

Vir2

Electri6ity £259



PC MAC

We crank it up to 11 with this multisampled library of eight classic axes, including built-in amp simulation

> The workstation guitar patches of yesteryear typically used a handful of feeble-sounding samples or, even worse, cheesy FM synthesis. The results were thoroughly unconvincing, but the tables have since turned, Vir2's new Electri6ity sample library being a case in point.

It's in Kontakt format and comes with the Kontakt Player, so you needn't be a Kontakt owner to use it. Over 24,000 samples make up each of the eight guitars. At the twangier end of the scale, you've got a Fender Strat and Tele, with their natural enemy the Gibson Les Paul at the other. There are two LPs, in fact: one standard and one with P90 pickups. Jazz cats will lap up the dulcet tones of the Gibson ES-335 and L4, while indie jangle and fizzy pop can be had with the Rickenbacker and Danelectro axes. All are played with a pick - there's legato playing, of course, but no fingered plucking.

There are four main views - Performance being the default - with sliders for basic parameters like pickup (front, rear or both), strum speed, vibrato type/strength/speed, etc.

Oh, the humanity!

Electri6ity's behind-the-scenes scripting does a lot to interpret and 'humanise' parts - it's a bit like having a virtual guitarist to go along with your virtual guitar. For example, play a chord and it detects this, rapidly triggering the notes in sequence, just as a guitarist would strike a chord. Chords are converted into guitar voicings and picking direction is handled automatically.

All of the 'artificial intelligence' features can be disabled or further configured in the Settings panel, which offers a ridiculous degree of control over the characteristics of strumming, picking, vibrato and so on. There are also extra features, such as sympathetic resonance (unplayed strings softly ring when playing chords). Any Settings parameter can be assigned to any MIDI CC.

All guitars have been recorded dry and direct, for running through an amp sim plug-in. There



are also 'Amped' patches, with an extra panel for effects (delay, reverb, modulation), a Tube Screamer-alike and a straightforward amp sim.

So, the sound. You've heard an electric guitar, right? Well, it sounds a *lot* like that, and is good for pretty much any style: rock rhythm, smooth jazz comping, screaming metal leads, twanging clean tones - you name it, Electri6ity can handle it. We weren't expecting much from the built-in amp sim, but were pleasantly surprised - it's thoroughly usable. It's also a lot of fun to try out different guitars mid-session, layer them, etc.

Omissions are that the Strat doesn't have all five pickup positions sampled, and there's no full-on detuned metal axe either. All guitars do go down to a meaty C, but an EMG-loaded seven-stringer would've been nice. Creating convincing parts is fairly painless, with the

humanising features helping a great deal. It's worth tweaking their settings - the release noise types and so on - to suit the piece. If anything, Electri6ity can sound a bit *too* proficient at times: for instance, fast runs in the Solo/Legato mode are very clean, and we found it sometimes sounded more authentic to program them in Poly mode and overlap some of the notes a bit. Still, what you've got is essentially a super-tight session player on tap..

This is the most comprehensive virtual electric guitar package we've seen, doing for guitars what Superior Drummer and BFD did for drums. **cm**

Web www.vir2.com
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System requirements

PC 1.4GHz CPU, 4GB RAM, Windows XP/Vista/7, 27GB free drive space

Mac Intel 1.66GHz CPU, 4GB RAM, OS X 10.5.x, 27GB free drive space

Alternatively

Prominy SC Electric Guitar

N/A >> N/A >> €249

Ultra-realistic sampled Strat. Prominy do a Les Paul one too

Impact Soundworks Shreddage

cm151 >> 9/10 >> \$49

Sampled guitar focused specifically on metal rhythm playing

Verdict

For Can sound very convincing

Eight distinct guitars

Good built-in amp sim

Extensive articulations with morphing

Articulation/velocity morphing

Fine-grained control over AI behaviour

Against No deep-tuned metal guitar

Doesn't offer all Strat pickup positions

A superb solution for anyone seeking a broad palette of convincing sampled axes

9/10

Technical difficulties

Articulation switching is mainly handled through the extensive keyswitching system, which is easier to use than it might appear. The three main keyswitches to get down are those for Poly, Solo (picked) and Legato modes. Others offer trills, tremolo picking, pinch harmonics, muted playing, hammer ons, pull offs and slides. There are also FX like whammy bar dives and pick slides. Toward the top of the keyboard are keys for right-hand motions such as strum up/

down and picking of individual strings. You can thus hold a chord with one hand while strumming/picking with the other.

Vir2's AMT (Articulation Morphing Technology) enables you to seamlessly blend between articulations using velocity or a MIDI CC. The same Vir2 morphing technology is also used for velocity layers. It's not simple crossfading, nor does it use Kontakt's AET morphing - Vir2 have cooked it up themselves, and it sounds very natural.