

VIRTUAL INSTRUMENTS MAGAZINE- JUNE 2007

Fixed Noise OTTO

IDM, industrial, and electronica workstation

www.fixednoise.com distributed by www.Bigfish.com

\$199.99

Format: Comes with Native Instruments Kontakt 2 Player, which is VST, Audio Units, RTAS, DXi.

Kontakt 2 Player requires Mac OS X 10.2.6+, G4 800GHz+; Windows XP, PIII 1GHz+.

Copy protection: Native Instruments online activation using included utility program.

"In 1995 Otto bought his first drum machine from a crack-head just 2 blocks from his mom's house. Right away he recognized his passion for grimy diamond soaked kick drums through distorted fuzz muck."

And that excerpt, turned up in an internet search for Fixed Noise OTTO developer Otto Von Schirach, sums it right up. If you're into or are ever called upon to produce Intelligent Dance Music, Industrial, or Electronica, this library has it nailed.

OTTO is a 4GB collection of everything from industrial noises to processed drums to weird synth noises to backwards blips and all kinds of unrecognizable sound effect hits—mapped in the included Native Instruments Kontakt 2 Player so they're musically useful, with lots of loops and beats as well as individual sounds. While there are some melodic sounds mapped chromatically, OTTO is essentially not something you play chords and melodies on; it's a library of noises and sounds.

The instrument is organized into several categories. First, there are "sequences" that use Kontakt 2 scripts to create off-center rhythmic patterns (which are easy to edit). Then there keyboards full of different loops that you can play in real time and that follow the host sequencer's tempo; these are the heart of library.

All the sounds from the loops are available individually in programs with the same names, so you can create fills or other loops using the same sounds. OTTO also has Construction Kits with lots of sounds you can make into beats or sequence individually, series of melodic sounds and "cinematic noises," Performances with loops on the left and hits on the right, and finally surround versions of the loops.

Developers can set up their programs in the Kontakt 2 Player for a limited amount of tweaking. In this library generally have control over global envelopes, filters, reverb, EQ, levels, input quantizing, and so on for each program. My only comment is that while it might not be correct stylistically, I personally would prefer the programs to have more (or in many cases just some) velocity control right out of the box. But as with all Native Instruments-encapsulated libraries, you can open OTTO in Kontakt 2 for more extensive editing.

During the review period I had an opportunity to use OTTO on a cue for an awards show. The cue needed a hint of electronica in the introduction and a couple of breaks, and if it wasn't in the first set of loops loaded then certainly by the second I'd found just the ticket. It's easy to build very complicated, interesting, and constantly changing layers of loops, since every file you load puts so many of them under your fingers—maybe 40, taking up 125MB of RAM—but in this case that wasn't called for.

Some of the loops will want to be anchored by a strong beat if you're not using them as short fills (with the beat still going in the listener's mind), because they can get pretty abstract. That's the style, of course, but the larger point is that while it's certainly possible to write music just using OTTO alone, most people are likely to regard it as an extra color rather than the last library you'll ever need. And it works really well in that context.

Despite what seems like raw simplicity on the surface, there's a lot involved with putting together a large library of creative sounds and loops like this, and Herr Von Schirach did a very competent job. That crack-head who sold him the drum machine can be proud of what he or she started.