

**WHAT IS IT?**

A fully-featured update to NI's popular groovebox

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 MPC60 and SP-1200 emulations
- 2 MIDI export
- 3 DAW automation support



# NI Maschine 1.5 | free/£529

Not content with the already doted Maschine, NI step in with even more additions. **Declan McGlynn** grooves with version 1.5...

**W**hen Maschine launched over a year ago, it was somewhat of a game changer for NI, and the software studio market in general. With a product that mimicked the MPC with the almost endless versatility of a software engine and GUI, NI were able to tackle (and tackle successfully) several niches at once and Maschine was welcome with open arms by the pad-pushing public.

It wasn't without it's faults though and from launch NI's forums have been alive with feature suggestions. The 1.1 update in November last year did much – direct MIDI sequencing

from the hardware to your studio gear, drag-and-drop audio rendering of your patterns and more – but the salivating public never rest and more feature requests have been met v1.5. And once again it's free to all existing Maschine users. Yes!

To avoid gobbling my word count, instead of listing every new feature (and there are a lot) I'll take you straight to the juicy additions. The first thing you'll notice in Maschine 1.5 is the new Sampler tab settings when you load a sound or kit. Instead of the familiar Pitch/Gate page, we're met with a new Voice Settings page, where you can reduce the polyphony of your

sample from 32 voices to one, or bring it below zero to introduce a Legato mode. What's most exciting about this new page though, is the new Engine section. Here, you can replay your sounds via emulations of classic samplers, namely the Akai MPC60 and E-mu SP-1200. These new playback options are fantastic for adding fizz and air to your beats, especially percussion, snares and claps. Have a listen to the examples on the DVD for more. It really comes into it's own as soon as you pitch your sounds up or down, adding a satisfying grit.

**Vintage vogue**

Unfortunately it's not possible to apply the emulation across a whole Group, only on individual sounds. NI's reasoning behind this is solid though. Firstly, the artifacts in these vintage samplers come from a repitching algorithm and how much a sound is repitched during playback, so it wouldn't be true to apply it to a Group as a whole. Secondly, NI say the engine is quite CPU intensive, so to include an option to 'batch-process' every sound in a Group with the same emulation would eat up your processing. Hopefully, NI can work out a way to apply these engines to every sound without too much CPU sufferance, as they do sound fantastically fizzy.

Speaking of MPCs, it's now possible to import MPC banks directly into Maschine and any long-term MPC users with unfinished (or finished) projects will be over the moon about it.

### Frontline improvements

Bridging Maschine and its host DAW has clearly become a priority for NI, and a few other new features seal the deal. As quick dragging of audio to your DAW was introduced in v1.1, it's now possible to do the same with MIDI. Your Maschine patterns can then be used either with other plug-ins or to send MIDI back to Maschine. The great thing about this is that subtle programming variations can be introduced in your beat using the familiar interface of your DAW and any of its quantisation or MIDI editing functions you might have missed while using Maschine's GUI.

The biggest improvement for me, though, is probably the simplest one. It's now possible to edit the volume and pitch of Groups and Sounds simply by holding the pad or Group button you want to change and adjusting the hardware's master

### Macro Mapping

Another much requested feature has landed in our laps – DAW automation – and NI have handled it particularly well, introducing a new feature called Macros. Kind of like Ableton Live's feature of the same name, eight unmanned knobs on the new macro page can be assigned to any feature deep within Maschine's brain. For example, cutoff of a snare, delay of a clap

and pitch of a kick can all be mapped to the same Macro page for quick and easy access to your most-used parameters.

Every Group has its own Macro page with up to eight mappings, so there's a lot of potential here. Though I assume this was implemented with a focus on live performance, it's also really useful in a studio environment, if you are accessing a lot of the

same parameters that are spread around the plug-in.

