

TUTORIALS FOR LOGIC, REASON, LIVE & CUBASE | PACKED DVD | BECK'S ODELAY



www.musictech.net

MusicTech

Issue 132
March 2014

The magazine for producers, engineers and recording musicians

AIRA: THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW

WORLD EXCLUSIVE The return of the TB-303 and TR-808/909!
Biggest reviews and hands-on guides

Pro Mastering
THE INSIDE KNOWLEDGE
Techno Guide
GOING DARKSIDE



GET PERFECT BEATS PT 2

Ultimate tips for recording drums

More reviews than ever!

ZERO-G EPICA

Stormdrum 3, UA Fairchild, Roland FA-06 + many more

The MT interview

Lorde's player

Backing the biggest

2.7GB of video
448 samples





EASTWEST/QUANTUM LEAP

Stormdrum 3

For PC
& Mac

Stormdrum enters its third generation, boasting a host of new instrument samples and significantly revised playback engine. **Mark Cousins** takes a closer look.

Details

Price €351
Contact via website
Web www.soundsonline-europe.com
Minimum system requirements
PC Windows 7, iLok2
Mac OSX 10.5, iLok2

The Stormdrum series has been a cornerstone of EastWest/Quantum Leap's product range for almost ten years now, establishing what many people feel is the 'gold standard' for cinematic percussion sounds. The release of Stormdrum 3, therefore, is a significant milestone, ushering in the next generation of Stormdrum samples and introducing PLAY 4, the latest version of EastWest's sample-playback engine. At over 80GB, Stormdrum 3 is certainly the largest version to date, but what does this latest iteration offer over the existing libraries?

Stormy weather

One key quality that defines SD3 is the distinct focus on ethnic sounds – including taikos, tablas and waterphones – rather than traditional cinematic percussion sounds such as timpani, grand casa and snare drum. With orchestral percussion already covered in other libraries, it makes sense that SD3 marks out its own territory, arguably seeking to be an almost encyclopaedic source of ethnic percussion sounds. To this end, the fact that the Grateful Dead's Mickey Hart and Remo Belli, founder of the Remo drum company, are both onboard suggests an intent to deliver something rather special.

Once you've installed the library, one immediate difference is the changes offered with the introduction of PLAY 4. With so many other sample developers using the Kontakt Player route, it's

important that the PLAY system continues to evolve and develop, and this latest version demonstrates some important changes.

The first notable improvement is in the introduction of a dedicated Mixer page, which as well as for balancing on multi-timbral patches can also be used to control the five microphone positions that SD3 is supplied with. Even more significantly, the introduction of signal processing licensed from SSL as well as an improved reverb based on EastWest's Spaces, means you get a wealth of mixing potential all directly from PLAY.

Fire breather

Given the wealth of what's included in SD3, it's hard to pick favourites, although we did find ourselves drawn to the gargantuan impact of the Dragon Ensemble Hits as well as the breadth of instruments included in the Taiko folder. As with previous version of Stormdrum, the quality of the recordings is consistently high, with plenty of transient detail and just enough room ambience (which, of course, can be fully controlled via the mixer) to give the instruments space to breathe. While other libraries favour an almost concert hall-like acoustic, SD3's tight sound makes it both a rhythmically precise and sonically flexible audio tool. Of course, you can always raise the level of the room mics or add some additional convolution reverb if you're really looking for that 'back of the concert hall' sound.

Alternatives

Spitfire Audio's Hans Zimmer Percussion (£399) provides some strong competition to SD3. The Kontakt-based library covers a range of ethnic and orchestral percussion sources. As the library was recorded in Air Lyndhurst Hall, it has a wide cinematic sound, but it's instrument list isn't as exhaustive as SD3's.

As you'd expect from EastWest/Quantum Leap, each instrument is sampled with a wealth of round-robins, velocity levels and different articulations, which alongside the five different mic positions explains how the library adds up to 86GB. The memory footprint of each instrument isn't too vast, though, assuming you're not too greedy with the number of mic positions! Interestingly, SD3 doesn't include the 'sound-design' patches as found in SD2, instead preferring to concentrate on a more acoustic sound. It does, however, include a plentiful collection of tempo-sync'd live loops, all performed by Mickey Hart and which really add a nice performance edge to the output you can achieve with SD3.

Drum magic

If you're a fan of the previous editions of Stormdrum you'll undoubtedly be won over by the detail and breadth of sounds offered in SD3. Despite some strong competition from recent Kontakt-based libraries, SD3 still marks itself out as one of the finest cinematic/ethnic percussion libraries money can buy. While it might not be a huge departure from the sound and feel of Stormdrum 2, there's little doubt that SD3 is a real labour of love and a demonstration of what current technology can deliver, especially with respect to the new signal processing features of PLAY 4.

All things considered, SD3 is an impressive package, and a music tool that will grace many Hollywood soundtracks for years to come. **MT**

MT Verdict

- + Encyclopaedic collection of ethnic percussion
- + Detailed, transient-rich sound
- + Full battery of taiko drums
- + Significantly improved 64-/32-bit PLAY engine

- No sound-design elements
- No orchestral percussion

Stormdrum 3 offers a vast collection of ethnic-flavoured cinematic drum sounds, all expertly recorded and with a real focus on transient detail and flexibility.

9/10

Key Features

- Instruments from the private collection of Mickey Hart
- Played by master percussionists Mickey Hart, Greg Ellis and Chalo Eduardo
- 5 user-controllable mic positions for each instrument
- Includes new PLAY 4 64-/32-bit software