ELEX K2

(Hohner Stringvox)



(revision 3)

Drawings, Schematics, & Notes

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The **K2** is an electronic piano & strings keyboard produced in different versions between 1975 and about 1980. It was designed and manufactured by *ELEX S.p.A.*, a company owned by *Excelsior*, a musical instruments manufacturer based in Castelfidardo, Ancona, Italy.

Excelsior, who had mostly produced acoustic and electromechanical instruments, appear to have set up ELEX (*Elettronica Excelsior*) as an electronics division some time prior to 1975. Products included electronic pianos and organs as well as string machines. It was closed down as a separate entity around 1980 or shortly thereafter, and their last K2s were sold under the Excelsior brand. Excelsior did continue to produce some electronic instruments, and the K2 was replaced with the EK2 before they exited the market along with most other European manufacturers during the mid-1980s.

Throughout its production the K2 was also sold in many other countries by Hohner, under their *Hohner International* brand, using the model name *Stringvox*. The majority of surviving K2s appear to be Hohner-branded. Some were also produced with the badge *String Orchestra;* available information about who sold these, when, or where, is uncertain. (It has been suggested by multiple sources that they were sold by Farfisa, but no documentary evidence has been cited.)

The K2 followed the earlier ELEX K1 electronic piano, and incorporates parts of its circuit design. It was followed in the series by the K3 piano/organ and the K4 string machine. (The K4 is basically a smaller and simpler version of the K2 strings section.) The K1, K2, and K4 were rereleased with significant design updates in 1979. [1]



'Silvertop String Orchestra'

The K2 has at least three distinct versions (based on circuitry and/or structural but not cosmetic changes). The original and the rev.2 were sold as 'String Orchestra', some of which were clad in wood rather than tolex. Rev.2 moved the pedalboard connector and trimmer from the underside to the rear panel and introduced a mains power socket. Rev.3 is the 1979 model, and incorporates significant case and circuit changes to earlier versions.

(*n.b.* if new information comes to light about the history of the K2, further revisions may need to be added; rev.3 may become a rev.4, for example.)

As original schematics for the K2 seem rare to the point of unavailability, and may not entirely cover rev.3, these **drawings** and **schematics** have been compiled as part of a repair undertaken by the drafter. [2] They are made available to anyone who's interested, under the <u>Creative</u> <u>Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0 licence</u>. [3]

The drawings are compiled as a multilayer PDF. That is, most PDF-reading software will show all layers, but software with layer display (e.g. Adobe Reader, but perhaps not the mobile version) allows individual layers to be switched off. For example, components or text can be hidden in some drawings, and some schematics have colour highlight layers for incoming power and ground. The **terminology** used in these drawings may be a little confusing. The main points to watch for are:

- There are two *strings* voices (in lower case), and one of them is called *Strings* (capitalised). The other is *Cello*.
- The keyboard is split between bass (in lower case) and treble sections. There is also a Bass voice (capitalised). And there is a Bass Mode in which the Bass voice can be used, and a Bass output socket. There is also a Full Keyboard Mode in which the bass signals are unified with the treble signals and operated by the treble controls.
- There is an *Ensemble Mode*. Strings keyboards are often called *String Ensembles*, and the chorus effects which largely distinguish them from other instruments may be called *ensemble effects*. But in the K2 (and K4), ELEX used *Ensemble* as the name of a mode which combines multiple octaves of the strings voices. So in these drawings the effect is called *chorus*.

The **drawings** are based on the revision 3 Stringvox. Components found here may not all be original, and the originals may have been what was available, rather than those specified in the original schematics. Or they may have been uprated in later revisions. Different K2s had different power ratings on their labels, but it is not currently clear how this relates to circuitry or power supply design.

The more visual drawings are fairly rough tracings from photographs, and prioritise clarity over precision. Proportionally, they are not precisely to scale. Different versions of original circuit boards may have visibly different components, especially capacitors.

Some information here has been taken from a set of ELEX K4 schematics, where it seems to be relevant. In particular, ELEX appear to have used the term 'Matrix' for different boards which might be called a backpane or motherboard by other manufacturers. But most board titles and many terminal descriptions are the drafter's interpretation.

Where information is available regarding differences from earlier designs, notes have been added. (Further information is welcome.) Nevertheless, the drawings here are only a general guide, and no warranty can be given regarding their accuracy or applicability to a particular repair task.

That said, while the K2 is not the best designed keyboard from the late 1970s, and while care must be taken in handling its unusual weight, it is an interesting and occasionally very musical instrument. Enjoy!

