WHAT IS IT?
An orchestral sample library with 'instant scoring' in mind

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HIGHLIGHTS

1 Hugely playable collections of instruments

2 Array of orchestral special effects

3 Genuinely innovative approach to composition

ProjectSam Symphobia | £899

What can ProjectSam's Symphobia collection bring to the busy virtual orchestra rostrum? Plenty, as *Jono Buchanan* discovers…

SPECS

System Requirements
PC: Windows XP or Windows Vista 32-bit on Pentium or Athlon XP 1.4GHz, 1GB RAM
Mac: OS X 10.4 or later on G4 1.4GHz or Intel® Core Duo 1.66GHz, 1GB RAM

18GB of free disk space for complete installation

Comes with NI Kontakt Player for library playback, will also open into Kontakt 2 or higher

These are great times for soundtrack composers who need convincing orchestral samples. With titanic collections available from a range of developers, it might seem an odd time for the programmers at ProjectSam to consider the launch of a new orchestral software instrument title.

However, the brains behind Symphobia are soundtrack and games composers themselves, who know exactly what's missing from the current crop of software orchestral titles – namely, multi-instrument combinations and orchestral effects which are ready to burst forth to accompany all manner of cinematic styles, with a minimum of organisational fuss.

After a painless install, Symphobia occupies about 18GB of your hard drive space and uses Native Instruments' Kontakt Player as its front end. Its sounds are organised into single instruments and ready-made multis, which stack individual instruments into groups, assigned to the same MIDI channel for simultaneous playback.

Cinematic textures

The orchestral samples have been meticulously recorded with correct orchestral positioning, so that when you hit a note with strings, winds and brass all contained therein, sound simply explodes from every corner of the stereo spectrum. The multis are imaginatively titled too, so you can quickly find combinations of instruments ready to score any 'virtual scene', be it romantic, quirky, dramatic, or downright scary.

Put simply, this is one of the most instantly playable orchestral libraries I've ever come across and it beats the majority of its competition in terms of load times and access to orchestral combinations to suit a broad spectrum of film styles. The advantage for programmers who want the sound of an orchestra but wouldn't quite know where to begin with raw samples couldn't really be clearer either – Symphobia will have you mocking up scores in a trice.

The limitations of the library are represented simply by the range of instrument articulations present and consequently, of those missing. You'll find ensemble groups aplenty, with strings, brass and winds represented in a range of playing styles but, except for a solo string quintet, you'll find no solo instruments. What you will find alongside the more traditional orchestral elements, is a huge collection of orchestral effects, including rises, glissandi, chord clusters and mad, spiky pizzicato patches.

High score

If you're interested in scoring for film, TV or games soundtracks, Symphobia is highly recommended. It manages to provide something different from many of the orchestral sample libraries available and, while its sampleset might not be quite as broad as that of some rivals, it makes up for this both in ease of use and sheer, glorious playability.

The manufacturers of Symphobia know that most orchestral software takes time and patience to get to a stage where realistic, dramatic sounds are being made. It aims to turn this process around and succeeds with flying colours. It's a genuinely inspirational instrument and if it doesn't fill you with ideas, you're in the wrong game. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT

STABILITY	
VALUE	
EASE OF USE	
VERSATILITY	
RESULTS	
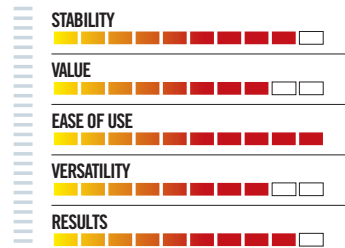
Symphobia makes it easy to make the Cinematic Orchestral music you want – fast.