



Native Instruments Komplete 10



£429 **PC** **MAC**

Bundles don't come much bigger than NI's epic offering, and this year's edition introduces yet more intriguing new toys

> An elegant exercise in upselling, NI's Komplete 10 bundle is priced only a fraction higher than just one of its individual flagship components. For a mere £90 more than Reaktor 5 or Kontakt 5 alone, you can avail yourself of 39 excellent instruments and effects, including the aforementioned must-haves, Massive, FM8, Absynth 5, Battery 4, Guitar Rig 5 Pro, and a ton of soundware to boot. And that's just the standard edition; there's also the awe-inspiring, 75-product Komplete 10 Ultimate to consider - see *The Ultimate seduction box* for details.

Every year, Komplete is bolstered with new additions, and v10 introduces a trio of original Reaktor ensembles and a collection of Kontakt-based pianos (as well as four of NI's releases from the past year, which we'll cover later).

Of the three Reaktor instruments, Kontour is probably the most immediately enticing - it's an FM synth based on two sine oscillators, with feedback, waveshaping, and separate comb and

multimode filters. Although it might not appear to be particularly revolutionary, Kontour is capable of generating cool organic lead and percussion tones, and will even stretch to authentic acoustic string plucks and filthy basses. It also boasts innovative motion recording macro controls that can record and play back parameter modulations, like a flexible envelope - great for sculpting evolving sounds. We found Kontour to be the most compelling of K10's new instruments, and like everything else

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in the bundle, it can be bought and demoed as a standalone product, too.

Swings and roundabouts

Next up is crazy performance synth Rounds, which is completely baffling at first but does have some exciting-sounding presets to draw you in. Wading through the rather convoluted manual makes its complexity apparent: at its heart are 16 voice generators, eight of them virtual analogue-style (Analog) and eight FM-based (Digital). These are played via eight Sound Blocks, only one of which is active at a time. A Sound Block comprises four Sound Cells, each of which is assigned an Analog or Digital voice, and all of which can be played simultaneously or individually. How the Sound Blocks and their constituent Sound Cells play is down to the instrument's Voice Programmer, which has five Voice Modes and three Poly Modes, plus three Progress Modes that

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define when the instrument switches to the next Sound Block. If all that wasn't confusing enough, you can also morph between sounds at various levels.

It's a lot to take in, and thanks to its complexity and arduous learning curve, Rounds is likely to remain the preserve of the dedicated synthesist, though preset junkies will appreciate its impressive, complex-centric factory patches.

The last of the new Reaktor instruments is Polyplex, which operates much like a simplified version of NI's Battery drum sampler. It features eight Sound slots, each of which can play up to four samples from the instrument's substantial built-in library simultaneously. Each sample is tweakable in terms of pitch, start point, pan, volume and play direction, and there are some fun modulation systems, effects and clever randomisation functions to get into. Polyplex is definitely at the less 'involved' end of the Komplete scale, but the presets kits are enjoyable to mess with, and the ability to import your own samples gives it a bit of depth.

Tickling the ivories

Aside from the Reaktor instruments, the only other new product debuts in Komplete 10 are Komplete Kontrol (a 64-bit only plugin that gives access to the entire Komplete 10 preset library from a single browser - read more on p96) and the Kontakt-based Definitive Piano Collection. This includes The Grandeur concert grand, The Maverick vintage grand, and The Gentleman upright piano. All three are well-recorded and feature excellent, intuitive timbre customisation tools - Tone Colour knobs, Lid position toggles, Overtone level and Dynamics Range controls - and more familiar parameters, such as noise levels for the hammers, dampers, strings and pedals. There are also some useful built-in mixing tools: stereo Width control, and EQ, compressor and reverb effects. They're a joy to play, and you can easily get bright, poppy sounds out of them as well as more naturalistic results - a notable improvement over previous



The new Kontour synth can deliver grungy synth bass and surprisingly convincing acoustic plucks



Action Strings provides a comprehensive set of building blocks for sophisticated string parts

The Ultimate seduction

Priced £849, Komplete 10 Ultimate ships on a portable USB3 hard drive - for some, this alone will make it preferable to the standard version, which comes on a whopping 13 DVDs! The software won't run directly from the drive, however, and must be installed, just like the standard version.

When we ran the Komplete 10 Ultimate installer on our test machine, it wouldn't actually recognise our existing Komplete 8 Ultimate installation, so we had to manually delete its factory content to make enough hard drive space for the new version. Of course, this meant that the

dropped-from-K10 Classic Pianos were no longer available. If you find yourself in the same situation and want them back, they can be installed separately with your previous version of Komplete.

In addition to the 39 products in the standard version, Ultimate includes the innovative Razor 1.5 additive synth, a range of Softube compressors and reverbs, and an absolute shedload of soundware, including cinematic string library Action Strings, the retro-styled Abbey Road Drummers and various Scarbee guitars. To see the whole 75-strong line-up, see the comparison chart at bit.ly/kompareU10.

NI pianos.

The Definitive Pianos replace Komplete's incumbent Classic Pianos (Upright, Berlin Concert Grand, New York Concert Grand, Vienna Concert Grand), and we certainly found the new models to be superior.

Finally, alongside all that new stuff, there are a few other additions to Komplete that have been available for a while as separate plugins: the Driver distortion filter (previously also in Komplete 9 Ultimate), Session Horns brass library (ditto), Supercharger GT tube compressor and Drumlab drum designer. All of them are excellent and welcome additions to the package.

The Komplete package

While all of its fresh instruments, effects and sounds are up to NI's usual high standard, there's nothing new in this year's Komplete that carries anything like the gravitas of its flagship titles (Massive, Kontakt, Reaktor, etc), so owners of K9 shouldn't feel any desperate need to upgrade. However, for newcomers and those still on Komplete 8, Komplete 10 is NI's best value bundle yet and a terrific investment for any music producer. **cm**

Web www.native-instruments.com
Info Komplete 10 upgrade, £169;
 Komplete 10 Ultimate upgrade, £339

Alternatively

MeldaProduction MTotalBundle
N/A » N/A » €799

A selection of 74 effects covering everything from pitch correction to waveshaping

Korg Legacy Collection
cm111 » 9/10 » \$199

Classic synths and cool effects from one of the giants of music tech

Verdict

For Kontour is deep, with great presets
 Driver and Supercharger sound fantastic
 Polyplex is good fun
 Top-notch new pianos
 Session Horns and Drumlab are superb

Against Rounds requires commitment
 Installer didn't recognise Komplete 8
 New additions aren't earth-shaking

The new additions to Komplete 10 might be minor, but it remains a great buy for the value-conscious computer musician

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