You can then map these Macros as automation lanes in your DAW, all of which are handily named for easy reference. It's not possible to map your macros using the hardware so you will have to grab the mouse for this, but it only needs to be done once, as it's now possible to save a default start-up template.

improved destructive sample editing capabilities on the hardware itself, with a number of new functions implemented such as truncate, reverse, copy, paste and fix DC offset. These features, along with zoom and scrolling, are so well incorporated that you don't even need to look at your screen for quick editing of samples – remarkable really, considering the downfall of hardware samplers was

Maschine edit of the new Abbey Road drums pack (see page 100 for more) and the ability to save your projects with the sample files included for self-contained sharing.

Also, you can now also load kits without loading their demo pattern over your programmed one – something that always confused me in earlier versions, so I'm glad to see that ditched.

## You forget you are using a MIDI controller, and Maschine takes on a life of it's own under your fingers

volume and tempo knob for pitch. It always was a little crazy that you couldn't have instant access to a drum's pitch and volume while playing ie, like a drum machine. Now you forget you are essentially using a MIDI controller, and Maschine takes on a whole life of it's own underneath your fingers. This is also helped by the

heavily based on editing difficulties on small screens.

So far so good, then. NI have taken an already impressive and relatively unique product and put ever-more enticing bells on. And we are literally only orbiting the surface of this update on these pages. There's also 1GB of new sample content, including the

that this type of hard-soft integration is the way ahead for the software studio and with this update Maschine has become the landmark product we wanted it to be. V1.5 is an update I would have happily paid for, and NI would have been within their right to charge for. The scope Maschine now covers means that no matter what music you make, I would be incredibly surprised if you didn't fall in love. **FM**

### Forward thinking

With this update, NI have not only bridged Maschine and the DAW, but the past and the future. There's no doubt in my mind

#### Macro Knobs

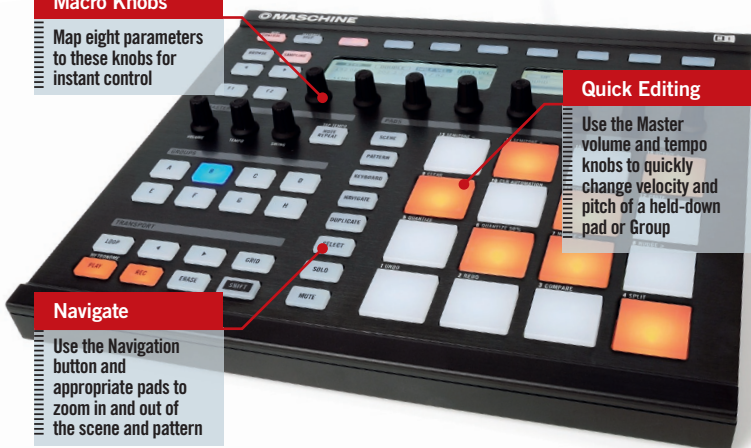
Map eight parameters to these knobs for instant control

#### Quick Editing

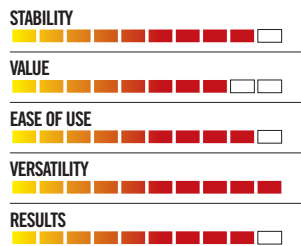
Use the Master volume and tempo knobs to quickly change velocity and pitch of a held-down pad or Group

#### Navigate

Use the Navigation button and appropriate pads to zoom in and out of the scene and pattern



### FutureMusic VERDICT



What was once a serious front-runner is now a must-have. Maschine has come of age.

### SPECS

**PC:** Windows XP / Vista (32-/64-bit)  
 Windows 7: (32-/64-bit), Pentium or Athlon XP 2GHz, 2GB RAM  
**Mac:** OS X 10.5 or higher, Intel® Core™ Duo 2GHz, 2GB RAM  
**Dimensions:** 320 x 295 x 60mm  
**Weight:** 1.8kg

### ALTERNATIVES



**FXpansion Guru**  
 £149

Much cheaper, but with no hardware, Guru is a comprehensive loop maker and mangler.

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



**Xfer Records Nerve**  
 \$199

A nicher sound-set than Maschine, but with much more sample manipulation possibilities. Still no hardware, though.

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



**Akai MPC1000**  
 £650

No computer needed and features very similar functions but with nowhere near the same DAW integration features.

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