



ON THE DVD

**WHAT IS IT?**

A pair of sold-separately individual ROMplers featuring the sounds of multiple vintage electronic instruments

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Samples taken from original analogue instruments
- 2 Extensive MIDI control
- 3 SampleTank-compatible sample libraries



**SampleTron**

IK take the much sought-after Mellotron sound and apply it to a reliable and comprehensive sample library

# IK Multimedia SampleTron & SampleMoog | £229ea

Moogs and Mellotrons opened up new possibilities for keyboard players. *Karl Foster* grooves to IK Multimedia's take on vintage timbres

**S**ince 1975, many a dumped male has blubbed himself to sleep to the strains of 10cc's *I'm Not In Love*. Schmalz

aside, the song is notable for an insanely convoluted approach to the choral backing. The band spliced together multi-track tape loops, bringing up the breathy vocal 'ahhhs' by riding the faders of the mixing desk.

More than 10 years earlier, however, an instrument combining both keyboard and magnetic tape emerged from Birmingham, UK. It was monickered Chamberlin, later developed into the Mellotron, the concept of which, if it were a person, could be considered certifiable. Rather than hammering strings, bashing tines (Fender Rhodes) or actuating tone-wheels (Hammond),

the Mellotron plays sounds recorded to strips of tape when its keys are pressed.

Meantime, Dr Bob Moog was working along different lines. He used solid-state electronics to produce basic waveforms that could be augmented and modified by yet more electronics, then amplified in order to keep speaker cabs in gainful employ.

Two very different approaches indeed, and both of which propelled near-unlistenable avant-garde artistes, along with a host of semi-sufferable progressive acts, into new and fertile vistas of pretentiousness. Mellotrons and Moogs, while variously despised by roadies and stage crew for their bulk and unreliability, were beloved of keyboard players. Pitch-drift induced by dodgy power supplies and physical

instability, as well as tortuous patch-changing routines, didn't phase the adventurous ivory-plonker. The Mellotron's characteristic grainy, low-fi sound and numerous Moog models' organic sizzles, screeches and squelches became beloved of those with the patience, and budget, to tolerate the foibles of such instruments.

In the digital era of the 21st Century, we musos can afford to be smug. Computers are powerful enough to be able to run software simulations of near-Triassic technology. Developers Arturia go a bundle on this, literally, with Analogue Factory 2.0, as does Native Instruments with its Komplete collections. However, IK Multimedia goes to the source, presenting two ROMplers loaded with samples from

original Moogs and Mellotrons, all front-ended by highly regarded IK SampleTank technology.

In conjunction with Sonic Reality, the company has tracked down numerous hard-to-find classic analogue examples, recorded a wide range of timbres and topped them off with processing and effects facilities unavailable on the original machines. Add in the means to save custom patches, control numerous parameters via MIDI, apply multiple effects and load the instruments as plug-ins into pretty much any flavour of sequencer you fancy. Grey-haired Prog-Rockers may well blub themselves into dementia when assessing what's on offer.

Key instruments from both packages are shown under 'Instrumental

### Instrumental Decisions

The Mellotron, and variants, along with the multiple Moog models that came and went, present a titanic tone palette. Hence, bearing in mind IK's sample-based approach, you'll need a feisty, capacious dedicated media drive on which to host the core libraries. SampleTron's data occupies 2GB of storage, comprising 65 multi-sampled sounds in 647 patches from the Mellotron M400, the Mk2, Mk5 and M300. The

Chamberlin is also represented, as are the Novatron and Vako Novatron. It's the M400 that stars, however. Genesis, Yes, Led Zeppelin and others toured this cumbersome beast and one of its highlights is the Choir patch, as used by Radiohead on *OK Computer*. Multi-tudinous Moogs sally forth from SampleMoog's 4GB core library – 16, in fact, divided up into more than 1,700 sounds and with

32 effects available. Naturally, the Minimoog is there, as well as three incarnations of the Modular Moog, the Prodigy, Multimooog, Polymoog, Source, Rogue, Little Phatty and even the Taurus 1 bass pedal, as well as the Etherwave Theremin and Vocoder. It's a 16-part multitimbral show with 256-note polyphony and slots neatly into SampleTank – look out for fruity deals on the IK website if you already have this latter.

