



Toontrack Music EZ DRUMMER

FOR PC
& MAC

MusicTech
RECOMMENDED
★★★★★★★★★

With a deceptively simple interface and superb sounds, is EZ Drummer the ultimate beat-maker? Mike Hillier takes it easy...

KEY FEATURES

- 7,000 drum samples
- Over 8,000 MIDI patterns
- Multiple microphone control
- TPC II file compression minimises system requirements
- Humanisation control prevents machine-gunning

MEASURING UP

EZ Drummer goes a long way towards competing with the twin giants of Toontrack's own dff Superior drum kit (£166) and FXpansion's formidable BFD (£180). Like BFD, EZ Drummer can be expanded with additional kits and MIDI loops. Check out the EZ Drumkit From Hell (£49), Latin Percussion (£49) and Vintage Rock (£49) kits. The only additional kit currently available for dff Superior is Superior Vintage (£79), which is also available as a standalone kit (£166).

EZ DRUMMER

Manufacturer **Toontrack Music**

Price **£99**

Contact **Time+Space 01837 55200**

Web **www.toontrack.com**

Minimum system requirements

PC 1.8GHz processor, Windows XP,

512MB RAM

Mac G4 1GHz, OSX 10.2.8, 512MB RAM

As improving hard disk and RAM technology enables sample library producers to create ever larger and more realistic sample instruments, casual users are being left behind by spiralling levels of control. Perfectionist producers may be in their element with colossal libraries such as Toontrack Music's Superior instruments and FXpansion's BFD libraries, but users hoping to produce a quick acoustic drum track for a demo have had to rely on much simpler technology, without the kind of expression these multi-sampled kits are capable of. With EZ Drummer, Toontrack has bucked that trend, releasing a drum sampler that features much of the technology used in the Superior instruments, but wrapped in an interface designed to be intuitive.

Less is more

The main window of EZ Drummer displays a drummer's-eye view of a drum kit. Clicking on any piece of the kit plays a sample of that piece

(enabling users to quickly audition samples), while a small area at the bottom of each kit piece can be clicked to bring up a list of the available kit pieces for that slot.

The bundled kit pieces are a little thin on the ground, with a choice of four kick drums (all GMS drums with a variety of beaters), three snares, two hi-hats, two lots of four cymbals, two rides and only one set of three toms. However, all of the drums are well recorded and could be moulded for use with a variety of drum styles. This starter kit can be expanded with further kit pieces from the Toontrack EZX expansion range. An EZX expansion is included free with EZ Drummer – the Yamaha Club Jordan Cocktail drum kit, which adds a further bass drum, snare, hi-hat, ride and a set of two toms. Even with this expansion kit installed the selection of drums is fairly minimal in comparison to the massive libraries included with more advanced collections such as BFD. However, by opting to include a fairly generic kit with reduced kit options rather than a variety of highly flavoured kits, Toontrack has maintained the simplicity of the software while simultaneously providing a product that can be used across a wide range of musical genres.

All that you need

Users unaccustomed to programming their own beats can create whole backing tracks using the included MIDI files, which are accessible from the MIDI Browser. Opening the MIDI

Browser presents you with a menu from which you can audition the bundled MIDI grooves. Once you've decided on one or more grooves, the MIDI file can be dragged into your host sequencer, enabling you to quickly create an entire drum track complete with fills and variations in a matter of minutes. Once all of the files have been dragged into the host sequencer, you can edit them using your host's tools to create an entirely individual drum track from the supplied rhythms. This method of working is exceptionally easy and we were able to create drum tracks for several different musical styles in a variety of time signatures very quickly using only the MIDI files presented with the initial EZ Drummer installation.

All mixed up

With a good MIDI library and an easy-to-use interface, the addition of a mixer would seem to be the icing on the cake. However, mixing drums is a difficult skill to master, and the addition of this window could add to the complexity of the program. However, Toontrack has wisely included a small selection of presets and hidden the mixer in a separate window so that beginners can experiment with the samples and rhythms, leaving the mixer itself to more accomplished users.

Advanced users can also choose to route multi-track audio into their host sequencer rather than sending only a stereo mix. This is done from the mixer, and unlike other multitrack plug-in instruments it doesn't require separate versions of the plug-in to be loaded for each configuration. This feature is useful for speeding up the mixing process, enabling users to switch between stereo and multitrack routing with only a few clicks.

Creating a lite version of one of the leading acoustic drum samplers was an ambitious task, but Toontrack has struck an excellent balance of ease of use, flexibility and – most importantly – great sounds. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Effortlessly simple interface
- Humanisation features prevent loops sounding too robotic
- Excellent drum samples
- Thousands of useable MIDI patterns

WALK ON BY

- Limited initial selection of kit pieces
- No standalone version

VERDICT

An excellent introduction to the sonic qualities of massively multi-sampled drum kits that removes much of the complexity of using these instruments.

★★★★★★★★★

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