

Mac PC What is it? Drum kit ROMpler PRICE: €225

CONTACT: info@xlnaudio.com WWW.xlnaudio.com

KIT PRESET SELECTION
Choose from a list of over 100 drum kit presets. These cover everything from straight-ahead rock to lo-fi and beyond

PLAY/AUDITION
The selected drum pattern can be played/auditioned either manually or in sync using the playback button

SCREEN SELECTION
With only four main screens to choose from, Addictive Drums is simple and intuitive. And with the mixer always visible, balancing is easy too

KIT PIECE SELECTOR
Hitting the L tab opens up the kit piece selection menu, so you can easily mix and match drum sounds

KIT PADS
Each kit piece has its own playback pad. This is velocity graded – from high at the top to low at the bottom

EDIT BUTTON
Selecting the kit piece button above the fader or E button in the pad opens the corresponding Edit screen

FADER CONTROLS
Each fader has a number of typical buttons including mute and solo. You can bypass inserts and effects here too

MASTER SECTION
Each sound can be routed in various ways, and the four main stereo signals are easily balanced in the Master section

ROUTING
Activating the Out switch routes a sound separately to your sequencer's mixer (how it appears will depend on your host)



XLN AUDIO

Addictive Drums

FXpansion and Toontrack may have thought that they'd cornered the live drum ROMpler market, but newcomers XLN Audio have other ideas...

- **SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**
PC: Intel P4 2GHz, 1GB RAM, Windows XP, 3GB hard drive space, RTAS/VST host, DVD drive
Mac: G5 or Intel Mac, 1GB RAM, OS X 10.4.8, 3GB hard drive space, VST/RTAS/AU host, DVD drive
- **TEST MACHINE**
Mac: G5 Dual 2GHz, 2.5GB RAM, OS X 10.4.8, Logic Pro 7.2

On the DVD

AUDIO DEMOS
The file in the Audio demos folder showcases basic kits and creative kits and patterns

With drum kit plug-ins springing up all over the place, it's hard to know which to choose. In fact, given how long the libraries for many of these plug-ins take to install, it sometimes feels like the quickest and easiest option is simply to go and find a real drummer!

Intriguingly, XLN Audio have taken a fresh look at the live drum ROMpler concept and come up with Addictive Drums. But with just a 3GB library, can it really compete with the likes of BFD and DFH Superior?

The plug-in's interface seems

familiar – it's clear that Addictive Drums' developers were influenced by the design of existing software, and apparently, super-producer Max Martin provided his opinions during the development stage. A preliminary look reveals everything that you'd expect to find: effects, patterns, processing and the inevitable mixer.

Three ways
Addictive Drums has three main elements: a sample library, onboard effects processing and performance patterns. As we've already mentioned,

the library is quite compact, though if you're a Mac user, you'll find it difficult to move this from your system drive.

The library comes in a proprietary format and as one single data file. It includes three main kits and the source samples were recorded at 24-bit/96kHz. Although at first glance the library might not seem to be that extensive (add-on packs are in the pipeline, by the way), the basic kit patches are complemented by about a hundred presets. These make use of the onboard processing and give you an excellent palette of sounds that

goes way beyond a typical live kit. What's more, they're all fully editable.

So what exactly do we mean by onboard processing? There are a number of aspects to this; you'll notice that there's a mixer on the main screen, and each piece of the kit can be opened in the Edit screen to reveal a full chain of processing. Here, you'll find everything from basic sample manipulation controls (envelopes, pitch and filter) to compression, distortion, EQ and saturation devices. And because the mixer is always visible, you can tweak and balance without having to switch screens.

The mixer also hosts a few other notable features, including feed levels to the overhead and room mix mics, mic balance controls for the kick and snare (each has two mics), and send levels to the two reverb busses.

Beat street

Although AD is playable via MIDI (or from its interface), for quick results it

“LOAD TIMES ARE QUICK, AND THIS MAKES ADDICTIVE DRUMS FEEL SLICK AND RESPONSIVE”

also has a pattern library. This is accessed via the Beats page and contains over 3000 beats and fills. These are arranged by style into around 200 songs – each of these contains many variations, and they can all be auditioned from the browser. When you've found what you want, you can drag your chosen patterns into your host's arrange page as MIDI.

The simplicity of this approach is matched across the rest of Addictive Drums. In fact, if you've used one of the established drum ROMplers, you'll find this one a relative breeze. Even novices should be able to get to grips with it quickly, and if you get stuck, the manual's a mere 30 pages long. You'll soon discover how easy it is to audition using mouse clicks (with location-sensitive velocity), and interface familiarity comes quickly.

Unlike in some sample-based instruments, load times are quick, and this makes Addictive Drums feel slick and responsive. In our tests, playback was consistent even at low latencies, and the CPU hit minimal. All of these things help to ensure that this is a fast and fun plug-in to use.

Keep it simple

What should be noted is that XLN Audio have opted not to include some of the more complex configuration options that you'll find in rival software.

So, although you can control overhead and room mic levels for each sound (and buzz level for the snare), beyond this, the cross-bleed options are set. Similarly – and very annoyingly for owners of electronic drum kits – MIDI note mapping is fixed.

Happily, Addictive Drums does have a few innovative features of its own. Firstly, the mixer includes a submix



▲ The Edit screen lets you make subtle or radical tweaks to each piece of the kit

buss, which is great for setting up a compressed blend. Also, if you want to generate a typical 'drum machine' type sound, the default 'alternate' sample option can be switched to 'single'. Finally, all the cymbals include a choke sound for realistic muting.

On the whole, Addictive Drums' sound quality is excellent, but if we were pushed to make a criticism, it would simply be that there's a 'samey' sound to it that's consistent with everything having been recorded in one studio. What's more, there isn't quite enough content yet, but this should be rectified with the release of extra libraries.

All told, though, Addictive Drums is one of the most accomplished plug-ins we've seen in a long time, and its slickness easily compensates for the slightly small core library. This one will give the established players a real run for their money. **cm**

▶ ALTERNATIVELY

FXpansion BFD

cm68 » 9/10 » £180

Very popular drum ROMpler. Some fabulous (and very large) add-on libraries are also available

DFH EZdrummer

cm102 » 9/10 » £99

A simpler and more affordable version of DFH Superior (only one full kit is included)

VERDICT

FOR

- + Quick and easy to use
- + Crisp, impressive sound
- + Onboard effects and processing
- + Additional sub mix buss
- + Great onboard patterns
- + Space-saving library

AGAINST

- Library could be more varied...
- No easy way of moving the library on the Mac

Nicer to look at and easier to use than either BFD or DFH Superior, Addictive Drums is right up there if you want top-quality live drums

RATING



Rooms, rooms, rooms

One of the most important aspects of any live drum kit is its ambience. However, produced drums invariably use a combination of the original sound and artificial reverb. Addictive Drums offers all of this within the same plug-in.

There are master faders for the overhead and room mics, and each kit sound has a send level (including pan) to each of these. You'll also find that the 'room' sound itself has a proximity control (effectively a pre-delay). Combined with the additional buss we mentioned in the main text, this gives considerable scope using just the kit and room sounds.

To give an example, you can easily set up your kick and snare to feed the room and overhead mics while sending the other elements just to the overheads. And with complete level control, you have far more flexibility than you do with a real kit. However, if you still want a specific room sound, you can use the two reverb busses. There are four algorithms to choose from (room, hall, ambience and plate), and you can easily set up a couple of different reverbs to send to.



▲ The excellent reverb algorithm will give your drums room to breathe