## Grey-haired Prog-Rockers may well blub themselves into dementia when assessing what's on offer

decisions', and there's no lack of tonal options available. What's interesting are the interfaces of each. While aesthetically different, reflecting the design of the devices on which they're based, both SampleTron and SampleMoog feature sets of intuitive, reassuringly retro-looking rotaries neatly divided into logical sections.

First up is the Part section, which enables you to manipulate the pitch, pitch-bend range, pan and other fundamentals relevant to the patch loaded. More than 50 parameters, divided into eight sections, are game for warping – here's where dual envelopes, LFOs and velocity settings can be fine-

tuned. Then we're on to a basic Resampling module, which is used to speed up or slow down samples without re-processing them.

More sophisticated is STRETCH (it must have taken a good few meetings to render Sampletank Time REsynthesis TeCHnology into a workable acronym), which is used to mangle loops without affecting time or pitch. Then we've Macro controls for numerous global parameter changes, including portamento, legato and even applying the eight-second note limit of the Mellotron tape (contrary to popular belief, Mellotrons do not use tape loops). Speaking of which, wow, flutter

and all manner of graunchy tape gloop can be introduced with the Noise knob.

There are four effects slots for each patch and an

array of 32 digital effects with which to populate them, the tempo-based FX being syncable with the host sequencer.

A Zone function enables you to map sounds to different keyboard ranges and, as you'd expect, there's a lot of real-time MIDI control to be had. Timbres can be mutated on the fly and it's possible to customise which MIDI controllers affect which parameters.

Fundamental, however, is sound. If your tastes run to authentic, analogue tone-palettes, then both SampleTron and SampleMoog have ye olde worlde tonality in buckets. From the grainy strings and choirs of the Mellotron to the blarps and warbles of many a Moog, IK's latest delivers. As is the current trend, if your direction is full-steam ahead backwards, Smoog and Stron will not disappoint. **FM**



### SPECS

**Mac:** 866MHz PPC G4/1.5GHz Intel Core Solo (1.66GHz Core Duo recommended), 512MB RAM, OS X 10.4+, standalone, or Audio Units, VST or RTAS plug-in host  
**PC:** Pentium 1GHz/Athlon XP 1.33GHz (2.4GHz recommended), 512MB RAM, Windows XP/Vista, standalone or VST or RTAS plug-in host

### ALTERNATIVES



Arturia Analog Factory 2.0

£170

An utter bargain, this latest incarnation of Analog Factory sports 3,500 analogue synth sounds, including Moogs, ARPs, Prophets and more. There's a hefty amount of patch modification to be had and, being a modeller, it doesn't stuff up your media drive.

[arturia.com](http://arturia.com)



Native Instruments Komplete Classics

£340

OK, so there's not a Moog or Mellotron in sight with this bundle. But you do get four acoustic pianos, two Fender Rhodes, a Hohner Clavinet E7 and a Wurlitzer A200, all powered by NI's elegant Kontakt ROMpler engine.

[native-instruments.com](http://native-instruments.com)



Zero-G Nostalgia

£TBA

Currently off-market, while the developer whips up an Intel-Mac compatible version, Nostalgia promises a wealth of vintage patches covering four decades of synth technology. Let's see what the update brings.

[zero-g.co.uk](http://zero-g.co.uk)

**FutureMusic VERDICT**

**BUILD**

**VALUE**

**EASE OF USE**

**VERSATILITY**

**RESULTS**

Slightly pricey, but authenticity costs. Both SampleMoog and SampleTron do a worthy job.