily on a PC3X. So I already have expectations of what Kurzweil should provide in a stage piano, and was curious as to whether the new SP4-7 delivers the goods, given its budget price. I was excited to see how much Kurzweil packed into this 24-pound package, but was there enough PC3 in its blood to make it a contender? If something had enough of my PC3-quality sounds, and was less than half its weight, it could be a great solution for rehearsals and quickie gigs. The day the SP4-7 arrived, I threw it in a gig bag and headed for a rehearsal for a casual scheduled for the upcoming weekend.

### Layout

The simple layout provides direct access to all 128 factory sounds and 64 setups (factory layers and splits), as well as performance controls for each of the presets and setups. The factory sounds are nicely grouped by type, in two banks of eight groups (A through H), with eight presets per group. The same goes for the 64 setups, although only one setup bank is factory-stocked, leaving the others open for your own.

Especially convenient is the "Control" section: a single knob and function selector button towards the left of the panel. It gives quick access to five parameters: Timbre, Modulation, Envelope, Effect, and Reverb. These vary from sound to sound, and are factory set, not user-programmable, but Kurzweil made good decisions about what you'd most want to tweak while playing. In a way, having only one knob makes things easier than on the PC3, where you have to remember which parameter is set to which slider or press the "Info" soft button to get a reminder in the LCD.

### Sounds

To my ears, Kurzweil has always excelled at balancing realistic emulations with an uncanny ability to sit just right in a mix, and the SP4-7 is no different. Out of the box, there's just the right balance of instruments and categories. This is especially true for the piano, electric piano, and Clav sounds, not to mention a nice selection of orchestral sounds that have Kurzweil's typical detail and depth. You can also load some PC3 sounds, though the SP4 uses less beefy processors than the PC3, so there are limits as to which sounds it will support (no KB3 organ or cascade mode sounds, for example). Step through the factory sounds, and it's obvious they're designed and ordered to meet the needs of gigging musicians, not for showing off the keyboard on the showroom floor.

First off, the pianos are terrific. They have lots of detail, but also that punch that works so well in rock and cover bands. The strings are as lush and realistic as I've come to expect from Kurzweil. The electric pianos and Clavs are quite good—I love the electric grands and Dyno Rhodes in particular. Also noteworthy are the great Mellotron sounds. The Wurlies and Clavs deliver authentic vintage spunk and bark.

The organs, however, could use some variety. While a number of big, full organ sounds are on hand, and have adjustable overdrive and rotary speed control, subtler drawbar settings (such as just the 16' and 1' or just the 8' and 4' drawbars) aren't really represented. A nice touch is that the Timbre parameter in the Control section lets you "pull" or "push" a factory choice of two or three grouped drawbars at once for realistic harmonic changes while playing.

Quite a few analog-style leads and comps add to the SP4-7's gig flexibility. The variety doesn't touch the PC3 or PC3LE series, but you get a very serviceable "greatest hits of analog synths."

## Specifications



Delivers the sought-after Kurzweil piano sound in the lightest and most affordable package yet. Great vintage keys, synth, and orchestral sounds as well.



Keyboard doesn't sense aftertouch.



**CONCEPT** 76-key semi-weighted stage piano/general-purpose gig keyboard.  
**PEDAL INPUTS** 2: sustain and continuous/sweep.  
**W x D x H** 43.6" x 11.4" x 3.4".  
**WEIGHT** 24 lbs.

**PRICE** List: \$1,349  
 Approx. street: \$1,100

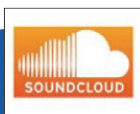
[kurzweil.com](http://kurzweil.com)

## Keyboard Feel

The SP4-7 is the first semi-weighted 'board with which I've spent serious evaluation time—I'm used to weighted keys for piano and unweighted for synth and organ, so I approach semi-weighting with some skepticism. I was surprised at how much I liked the compromise the SP4-7 makes. If I had to move to a single-keyboard rig, the SP4-7 splits the difference: I can lay into the piano and feel decent resistance, but also play organ smears and Jan Hammer-like synth solos without fatigue. Layers and splits are easy to create, and you can set up to four internal or external MIDI control zones with fully adjustable key ranges.

## Conclusions

Between the sonic variety and the middle-ground action, the SP4-7 comes off more like a keyboard Swiss Army knife than a straight stage piano, and that's its most endearing quality. The variety of presets should give you anything you need to cover any old-school or new-school style. Of course, the 24-pound weight wins points as well. Kurzweil enters into a new, lower-priced category with the SP4-7, and they've packed a whole lot of keyboard into this thing for not a lot of money or weight. **K**



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