

Mac PC What is it? Vinyl or CD turntable-controlled DJ system **PRICE: £450**

CONTACT: Arbiter, 020 8207 7880 WWW.native-instruments.com INFO: Crossgrade from FinalScratch/Serato, £300

**DETAILS PAGES**  
Use these to access Send Effects, BeatLump, Cue List, Key, Cue Edit, BPM, Audio Recorder, Master, etc

**SYSTEM MONITOR**  
Check device connection, CPU usage, Master Output, Battery Power and Record Status

**TRACKING MONITOR**  
View the quality of the incoming signal, or activate Sticker mode

**WAVE DISPLAY**  
Click and drag to cue with the mouse, using the scroll wheel to control the zoom level

**PITCH FADER**  
Controls the playback speed in addition to the timecode disc pitch control

**BROWSER TREE**  
Search disks, preview files, and even access the Beatport online Dance Music store

**DECK LOOP**  
Select a tempo-synced loop length, then set a loop at the current play position

**CHANNEL EFFECTS**  
Both decks have multiple styles of tempo-synced filters

**TRACK LIST**  
Drag files from here on to the virtual decks, ready to play

## NATIVE INSTRUMENTS

# Traktor Scratch

If you've ever wanted to own a DJing system that allows you to spin your digital track collection using vinyl or CD turntables, then NI could be about to answer your prayers...

### ► SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

**Mac:** G4 1.4GHz or Intel Core Duo family, 512MB RAM, Mac OS X 10.4.8  
**PC:** Pentium or Athlon 1.4GHz, 512MB RAM, Windows XP (SP2), USB 2.0 interface

### ► TEST SYSTEM

**PC:** AMD Athlon XP2500+, 1GB RAM, Windows XP

 **On the DVD**

**AUDIO DEMOS**  
Check out the **Audio Demos** folder on the DVD to hear Traktor Scratch in action

**W**here Native Instruments are concerned, we've come to expect a certain high standard. Now the team have stepped it up with a new version of their award-winning Traktor software. This time, however, the software is accompanied by the Audio 8 DJ – an audio interface designed with the serious DJ in mind. It also comes bundled with two pairs of timecode discs – one pair for vinyl and another for CD turntables. It even comes complete with a set of multicore connection cables, making integration as simple as possible.

In fact, the system is designed to be dropped into an existing DJing

setup, so you will need your own hardware DJ mixer to use Traktor Scratch, since the virtual decks are piped straight to the soundcard outs, with no software mixing.

On closer inspection it soon becomes apparent that this particular package has a lot more to offer than you might expect from a two-deck mixing setup, however. Thankfully, NI have endeavoured to cover every base, with a feature set that's guaranteed to raise a few eyebrows. But allow us to cut to the chase...

### Late DJ

Let's face it, latency has long been the arch enemy of DJs. Any DJ will

appreciate how difficult it can be to do your job when there's an obvious lag between what you do and what you hear. In the realm of digital audio it's almost taken for granted that there will be some signal delay, so how does Traktor Scratch perform in this most important area?

First of all, the Audio 8 DJ USB 2.0 audio interface comes with a set of low-latency ASIO drivers as standard. Within the software preferences are convenient templates with configurations to suit a range of different computer setups. We found that some of the lower latency settings worked very well, even on our modest test machine. More important

than the numbers, though, is that it feels exceptionally tight, even at pretty high latency settings.

You'll find pulling off a tight mix or scratching with your digital audio files is no hardship for Traktor Scratch at all. The supplied vinyl timecode discs are pressed on high quality, lightweight 12" slabs, with a deeper groove on one side for a very comfortable scratching experience, and you can set the discs to respond in either 33rpm or 45rpm modes. Close your eyes and you'd be forgiven for forgetting that the sounds aren't actually coming direct from the plastic! That is, of course, until you dip into the plethora of digital goodies...

