



The new BFD version 1.5: "enormous"



ON THE DVD

FXpansion Deluxe for BFD

A drum library recorded by the most notorious engineer of modern times. **Steve Hillier** takes a deep breath and dives in

DETAILS

PRICE £150, requires Fxpansion BFD v1.5 (free upgrade from v1.0)

CONTACT
Web: www.fxexpansion.com

TECH SPEC

Mac: OS X 10.2.8, G4 1.2GHz or faster recommended, 1GB RAM, 55GB hard disk space for full installation

PC: Windows 2000 or XP, 1GHz Pentium III or Athlon XP 1GB RAM, 55GB hard disk space for full installation

EVERY FEW YEARS a product is released that changes the way we approach our studios. In the late eighties, Alesis livened up our tracks with the first affordable digital reverb unit, the Midiverb.

In the early nineties they trumped that by giving us the ADAT, digital multitrack recording for the masses. Then Propellerhead launched Recycle, giving us malleable drum loops and kick-starting a few musical genres along the way, like Drum & Bass and Breakbeat. Next, DAWs came along in the form of Logic and Cubase Audio, and made the computer the focal point of our

studio. Then Antares changed the music game forever by releasing Autotune, giving us record after record of perfectly tuned vocals.

In 2003, FXpansion released BFD, the plug-in sample library that gave us the sound of a drum kit recorded in a proper drum room with controllable mic placement too. This was a godsend. At last the sound of a played drum kit was available without the hassle of hunting, capturing and taming a live drummer and his kit.

Now, in 2005, having already released two expansion packs, FXpansion release their fourth library, recorded by legendary

engineer and producer Steve Albin. Are we looking at another leap forward in the world of live drums?

What's bigger than huge?

The Deluxe collection is massive. It's not just huge in terms of the amount of drums sampled (67 individual drums and cymbals) nor the detail of the recordings (24-bit samples with up to 127 velocity levels); the Deluxe library is 55GB. I don't know about you, but I don't have that amount of free disk space in my studio.

Luckily FXpansion give us the option of installing small (30GB) or medium (40GB) sized versions of the sample library – the drawback being less velocity layers to play with. This seems like a reasonable trade, but if you're intending to use the full extent of the realism available in the Deluxe Edition, you're probably going to need a new hard drive.

Before you can run the new library, you'll have to upgrade your version of BFD to 1.5, which can be done via the FXpansion website.

(right) Deluxe edition contains nine new snares (far right) Ever wanted a pink drum kit? Now you have it



This upgrade fixes a collection of bugs, and also gives you a few new options, such as extra control over cymbal 'choke' time.

Gigantic

Once you've installed the library and upgraded to BFD 1.5, it's available in the BFD instrument. Select a collection of drum sounds as a kit, or the individual drum sounds you want to incorporate into your track, and they load in. The level of detail in the sounds will astound you.

the library then you're going to need a computer that's significantly better specified than the minimum FXpansion recommends.

But when the Deluxe edition is up and running it's a joy to use. The sound quality is stunning, and these drum sounds leap out of your monitors with just the right amount of energy and punch. Sonic Highlights include the Gretsch Maple drum kit, perfect for funk and jazz. Or try out the Vistalite kit with its huge kick drum for instant weighty

Who is Steve Albini?

STEVE ALBINI ROSE to fame as a member of 80s alt-rock band Big Black. They released their first album 'Atomizer' to wide acclaim in 1986, and Steve, ever the maverick, disbanded the group just before their second album, *Songs about Fucking* was released. Since then, he has engineered and produced records by artists including The Pixies, Wedding Present, Nirvana, PJ Harvey and about '1,000 bands you haven't heard of'.

Steve is a sought-after producer and engineer for alternative rock bands; in fact, you can hire him as an engineer for your own project if you can find the \$650 per day he charges. And make it out to his Electrical Audio studio in Chicago. Known as a free thinker in an industry dominated by yes men, Steve is not short of an opinion or ten. If you fancy a sobering look at the reality of the music biz, check Steve's piece *The Problem with Music* here: www.negativland.com/albini.html

"DRUM SOUNDS LEAP OUT OF YOUR MONITORS WITH THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF ENERGY AND PUNCH"

These samples have clearly been recorded by an engineer who takes pride in his recordings; this will come as no surprise to anyone who knows Steve Albini's work. He's used some mouth-watering microphones and preamps in these recordings, as well as some obscurities I've been told about but never heard before; check out the FXpansion website for more details, but only if you can live with extreme jealousy.

Inevitably, the second thing you notice is the sheer amount of computing power required to run the Deluxe size kits. On my set-up (Mac G5, 2GB RAM, Firewire 400 hard disk) it took nearly a minute to load some of the drum kits; quite a pain if you're auditioning sounds. If you can afford more RAM for your machine, then stick it in because Deluxe has quite an appetite. A fast hard drive won't go amiss either; in fact, if you intend to use the full size version of

beats. The multisampled cymbals are superb too; there's so much detail and realism in the Zildjian rides and crashes that I suspect I'll never need to record a real crash again. And at last we have some snare sounds that are ideal for full-on Rock; one of the gaping omissions from the earlier BFD libraries.

Planet of sound

As much as I've enjoyed using BFD in the past I've felt that the drum room sound was a bit too 'live' for my



The graphic details in the Deluxe edition are immensely enjoyable

taste, and I found myself spending more time adjusting the balance of the samples than I expected (although nowhere near as much as I would have done with a live kit in a real room, so I can't really grumble).

With the Deluxe edition, the live room (known as Eldorado at Steve's Electrical Audio studio) was much smaller, tighter and punchier than the room used on the original and XFL drum BFD libraries. This solves my only gripe about BFD, and I have to say that I loved using this library.

The Deluxe edition has quickly become my first choice for live drum sounds, and as I'm notoriously hard to please when it comes to percussion, that's no mean feat. If you're lacking loud, powerful and realistic kit sounds, or maybe just feel like treating yourself to a new drum collection of professional level quality, then BFD with the Deluxe Edition library is essential. **FM**

ALTERNATIVES



SPECTRASONICS STYLUS RMX

£140, 10/10/9/8/9, FM156
Stylus RMX is essential for dance drum programmers, and the Deluxe Collection BFD Expansion pack would be its perfect complement for live drums.

www.spectrasonics.net



BEST SERVICE ARTIST DRUMS

£110
Another drum library with a virtual instrument front end. Somewhat eclipsed by BFD but worth a look.

www.bestservice.de



TOONTRACK DFH SUPERIOR CUSTOM AND VINTAGE

£165, 7/8/7/7/8, FM151
Still BFD's only real competitor. This huge (35GB) drum library has full control over room mics, overheads and even spill. Definitely worth a look.

www.toontrack.com

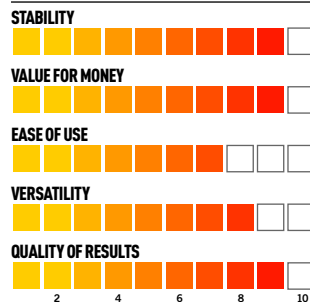


Everything you need to know about your drums is displayed here

ON THE DVD

Some home grown drum patterns that demonstrate the breadth of sounds of the Deluxe Collection.

VERDICT DELUXE FOR BFD



The Deluxe collection adds powerful, punchy rock kit sounds to the BFD.