> electropict <u>zasm.earth</u>

- [1] For more information about the K1–K4 series see: zasm.earth/hipstrs
- [2] Articles describing the repair start at: zasm.earth/hohner-stringvox-repair-notes-1
- [3] Note however that ELEX and Excelsior are believed to be trademarks of Excelsior and Pigini srl, and Hohner remains a trademark of Hohner Musikinstrumente GmbH & Co. KG.

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ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3): Wiring Diagram



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ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3): Tone Signal Route





On K2-2, the oscillator on the OS-5 board produces the fundamental tone (c.667,040H2) which is divided by the TOG chip to produce the top octave of notes. These are passed directly to some K2-1 boards but are also passed through the divider chain to produce successively lower octaves.

K2-2

OS-5

(oscillator

& TOG)

In each K2-1, when a note is triggered by a keypress, a tone and its one-half division are passed on separately as Strings and Cello tones, and the two are combined to produce the basic Piano/Harpsichord/Bass tone (PHB). The tones have their amplitude varied by internal amplifiers controlled by the velocity circuits and sustain pedal (pianos), and decay controls (strings). Each set of tones is routed separately for the bass (F1-F3) and treble (F#3-F6) key groups. A single tone signal for C#-C is also sent through the pedal board if used.*

The strings tones and PHB bass are sent to the K2-110 board, where, according to switch selection:

 The Cello and Strings tones are grounded or passed to the K2-13 board, where they are mixed, then sent to the M175 assembly. In Full Keyboard mode, the Cello and Strings bass tones are combined with the treble tones in the K2-110.

 Normally the PHB bass signal is grounded or passed to the K2-9 board. In Bass mode it is diverted to the K2-10 board, and the Bass voice replaces both pianos and strings voices in the bass range.

The PHB treble signal is sent direct from the K2-1s to the K2-9. In Full Keyboard mode PHB bass is combined with it at the K2-2 output.

In the K2-9 board the signals are filtered producing the Piano and Harpsichord voices, then sent through the bass and treble Piano and Harpsichord attenuators on the K2-13 board, and back to the K2-110 board for final amplification, then to the Piano/Harp output.

In the K2-10 board the signal is filtered (together with any signal from the bass pedals) producing the Bass voice. It is then sent through its own attenuator on K2-13, returned to K2-10 for final amplification, then to the Bass output.

With no plug in the Bass socket, the signal is returned to the K2-110 and combined with the other pianos voices. With no plug in the Piano/Harp socket,

the pianos signal is combined with the strings voices at the General output.

Piano/Harp General

outputs

Bass

On the M175, the combined strings signal is amplified in the K2-6 and duplicated through the three K2-20-2 boards which each delay the signal by varying amounts. Their combined outputs are attenuated by the volume pedal if used, and the final signal is amplified in the K2-7 board and passed to the General output.

(Earlier revisions used different boards in place of the K2-110, M175, and K2-20-2 but with the same general routing.)

^{*} Only twelve pitches are taken from the K2-2 board and they are a single waveform, IPN C#2–C3. I do not yet know how this is turned into the pedals' thirteen notes; does this pedal board have its own divider circuit?

ELEX K2-0 Power Regulator Board: Drawing

components side, shown transparent to circuit side

designed ELEX S.p.A. (Excelsior) c.1975–79 | drawn 2024 Electropict



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Component numbers are assigned arbitrarily in the absence of original schematics, except K2-0 terminal numbers which are as on the board, and the Zener diodes where codes have been copied from the K4 schematic. (Most components on that schematic are not individually numbered.) Wiring sheath colours are shown as found. (Earlier revisions used different colours.)

It is not certain what the original specification for capacitors was. The installed components vary. Rev.2 information received gives C1 as 35V, C3 as 50V, C6 & 7 as 16V and C8 as 2mF. [1] The + and – bridge outputs should be proportionately lower with 220V AC in; some K2s were built for 117V and had different transformer connections; the outputs would also be different there.

- [2] Earlier revisions had fuses on the K2-0 board after the bridges and did not have the M282 board, but in r3 the fuses have been moved to the outside of the enclosure.
- [3] The DZ2 Zener voltage seems to be 15.4, which should make it a BZX 85C15, but the end of the code is not quite legible.

[4] Q4 seems to have been replaced and may not be the original specified part. (The K4 schematic had another BC286, which seems to have been used in a K2r1; it also had BC160b for Q1.)

[5] Earlier revisions had no R12.