Notable is the Beatjumper feature, which enables you to skip a number of beats backwards or forwards according to the detected BPM or Beatgrid – perfect for those situations when a fine dancer catches your eye, causing you to miss your cue.

## Take me higher

Have you ever wished to mix two records that can't be beatmatched within the pitch range on your decks? Traktor Scratch boasts an adjustable range of pitch scales – plus or minus 8%, 35%, 50% and 100% – that are separate from the actual speed of the timecode disc. That means the digital audio file plays at the speed of your timecode disc *plus* the additional range of the software itself. It also comes with an adjustable Pitch Lock option so that playback speed and tuning can be altered independently.

Another trick not possible with records is that you can set a loop, and then spin that vinyl back as it loops indefinitely. Chuck in NI's quality filters and effects and the system can even serve as a sound editing tool. You can also route your mixer's sends into the software and apply the effects to your music vinyls and CDs too.



With the in-built recorder and capacity to play back high-quality 24-bit and 32-bit audio formats, there's no reason why you couldn't use it in your productions. After all, the Audio 8 DJ boasts 24-bit/96kHz audio and high-grade Cirrus Logic A/D and D/A converters. It's a serious interface, for sure, with eight inputs and outputs, MIDI ports, status LEDs and a headphones out. There's also a ground lift and rumble filters for your decks, and it's clearly built to last. If you only want the interface, you can get it for £300, and, conversely, if you buy a 'Traktor Scratch Certified' integrated mixer/interface, you can get the software, vinyls and CDs as an upgrade kit, making a full setup.

## Take a peak

One of the greatest luxuries of most digital mixing systems is the ability to see the waveform on the display

screen. Whilst this is a very useful aspect of Traktor Scratch, we can't help but feel that this feature could be better implemented. It's great that NI have included the option to alter the colour of the waveform, and that there's a zoom function, but it would be much more useful if you could blow the whole thing up even bigger.

Some of the buttons and fonts could also benefit from being larger or clearer, and even the largest of the available fonts just isn't quite big enough for our tastes.

Also, there will no doubt be some of you who are wondering why there are only two decks when software DJing has the potential to allow us to work with more.

However, the fact that these are the biggest gripes that we have with Traktor Scratch should tell you that overall this is a very enticing package for the modern DJ. **cm**

▲ What more could a digital DJ ask for?

### ▶ ALTERNATIVELY

**M-Audio Torq Connectiv Vinyl / CD Pack**

cm110 >> 7/10 >> £229

The original audio interface-based system for the digital DJ, including control vinyl and CDs

**Image-Line Deckadance**

cm114 >> 9/10 >> \$179

A similar offering, with the added ability to calibrate to other DJ packages' timecode discs

## High-end detail

One of the outstanding aspects of Traktor Scratch is the sheer attention to detail, and indeed, the Details pages are conveniently accessed via the Page Selector at the top of the screen. The first of these is the Send Effects page, where you can route the high-quality Delay, Reverb, Flanger and BeatMasher effects.

You'll find all the essential effects parameters, which can be assigned to your MIDI controller. As an added bonus, all effects are tempo synced where possible, and the sound quality is exactly what you'd expect from a company of NI's reputation. There's Autogain and a Multiband Limiter on the master outs too, to keep your sound hot at all times without being distorted.

NI have also thought to include a stylish bag to carry your Audio 8 DJ in, and some funky Traktor Scratch stickers with which to 'pimp' your laptop. There's also a gift card for the Beatport online dance music store, which you can connect to via the in-built browser. This enables you to import fresh tracks from the net while you mix, which could be handy for those awkward requests.



▲ Autogain and a Multiband Limiter will keep your sets loud and proud

## VERDICT

FOR

- + Sounds and feels great
- + Quality hardware
- + MIDI-compatible
- + Vast feature set

AGAINST

- Display could be clearer
- Only two decks

If you want to breathe new life into your DJing setup and spin MP3s as if they were vinyl, Traktor Scratch will work for you. As long as you're still happy with just two decks, that is...

RATING

