

Mac PC What is it? Drum sampler and sound library **PRICE: £149**

CONTACT: Arbitrator, 020 8207 7880 WWW.native-instruments.com INFO: Upgrade from Battery 2, £70

SYNC-TO-TEMPO
Battery can sync many things to tempo, including its effects, modulations and now its loops

MASTER SECTION
Handles everything from kit selection to cell setup and general instrument options

CELL MATRIX
Rescales itself depending on how many cells you have active. Also, look out for the solo and mute buttons

COLOUR CODING
The new colour-coding helps differentiate cell types. Some patches also group sound types in columns or rows

EDIT PANE
Features tabbed windows for all the important settings. You can also access these from the View menu

BEAT MODE
Each cell can operate in three different modes, for example, Beat mode is for working with suitably formatted loops

MULTIPLE SAMPLES
There may be more than one sample assigned to a cell. You can page through them by clicking your cursor in the wave display

START/END
You can adjust start and end points in a number of windows, including the cell window



NATIVE INSTRUMENTS Battery 3



On the DVD

AUDIO DEMOS
Audio examples of just what Battery 3 can do are in the Audio Demos folder

NI's product revamp brings us a new version of Battery. But now that we all have soft samplers, is there still a market for one dedicated to drums?

- **SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**
PC: Pentium 1GHz, 512MB RAM, Windows XP, 200MB free hard disk space (14GB for sample library and video tutorials)
Mac: G4 1.4GHz, 512MB RAM, OS X 10.4 (PPC/Universal), 200MB free hard disk space (14GB for sample library and video tutorials)
- **TEST MACHINE**
Mac: G5 dual 2GHz, 2.5GB RAM, OS X 10.4.8, Apple Logic Pro 7.2

It's fair to say that the majority of contemporary music is 'sound-driven', and nowhere is this truer than in the area of beats. Whether it's a live kit or an urban 'click', even Joe Public knows a hot rhythm section when he hears it, and when you're putting your beats together, any limitations in your software will quickly become apparent. So what's the answer? Quite simply, a job-specific tool, and in this case that means a drum machine. Of all those on the market, Native Instruments' Battery is one of the finest

examples; now at version 3, it's established itself as something of an 'MPC' for the software generation.

Recharged
To cut right to the chase, Battery 3 is an important update. The sampling engine has been revised and a bunch of improvements bring the software right up to date. As before, it works standalone and as a plug-in on PC and Mac, but it now comes with a 12GB sample library that includes over 100 preset kits. The Battery interface is still

dominated by a customisable cell matrix, but this can now include up to 128 cells. Other new features include a wave editor, cell-specific timestretching, better cell effects and a new master multi-effects section. If you tire of the included library, you can easily expand Battery 3, for it supports a plethora of sampler formats. It can also now handle sliced loops, including those in the Apple Loops and Acid formats. On the performance front, new features include a humanise option and a selection of drumming articulations.

Like a number of its stablemates, Battery 3 has also been given a visual overhaul – the angular, scientific look of earlier versions is gone. NI have added colour-coding options to make cell allocations more obvious, and revamped the browsing and loading options. If all of this sounds a bit much, or you're simply new to Battery, eight step-by-step video tutorials are included to get you going.

Bettery

Just as in version 2, Battery's workspace is divided between the aforementioned cell matrix and the edit pane, with the master section running along the top. This makes for a simple layout, and if you want, various parts can be 'folded away'.

Factory kits are loaded from the master section or via the full browser tab at the bottom of the screen (kits

the natural kits found in version 2, it also extends its coverage into sound design territory, with the Armageddon and Noise kits featuring various impulse-type noises. You can easily import individual cells from these when building up your own sound set.

On the subject of customising, the 'articulations' feature lets you apply standard drum performance techniques (flam, roll, drag and so on) to any cell. This doesn't require any extra samples, though the fact that it takes advantage of different velocity zones means it sounds best when used on multisampled cells.

Articulations certainly add to the realism, and the same can be said of the new convolution reverb in the master effects section. Rather cheekily, you can even drag any loaded sample into the convolution window for use as a convolution source!



▲ Gamesters will be disappointed that Battery isn't, in fact, a Columns-esque match 'em up

“NI HAVE ADDED COLOUR-CODING OPTIONS TO MAKE CELL ALLOCATIONS MORE OBVIOUS”

from all three versions of Battery are grouped in their own sub-menus). Once you've got a full-on kit patch open, the visual improvements in Battery 3 become clear. Envelope settings come up as shaded areas over the cell waveform and you can view a cell's information simply by waving the cursor over it.

In terms of sound, the expanded library is excellent. As well as adding to

you can miss out on the multilayered nature of the kits (many of which have 30 or more velocity layers) or the 'note off' cells. What's more, with different kits loading different cell matrix arrangements, it's easy to get confused as to how cells and notes line up.

Ultimately, though, if you use beats in your music-making (like most of the Western world), Battery 3 is a fantastic instrument. Once you've used it, you'll realise just how important a good drum machine is. Sure, you can achieve much of what it offers using a standard sampler, but doing so would undoubtedly take longer. What's more, if you ever get bored, Battery 3 also offers the flexibility and creative tools to keep your beats, loops and any other sounds on the cutting edge. Factor in the fantastic sound set and at £150 it's pretty much a bargain buy. **cm**

Beat-downers

With all of its new features, it would be easy to overlook any shortcomings in Battery 3, but inevitably, there's still room for improvement.

From a user perspective, to get the most from it, you really need to play it from a MIDI controller. When clicking the mouse, velocity is fixed (though it can be adjusted), so there's no context-sensitive playback. This means

▶ ALTERNATIVELY

FXpansion DR-008
cm35 » 8/10 » £55
Still available but no longer being updated, DR-008 is a cheaper drum solution but for PC users

LinPlug RMIV
cm64 » 9/10 » €145
Combining analogue synthesis with sampled drum sounds, RMIV is a true hybrid powerhouse

Three in one

Battery 3 can handle samples in three ways (or modes); these are known as Sampler, Stretch and Beat.

Beat and Stretch are the new additions, with Sampler offering standard playback as per Battery 2. The modes are mutually exclusive on a cell-by-cell basis, so you can mix and match different sample-handling modes within a kit, although not within a cell.

Thanks to its use of granular synthesis, Stretch mode enables you to maintain pitch at different tempi. Of the three available parameters – Smooth, Length and Grain – Length is the key to the stretching amount, ranging from 0% to 800%. Stretch works surprisingly well, even on harmonic sounds such as bass, though typically, speeded-up sounds are less sonically compromised than those that are slowed down.

Beat mode adds timed loop-style functions. Although Battery 3 doesn't include its own loop library, support for the Acid, Apple Loops and REX formats means it could become your sampler of choice when you're working with these file types. Load a suitable loop and its slices are mapped across



▲ No more going round in circles when working with loops

a number of cells (each of which becomes a regular Sampler format cell), while the original loop has its own cell too. It can then be adjusted to play in time using the percentage control and synced to the song tempo with various division options.

VERDICT

FOR

- + Great library
- + Slick interface
- + New loop handling
- + Good new effects
- + Bundled video tutorials

AGAINST

- Best played from a MIDI controller
- Cell note mapping can be confusing

A fine update, proving that Battery is in no danger of running out of juice just yet. If you work with beats, you'll love working with this

RATING

