



Best Service

TITAN

FOR PC
& MAC

MusicTech
VALUE

Titan brings together more than 5,000 sounds from the last 20 years of synthesis history. Mark Cousins weighs it up.

KEY FEATURES

- 36GB sound library
- 5,500 unique multi-samples
- ENGINE sample player
- Arpeggiator and step sequencer

TITAN

Manufacturer **Best Service**

Price **£229**

Contact **Time+Space 01837 55200**

Web **www.bestservice.de**

Minimum system requirements

PC 1.4GHz processor, Windows XP, 1GB RAM

Mac G4 1GHz, Mac OSX 10.4, 1GB RAM

Sampling 200 synthesizers and creating more than 5,500 accompanying patches is certainly a gargantuan task by anyone's standards, so it's no surprise that Best Service's latest virtual instrument has been given the rather apt title of Titan. As well as offering an impressive amount of patch and sample data (36GB at the last count), Titan is also notable in the fact that it utilises a sample engine developed in conjunction with Yellow Tools. Not surprisingly, therefore, Best Service's 'ENGINE' shares many similarities with Yellow Tools' Independence Pro, as well as having a series of dedicated controls and features that relate specifically to the Titan library.

Setting up Titan requires installing Best Service's ENGINE, followed by the Titan installer for all the various preset files. You then have to manually install Titan's Image files into the corresponding Image folder in the ENGINE root folder. It's worth noting that the ENGINE root folder can be installed on any available drive,

enabling you to store the 36GBs of sample data separate from your main system drive. Copy protection is via Yellow Tools' E-License system, a challenge-and-response solution.

Combustion engine

Given that this is the first ENGINE-based product from Best Service, we were eager to see how the instrument performed. If you're familiar with Independence Pro, ENGINE won't come as a great surprise. New users, though, will be pleased to note how efficient and easy to use it is, with its clear performance layering system accessible to the left of the interface and a large QuickEdit page providing immediate control over elements such as filtering, envelopes and effects. Delving deeper into the architecture, it's also possible to use the Pro Edit page to gain more detailed control over each layer.

The organisation of Titan's patches follows a functional and ordered approach. Patches are listed by instrument type (synths, basses, pads and so on), with further sub-categories. Given the range of synths used to source many of these sounds, it might have been good to see some indication of their origins, although those who are acquainted with 'classic' synths will recognise many of the sounds.

Sample this

Overall, the quality of the multi-sampling is excellent, with the patches playable over a large range and many of the

original details seemingly intact. The additional programming (beyond the basic sounds captured in the samples) seems to be sensitively light – adding small amounts of ENGINE's filters, for example, rather than smothering the samples with multiple layers and effects. The step sequencer and arpeggiator also add to many of the sounds, providing a suitably contemporary twist on the basic patches.

While it's hard not to be impressed by the range and number of instrument patches on offer, we didn't experience the same level of excitement as during our first encounter with Spectrasonics' Omnisphere, for example, or a cutting-edge software synth like Absynth. Although there are plenty of great-sounding basses and analogue pads, some of the piano and keyboard sounds have a distinctly 90s feel to them. Still, given the amount of raw material and the features available in ENGINE for modifying the basic samples, there's still plenty of creative potential.

Clash of the Titans

Titan is an impressive first outing for Best Service's ENGINE system and an exciting indicator of things to come. If you're new to the world of recording and music production, then an instrument like Titan certainly represents a cost-effective way of acquiring a large number of key synth and keyboard sounds, especially given Omnisphere's fondness for 'unusual' sounds and textures rather than conventional pianos, pads, organs and so on. Those of a more creative persuasion, though, may prefer the sonic possibilities of a good contemporary software synth, even if the palette of sounds might be slightly less extensive. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- An exhaustive collection of synth sounds
- Powerful playback engine
- Clear patch organisation

WALK ON BY

- Source instruments aren't identified
- Some patches sound dated

VERDICT

Titan represents an impressive collection of sounds for your money, as well as featuring one of the most finely tuned playback engines to date. Some of the sounds are slightly dated, but there's still plenty to explore.



MEASURING UP

Spectrasonics' Omnisphere (£349) is more expensive than Titan but it includes an impressive 40GB of sample content as well as an ingenious STEAM engine that can transform the raw data using granular processing, timbre shifting and FM synthesis. However, you'll struggle to find certain 'conventional' sounds as it seems to excel at the unusual.