



WHAT IS IT?

VSL's multi-sampled Bösendorfer Piano instrument. Providing stunning, authentic piano performances

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Unprecedented authenticity
- 2 Three sampled microphone positions
- 3 Sub bass notes an unexpected bonus



FutureMusic

Platinum Award

VSL Vienna Imperial | £535

VSL have attempted the world's best sampled piano. *Jono Buchanan* cracks knuckles and strikes a chord

SPECS

Minimum requirements:

PC: Intel/AMD with Windows XP/Vista 32- and 64-bit versions (Core 2 Duo/Xeon recommended)

Mac: Apple G4 (G5 or Intel Core 2 Duo/Xeon processor recommended) with Mac OS X 10.4 or higher

1GB RAM (2GB or more recommended)

Fast separate hard drive with 55GB free space

ViennaKey (Vienna Symphonic Library USB protection device or other Syncrosoft eLicenser)

Master keyboard and authorisation. Compatible VST, RTAS, or Audio Units plug-in host application software, AGP or PCIe graphics video adapter card (PCI graphics not supported)

Vienna Symphonic Library might have built their reputation on providing high quality samples of more

'traditional' symphony orchestra instruments but their obsession with high-quality pianos is also fairly well established.

The Bösendorfer Imperial, released in 2006, remains among VSL's catalogue of instruments and for those of a more experimental nature, the Special Keyboards package includes samples from a Prepared Piano, allowing users access to playing techniques from the heyday of Musique Concrète. However, VSL clearly felt they had unfinished business so here, accordingly, is Vienna Imperial featuring seven-and-a-half times the number of samples of Bösendorfer Imperial.

Vienna Imperial is sampled from a Bösendorfer 290 Imperial piano and, as we'll see later, it's a rather special sample collection.

Those familiar with VSL's Ensemble and Instrument players are used to installing new VSL sample collections onto hard drives of choice and then accessing those libraries via one of those 2 interfaces (alongside a valid license on an attached Vienna USB Key, of course). Vienna Imperial is new, however, in that it features its own dedicated player window and therefore loads as a unique plug-in in your 'software instrument' list.

Hungry hungry hard drive

Your hard drive will lose 37GB at the install stage but Vienna Imperial actually contains a whacking 55GB of data to accommodate its 69,663 samples – the playback engine decompresses the library files in real time so that space is saved. Once loaded, the GUI is straightforward.

The piano has been multi-sampled in three positions – Close, Player and Distant, one of which can be loaded at

any one time and the middle of which captures the sound at the playing position. In addition to the full range of the piano, Imperial provides an additional nine sub bass notes the like of which I've never heard in a sampled piano before. They're included as some Classical music works demand them in performance but their richness will appeal to sound designers too.

Wonderful science

Quite aside from being a comprehensively multi-sampled instrument, Imperial uses Reptition Performance Technology to ensure that the sound it makes is as authentic as possible. This takes into account that if a key is re-struck, it will sound different to a note which is being struck for the first time, as the piano string will already be moving.

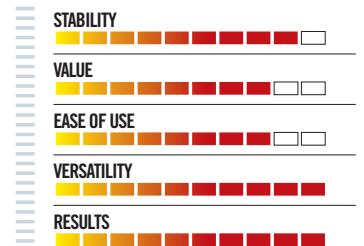
Accordingly, the Imperial engine plays an entirely different sample if you play the same note twice to take this into account, foregoing the dreaded 'machine gun' effect of repetitive samples. Imperial also features no looped samples in either pedal up or down modes – all sustain portions of sounds are 'as recorded', once again ensuring that authenticity runs as close to maximum as possible.

Imperialist

All of which means that Vienna Imperial is the best-sounding sampled piano I've ever played and heard. I've lost count of the number of times I got lost in the joys of simply playing this instrument and forgetting the source during the review process and I can see that I'll be turning to it a great deal in future, for production and composition work.

It's expensive but still a damn sight cheaper and more convenient than actually buying yourself a Bösendorfer Imperial. If you need authentic sounding pianos in your creative work, the search ends here. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT



Is this the best-sounding sampled piano available? Put simply: yes. A truly universal piano solution.