



ON THE DVD

WHAT IS IT?

Dark and dirty ROMpler.

CONTACT

Who: Sounds Online

Web: [sounds
online-europe.com](http://sounds.online-europe.com)

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1** 40GB library focusing on dark, dirty sounds
- 2** PLAY Advanced Sample System virtual instrument
- 3** Built-in reverb, delays, ADT filter and envelope



EastWest The Dark Side | \$395

The force is strong with this one. **Greg Scarth** doesn't underestimate the power of the dark side

SPECS

System requirements:

40GB free hard drive space,
DVD drive, iLok key.
7200rpm or faster hard
drive for sample streaming

Mac: Intel Core 2 Duo processor, 2.1GHz. 2GB RAM. Mac OS X 10.5 or later

PC: Intel Core 2 Duo or AMD Dual Core 2.1GHz, 2GB RAM. Windows XP SP2, Vista or Windows 7. Soundcard with ASIO

With a history spanning back over two decades, EastWest have consistently produced

some of the best sample libraries on the market, from their early Akai-format collections through to the industry standard Hollywood Strings orchestral package. Whereas most of their previous releases have stuck to very clearly defined themes, *The Dark Side* takes a slightly more abstract approach.

Installation and interface

As with most big sample libraries, don't expect immediate plug and play satisfaction from The Dark Side. Installation of the six-DVD collection is a lengthy process, taking a good few hours to copy 40GB of 24-bit, 88.2kHz samples to your computer. On top of that, you'll also need a much-maligned iLok key for authentication. Once you've jumped through the registration hoops, using the software is easy. Rather than simply being a sample pack, Dark Side is an instrument in its own right thanks

to EastWest's PLAY sample player, which can run in standalone or plug-in mode. With a nicely designed interface and clear controls, it's incredibly easy to get to grips with.

Skipping through the instrument presets, it's immediately apparent that *Dark Side* lives up to its name, offering dozens of nasty, heavily processed and distorted drums, bass, guitars, keys, strings, choirs and FX. It's easy to imagine most of the sounds being used to beef up productions of guitar bands or add an extra dirty element to synth-based tracks. The heavily distorted bass and guitar sounds take on synth-like tones, while the strings and choirs are processed and distinctive but still very usable without completely dominating mixes.

The 28 drum patches offer the expected variety of monstrously heavy clean and processed samples but I can't help but think anyone who's serious about ROMpler drums should probably turn to a more versatile and dedicated drum plug-in.

Tweakability

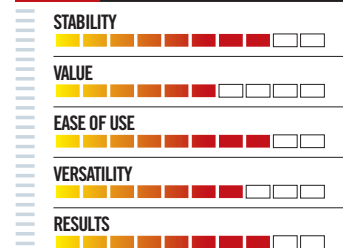
With a total of 144 instrument presets included, The Dark Side represents reasonable value for money. However, a lot of the sounds could be created with relative ease using soft synths and a couple of distortion plug-ins.

If you're looking for tweakability, a synth would probably be a better way of achieving similar sounds. The Dark Side's sonic options are useful, but focus on effects rather than more advanced resynthesis of the samples. The convolution reverb is particularly good, with a broad range of presets that cover pretty much ever base. Delay and double tracking effects also provide genuinely useful options, while the basic low-pass filter and envelope controls make things even more flexible.

PLAY ran smoothly during my test, but it is worth pointing out the software's hefty system requirements. In addition to a relatively fast processor you'll need 40GB of free disk space and a 7200rpm drive if you want to stream samples direct from the disk (if you're using a 5400rpm drive you'll have to load samples into RAM). Unfortunately for Mac users, 64-bit operation isn't possible until 64-bit iLok support arrives, though we're told it's imminent.

Join the Dark Side

The Dark Side is one of the more interesting virtual instruments I've come across recently. The concept is a little unusual but surprisingly effective and the broad range of sounds on offer make it a great tool to have on hand. In terms of workflow, it's far preferable to reach straight for a dedicated dark instrument rather than working your way through hundreds of presets until you find something suitable. Overall, the quality of the sounds is excellent, although anyone looking for versatile sound-sculpting options may be better off using soft synths and distortion effects to achieve similar results. **FM**

FutureMusic **VERDICT**

A doom-laden ROMpler with plenty of instruments to choose from and useful effects.

