MusicTech CHOICE

Sample Modeling THE TRUMPET

FOR PC & MAC

Notoriously difficult to emulate, the trumpet has finally arrived in virtual form. Keith Gemmell samples a model instrument...

KEY FEATURES
- 3 B♭ trumpets, flugelhorn, cornet, piccolo and German trumpets
- Kontakt 2 player
- Realistic emulations

THE TRUMPET

Manufacturer **Sample Modeling**

Price **€149 (download) CD €12.5 extra**

Web **www.samplemodeling.com**

Minimum system requirements

PC 1GHz processor, Windows XP, 1GB RAM
Mac G4 1GHz, Mac OSX 10.4.11, 1GB RAM

Virtual instruments are usually based on one of two technologies: sampling or synthesis. Each method has its drawbacks. Although recorded samples sound realistic, they are difficult to morph dynamically and expressively. Synthesizers, on the other hand, can be very expressive, but often lack realism.

Despite technological advances, this situation hasn't changed for decades – even today we can spot the 'phoney' virtual instrument in a solo situation, but there are exceptions. Garritan's Stradivari Solo Violin made something of a breakthrough in 2006 with its underlying sonic morphing technology. Giorgio Tommasini was responsible for much of its development and now, together with sound designer Peter Siedlaczek, he's created The Trumpet, a virtual instrument built using sophisticated sample modulation and advanced AI MIDI-processing techniques. It ships with NI's Kontakt Player 2, but can also be used with the Kontakt 2 and 3 samplers.

Magnificent seven

The Trumpet isn't just a single instrument – it's seven. Three different B♭ trumpets, flugelhorn, cornet, piccolo and German trumpets are included in the package. Each instrument was recorded in an anechoic chamber, and, as you'd expect, the result is a very clean sound that's far from lifeless. In fact, the instruments have a very pleasing ambience about them – closeness rather than dryness.

The Trumpet is first and foremost a performance instrument. To that end, a master keyboard with pitchwheel, modwheel and an expression pedal or breath controller mapped to CC11 is pretty much essential hardware if you want accurate results. There are no pre-recorded articulations; it's down to the player to shape the sound using MIDI controllers and AI techniques.

This, of course, is all taken care of in the background. Sample Modeling's proprietary 'Adaptive Model' approach 'acts by minimising the differences with the real instrument, whatever articulation or phrase is played'. However, despite the underlying technological complexity, it all works beautifully, and with a little practice it's remarkably easy to play and shape a convincing trumpet performance. You can, of course, edit the generated data afterwards using a variety of continuous controllers included with the Kontakt 2 Player.

A switch in time

As for the playing techniques, vibrato is easily achieved in the usual way using the modwheel, but further 'vibrato endings' typical to the trumpet are available at the touch of a keyswitch. Trills, shakes, falls, flutter-tonguing, wah-wah, crescendos, diminuendos and small degrees of pitchbend at the beginnings and endings of a note are all available as note-on and note-off keyswitch tools that can be instantly applied while playing.

One of the most distinctive trumpet effects, though, is the 'halve valve' sound, whereby the player presses the trumpet valves about halfway down to perform a continuous glissando. This is performed without any keyswitching. Playing the virtual glissando is a simple matter of pressing the keys lightly (low velocity) while moving from one note to another – and it works uncannily well.

All of the common mutes – straight, cup, harmon (with or without stem), bucket and plunger – are available as impulse responses for the B♭ instruments and they really are very good. Unfortunately, though, they can be activated only via a dropdown menu in the GUI (apart from the plunger, which is assigned to a keyswitch). It's no big deal, but for live performance a quicker method of selecting mutes would be useful (although, understandably, the already extensive keyswitching arrangement leaves no room for on-the-fly mute changing). However, we are told that assigning the mutes to a controller is planned for the first update.

Sample Modelling has spent years developing The Trumpet and it shows. The sound quality and articulations are second-to-none – it's a virtual instrument that just begs to be played. MTM

MEASURING UP

Although sampled brass sections, both classical and pop, are many, finding a good solo trumpet collection is difficult. Supplied in multi-format, Sam Trumpets (€165) are very good value for money. Much nearer to The Trumpet, technology-wise, are the B♭ trumpets from Wallender Instruments ($179), which are also real-time, playable instruments.

SUMMARY

WHY BUY
- 7 trumpets
- Relatively easy to play
- Very realistic trumpet emulation
- Very well implemented technology

WALK ON BY
- High CPU load
- Slow mute activation (fix coming)

VERDICT

The Trumpet is a truly remarkable virtual instrument which, like the Stradivari Solo Violin, provides a fascinating playing experience and an incredibly realistic trumpet emulation. As close to the real thing as technology currently allows.

★★★★★★★★★½