[6] Earlier versions had different power connectors with a different arrangement of terminals.

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The board is drawn from components side, semi-transparent to show the circuit side.

Component codes given here are assigned arbitrarily in the absence of original documents.

There are twenty versions of the board each with varying resistor and capacitor values. The shape and size of the varying capacitors (C3, C4, C5, C6, C9) is also highly variable.

* C4, C5, or C6 are not always present.

ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-1 Voicing Board: Schematic



Component codes given here are assigned arbitrarily in the absence of original documents.

Transistors are FBC 237B. Diodes are BA130. Resistors are ±5%. All nonpolarised capacitors are rated 50V or above.

PHB: Piano Harpsichord Bass

† Pin 3 function is uncertain; it is connected to ground through a power resistor. Speculatively, it may limit negative voltage from the contacts and voltage spikes resulting from their movements?

Positive and negative voltage inputs here are as measured.

There are twenty versions of the board each with varying resistor (R12, R18) and capacitor (C3, C4, C5, C6, C9) values. The consistent values are given on the diagram.

* Different versions use either C6, C4 & C5, or C5 & C6, but not all three.

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TONE 1 and 2 are the lower and upper octave divider outputs for each note.

ELEX K2 (r3) K2-1 Voicing Board: Component Variations

The 61 boards are divided into 20 groups. Those components which vary between the different groups are as follows.

Non-varying components are not listed. Capacitors C4, C5, and C6 are not always present.

| Group | Keys | Capacito | ors | Resistors | | | | |
|-------|-------|----------|-----|-----------|------|-----|------|------|
| | | C3 | C4 | C5 | C6 | C9 | R12 | R18 |
| A | 1–4 | 4n7 | _ | _ | 8n2 | 56n | 560K | 560K |
| В | 5–7 | 4n7 | - | - | 6n8 | 47n | 560K | 560K |
| С | 8–10 | 4n7 | _ | - | 5n2 | 39n | 560K | 560K |
| D | 11–13 | 4n7 | _ | _ | 4n7 | 33n | 560K | 560K |
| E | 14–16 | 4n7 | _ | _ | 3n9 | 27n | 560K | 560K |
| F | 17–19 | 4n7 | _ | _ | 3n3 | 22n | 560K | 560K |
| G | 20-22 | 4n7 | - | - | 2n7 | 18n | 560K | 560K |
| Н | 23–25 | 4n7 | _ | - | 2n2 | 15n | 560K | 560K |
| I | 26-28 | 4n7 | - | - | 1n8 | 12n | 560K | 560K |
| L | 29-31 | 4n7 | - | - | 1n2 | 10n | 560K | 560K |
| М | 32–34 | 4n7 | _ | _ | 820p | 8n2 | 470K | 470K |
| N | 35–37 | 4n7 | _ | - | 470p | 6n8 | 470K | 470K |
| 0 | 38-40 | 6n8 | _ | _ | 220p | 5n6 | 330K | 390K |
| Р | 41-43 | 6n8 | _ | _ | 100p | 4n7 | 270K | 390K |
| R | 44-46 | 8n2 | 6n8 | 8n2 | _ | 4n7 | 390K | 330K |
| S | 47-49 | 6n8 | 6n8 | 6n8 | _ | 3n3 | 330K | 330K |
| Т | 50-52 | 1n0 | _ | 4n7 | 1n0 | 2n2 | 330K | 270K |
| U | 53-55 | 1n0 | _ | 2n2 | 1n0 | 2n2 | 330K | 270K |
| W | 56-58 | 1n0 | _ | 2n2 | 1n0 | 1n8 | 390K | 220K |
| Z | 59-61 | 1n0 | _ | 22n | 1n0 | 1n5 | 270K | 220K |

ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-2 'Matrix' Board: Schematic



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K2 Divider Pitch Outputs

| | | Dividers | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|-------------|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Pins | 3 | Bb2 | Eþ3 | G3 | C4 | E4 | Aþ5 | B5 | D6 | F6 |
| | 4 | Bb1 | Eþ2 | G2 | C3 | E3 | Aþ4 | B4 | D5 | F5 |
| | 5 | <i>B</i> þ0 | <i>Eb</i> 1 | G1 | C2 | E2 | Aþ3 | B3 | D4 | F4 |
| | 7 | A2 | D2 | F#3 | Bþ3 | Eþ4 | G4 | Bb4 | C#5 | E5 |
| | 9 | A1 | C#2 | F1 | A3 | D3 | G5 | Bþ5 | C#6 | E6 |
| | 11 | F♯1 | B1 | F2 | Aþ1 | C#3 | F♯4 | A4 | C5 | Eþ5 |
| | 12 | F#2 | B2 | F3 | Aþ2 | C‡4 | F♯5 | A5 | C6 | Eþ6 |

Dividers are numbered left to right. Only output pins are shown.

