

Slate Digital PC MAC Trigger Platinum £255



You wait an age for a new drum replacement plug-in, then, like buses, two have come along at once! Trigger's up first...

> Slate Digital's debut product is Trigger, a drum replacement plug-in. You feed drum parts (ie, from multitrack recordings) into it and it outputs 'triggered' audio, or a blend of the dry/wet signals. For a fuller explanation of drum triggering, see *Busting Jargon* on p13.

Before you can dial in the triggering settings, you need to load up a sound. We're reviewing the Platinum edition of Trigger here, which is currently the only version (the EX edition should be out by the time you read this), and it comes with more than 30 kicks, eight banks of toms and 45 snares, accessible via the instrument browser. The samples offer direct mics, stereo overheads, room mics, and some reverbed sounds too. They're all fantastic quality - we actually had trouble finding any we didn't like!

The bundled samples feature 'articulation modes', which can give a harder or softer overall sound. Up to six sounds can be layered, each with volume, tune, pan, amplitude envelope, etc. There are dynamics and velocity response curves too. Trigger imports WAV/AIFF and can output MIDI, so you could use it to drive a drum instrument like Battery, BFD2, etc.

Trigger happy

The upper part of Trigger's interface shows the incoming audio level in blue, with orange flags whenever a trigger point is generated. The display also houses controls for the high-pass filter, Leakage Suppression (see boxout) and dry/wet mix. Getting Trigger to track the input is easy. First adjust the input level, then increase the Detail dial until the line representing it is just above the 'noise floor'. The Sensitivity knob is set according to the playing intricacy, while the Retrigger control can help alleviate flammings.

Trigger offers a Live mode with 2ms latency (potentially for stage use with a laptop, or for studio monitoring when recording) and Accurate, at 11ms. Live mode is comparable to a high-quality hardware drum module (eg,



ddrum), while for mixing, Accurate mode claims to align the samples to be precisely in phase with the original audio.

We tested Trigger using a variety of material, from rock drumming to hard-to-track material involving double strokes around the entire kit. We also recorded some deliberately variable, inconsistent parts - this kind of playing is a prime candidate for being triggered to MIDI so that the timing can be corrected, but it can be a challenge to trigger properly in the first place.

Amazingly, Trigger handled everything we threw at it - even soft ghost notes amid busy tom fills were picked up thanks to the superb Leakage Suppression feature. Once dialled in properly, mistriggers were very occasional, and nothing that a little automation or MIDI editing couldn't fix. The Accurate mode really works too, maximising coherency and tightness when the samples are blended with the audio.

We have to say that Slate's offering beats anything else we've tried, raising the bar considerably for all would-be competitors. **cm**

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System requirements

PC Intel/AMD CPU with SSE2, 1GB RAM, Windows XP/Vista/7 (32/64), 2.4GB HD space, VST/RTAS host, iLok

Mac G5/Intel CPU, 1GB RAM, OS X 10.4 or later, 2.4GB HD space VST/AU/RTAS host, iLok

Alternatively

Avid Pro Tools 8

cm136 >> 9/10 >> £Varies

This DAW's 'tab to transient' feature has long been used for triggering

WaveMachine Labs

Drumagog 4 Pro

cm88 >> 8/10 >> £290

Slightly long in the tooth but still decent, with v5 coming soon

Verdict

For Amazingly accurate triggering
Brilliant Leakage Suppression function
Bundled samples are top class
Phase-accurate replacement
Dead easy to use
Live and Accurate modes

Against Nothing!

Trigger is the new gold standard in drum replacement software. It's easy to use, triggers like a dream, and sounds terrific

10/10

Bleeding edge technology

When recording drums, it's inevitable that hits from all around the kit will bleed into every mic to some degree. This can play havoc with drum replacement, as a loud tom hit might inadvertently trigger a snare drum sample, for example.

To combat this, Trigger has an innovative feature dubbed Leakage Suppression. To use it, you send the drum channel to be triggered (eg, snare) to Trigger's left input, and the channels that are leaking onto it

(eg, toms, hi-hat) to the right - now trigger can exclude the leaking hits from the triggering process. In use, this can vastly improve tracking, especially on complex snare parts when there's a lot going on elsewhere. Trigger is thus able to track ghost notes more accurately, ensuring that the life is not sucked out of a performance.

Setting up the routing can be fiddly, but you only have to do it once per song, and you can always make a template for it.