



ON THE DVD

WHAT IS IT?

VSL's Glass & Stones library repackaged as a Vienna Instrument

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Wonderful, earthy sound
- 2 Beautifully recorded
- 3 Intuitive to use

PRICING

Standard Library
 £200
 Extended Library
 £330



FutureMusic

Platinum Award

VSL Elements

Vienna Instrument

| from £200

The boffins at VSL have really let their hair down with a percussion library to die for. **Jono Buchanan** strips off and gets back to nature...

Among the various packages that make up Vienna Symphonic Library's vast array of sounds, the collection that always seemed the most 'leftfield' was the Glass & Stones library. Formerly a part of the Horizon series, this sample collection gathered rare percussion instruments struck in various interesting ways, and presented them in a range of popular sample formats.

VSL's move into creating their own proprietary sampler instrument format,

Vienna Instruments, means that this library is shortly to be discontinued. In case you're crying a retrospective tear, dry your eyes – in its place comes 'Elements', a library that brings all the original Glass & Stones collection under one roof and adds new articulations and performance approaches to boot.

Vienna Key

Elements is actually a dual library, as it's available in Standard and Extended forms. When you run the DVD installer both libraries are installed, but you need

a license to unlock the package, so you won't get the Extended content unless you've shelled out for the applicable license. To get up and running you need first to register your Vienna Key, which is a USB dongle.

You do this via VSL's well-organised website, and once done you're then free to register the Elements collection, download its license and install this on to the key. This provides you with the Standard Library and a second registration and install gives you the Extended content.

While this might seem complicated and convoluted it's carefully explained in the manual, and as long as you take your time and complete the steps in the required order it's painless enough.

Collection

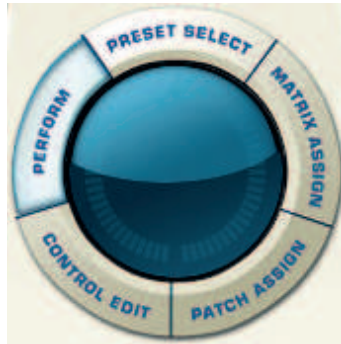
Any residual installation frustration should be wiped out within ten seconds of opening the Instrument interface and loading your first sound. 'Elements' comprises the sound of seven percussion instruments: Glass Harmonica, Verrophone, Bottles, Lithophone, XXL Tam-Tam and Musical Glasses, the latter of which are split into three groups.

Obviously, these aren't your common or garden percussion elements, but that's precisely the point of this library – to provide access to well-recorded instruments you'll struggle to find elsewhere. Indeed 'well recorded'

doesn't begin to do these samples justice. They simply ooze out of the speakers with a beautifully full bass and a treble that's shiny, harsh, gritty and wonderfully defined – at the same time.

You can hear a selection of sounds on the DVD, but suffice to say that the 62-inch Tam-Tam, which has been struck by objects such as metal rods, cardboard tubes – even an egg cutter – to provide its myriad samples, is simply one of the most unique instruments I've ever heard.

Overall, there's a real mixture here of playable instruments and effects, with the library variously capable of drones, plucks, one-off tricks and playable phrases in equal measure. In case you're an existing Glass & Stones user,



Well-rounded: Elements' menu selector

patches that feature each recording mapped to a set of keys as appropriate. Here, separate articulations feature in separate patches, so each instrument is divided into a number of patches

From here you move into Matrix Assign mode, which groups together these disparate articulations and offers them as an instrument group, separately playable via keyswitches.

In Matrix Mode you can load a group of articulations, assign each one to its own keyswitch and have each of these available simultaneously. At the top of the pecking order, Perform Mode allows you to create master information for your Instruments, including the ability to globally tune, assign MIDI controllers and create bespoke curves for velocity response and the like. There are also synthesis-style sliders for filter cutoff, attack and release here too.

The interface takes a little getting used to, but the manual proves useful

and it's particularly worth a read if you're intending to use additional Vienna Instrument libraries, as this is the interface you'll find for all these hereafter.

The recording quality is sublime and the instruments resonate so fully that you can almost feel their weight

you'll be interested to learn that the new content comprises two brand-new instruments in the form of the Tam-Tam and Bass Waterphone in addition to hugely expanded articulations for the Musical Glasses collection.

In use

The basic organisation of the library takes a little getting used to. At the bottom of the pecking order you'll find that the samples are organised into

to reflect the ways it has been struck or played.

When you first open the Instrument, the best thing to do is to start with patches as you can easily load your instrument and articulation of choice from the menu displayed. The sheer variation in timbre from one articulation to the next can be simply breathtaking, so do take the time to enjoy and familiarise yourself with each one before moving on.

Rooted

There's something wonderfully rooted about this collection. The recording quality is simply sublime for starters, and the instruments resonate so fully throughout all the patches that you can almost feel their weight.

Of course, one question might be to wonder when on earth you might need a Verrophone or Lithophone, but anyone who gets a chance to listen to these sounds and whose interest extends beyond functional music production will see the potential.

If you want to create soundscapes that are free from artificial, synthesized sound and either have these standalone or have them act as layers within your production work then I can't recommend VSL's Elements highly enough. **FM**

Er, what's a Verrophone, then?

Don't be embarrassed if you're new to the joys of Verrophones, Lithophones, or other instruments within the Elements collection. But to save a red face next time you're discussing them with mates down the pub, here's the briefest of history lessons: The Glass Harmonica is best thought of as a set of glass bowls

of decreasing sizes which can be struck to produce sound. The Verrophone is similar but uses a series of glass tubes, each of which is rubbed.

A Lithophone produces its sound by striking pieces of rock together and examples of music made this way date back centuries. Today it's possible to purchase

Lithophones in various guises, with slate a common construction material. A Tam-Tam is a member of the gong family. Tam-Tams come in various sizes, but the 62-inch model featured in the Elements collection is uncommonly large. The Musical Glasses and Bottles collections are more self-explanatory.



SPECS

PC: Intel/AMD 2GHz (3+ GHz recommended)/ Windows XP

Mac: Apple G4 1GHz (G5 or Intel Core Duo recommended)/Mac OSX 10.4 or higher

1GB RAM (2GB recommended)

VST (Win PC, OSX) or AU (Mac) compatible host (also works as standalone)

DVD-ROM drive

Separate hard drive for sample collection recommended

ViennaKey

Syncrosoft License Control Centre software (supplied with library)

ALTERNATIVES

Quite simply, Elements is unique. However, depending on your musical requirements and interests, you might also find these of interest.

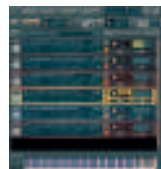


Garritan Personal Orchestra

£129

The Percussion Library within this software orchestra is surprisingly varied and well spec'd. Alongside that which you'd expect, you'll also find Gong samples, a Tam-Tam, Hand Bells and a wonderful selection of Assorted Percussion Toys.

garritan.com



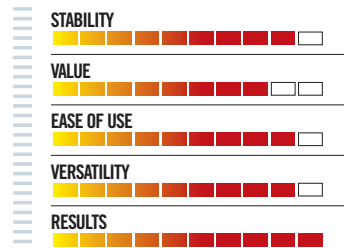
Sonic Implants Symphonic Percussion

£380

I was lucky enough to run the rule over the entire Sonic Implants Synchronic Library last month, but as with each orchestral section, the Percussion Library is available separately and offers a great range of Percussion tools, ranging from the usual to the less so – if you get my drift.

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FutureMusic VERDICT



Earthy, weird, wonderful and richer than dark chocolate – this simply has to be heard to be believed.