Outputs are shown as IPN pitches.

Bb0 and Eb1 are not used.

This table does not include the top octave F#6–F7 which is produced by the TOG chip on OS-5.

Each K2-1 voicing card uses two pitches an octave apart.



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ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-6 & K2-7 Preamp Boards: Schematics

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Pin numbers for the K2-6 are approximately based on the K4 schematic but it's too faint to read all of them; those for the K2-7 are as on the schematic.

In the K4 schematics, K2-6 is also called P.A.I and K2-7 is P.A.II. (Preamp?) Other than that the images I've seen are too faint to make much out.

ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-10 Piano & K2-9 Bass Boards: Drawings

Shown from components side transparent to solder side.

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Component numbers are assigned arbitrarily in the absence of orignal documentation.

Non-polarised capacitors' type and shape varied between revisions.





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ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-110 & K2-12 Switching Board: Drawing

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Drawn from B (components) side, transparent to show both sides' traces.



The K2-12 is permanently mounted above switches S9–S11. Its traces are shown separately.

Component codes are assigned arbitrarily in the absence of documentation, except contact pins which are numbered as on the board.



ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-110 & K2-12 Switching Board: Schematic



Component codes are assigned arbitrarily in the absence of documentation, except terminal pins which are numbered as on the board.

There are two separate ground connections here, connected from the K2-14 left and right end connectors. They are joined (in r3) in the M175 board, but also through the ground trace on K2-12 when either the Full Keyboard switch is on or the Bass switch is off.

Resistors are $\pm 5\%$, and $\frac{1}{4}W$ except where stated.

PH – Piano Harpsichord, PHB – Piano Harpsichord Bass

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ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-13 Controls Board: Schematic

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(Treble volumes apply to all keys in 'Full' mode.)

ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-13 Controls Board: Drawing

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Shown from components side transparent to solder side.

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Component codes are assigned arbitrarily in the absence of original documentation. Pin codes are as on the K2-14 board.

ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-14 Controls 'Matrix' Board: Schematic



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ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) K2-20-2 Modulation Board: Drawing

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Shown from components side transparent to solder side.

The K2-20-2 takes an input audio signal and delays it using the TCA350Z BBD chip, by amounts controlled by the incoming modulation signal from the M174 Oscillator board. It replaced an earlier K2-4 modulation board.

design c.1975–79 ELEX S.p.A. (Excelsior) | drawn 2024 electropict



Component codes are added arbitrarily in the absence of original documentation. Resistors are ±5% and ¹/4W except where stated. All diodes are BA130. All Transistors are BC558A.

ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) M174 Modulation Oscillator Board: Drawing

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Components (B) side with traces, shown transparent to A side traces. Component numbering is added arbitrarily in the absence of original documentation, except ICs which are as on the board.

designed c.1979 ELEX S.p.A. (Excelsior) | drawing 2024 electropict



Component numbering is added arbitrarily in the absence of original documentation, except ICs which are as on the board. All ICs are UA4558TC. All diodes are BZX85C5. All resistors are $\pm 5\%$, and $\frac{1}{4}W$ except where stated.

ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) M175 Chorus 'Matrix' Board: Schematic



This board serves as a backpane routing power and signals to & from its daughterboards. Terminal numbers and descriptions are added in the absence of original documentation.

The board may be a redesign of an older board used in earlier K2 revisions, and perhaps in K4s. The new daughterboards are the K2-20-2s and M174.

n.b. while the 'strings' effect is usually described as an ensemble effect, in the K2 ELEX chose to use 'Ensemble' for what might normally be called Unison mode, so 'Chorus' is used here.

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ELEX K2 (Hohner Stringvox) (r3) OS-5 Oscillator & TOG Board: Schematic

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Terminal descriptions are as on the K2-2 board. Notes are specific to the OS-5 as used on the K2's F—F keyboard. On some other ELEX instruments the oscillator is tuned for C–C. Component values may vary to allow this.

On the K2, the first terminal is not connected as there is no vibrato function, and the eighteenth is not connected as the K2 performs all F divisions on the K2-2 board. The connector on the K2-2 board does supply negative power at the fifth position, and is marked for it, but the OS-5 does not use it.