

Toontrack Cinematic Pads - EZ Keys Expansion pack

£129



With sound design running through its core, Toontrack's latest visit to the flicks brings complex pads to a DAW near you!

> In the Toontrack eco-sphere, they pretty much have you covered for the majority of your commercial music requirements. With the impressive roster of EZDrummer, EZ Bass and EZKeys, the ease with which you can assemble impressive track elements, with equally impressive speed, is genius personified. However, Toontrack have recently been furnishing their EZ Packs with imaginative elements of sound design.

The silver Screen

The EZKeys suite started life as an accessible way to get great pianistic sounds into your song, (especially helpful to non-keyboardists) and the lineup has been increasing steadily since.

The opening salvo of pan-swept goodness immediately inspires confidence, thanks to the glittering array of sampled content, from analogue and modular synths, through to bowed guitars and a Bösendorfer grand piano.

This is the brainchild of Mattias Eklundh, co-founder of Toontrack and head of sound design. The imaginative use of sampled elements filters down into an easy-to-use construct: on the one hand, you can take advantage of the onboard MIDI elements, which will make easy (EZ!) work of chord progressions, if your pianistic tendencies are limited. But on the other hand, it's a pad-like-powerhouse of content, which is ready to go.

The elements are arranged into six menus, labelled for descriptive guidance, with categories including Atmospheric, Bells, and Saturated. You can guess the sort of patch you'll find in each arena, and as is always the case with Toontrack, the GUI is intuitive and pleasing to look at. With more than 70 patches which are mix-ready, the collection sounds beautifully crafted, creating inspiration from the moment you play a chord. By the nature of the cinematic pad-shaped beast, many of these patches take a moment to get going, often with swathes of movement across the stereo field.

Attack of the edits!

One of the shortcomings of a product such as this is the lack of what one might call advanced control. There is capacity to save user presets, but with much of the content prescribed already, you are left with only basic access to control. It is possible to reduce the attack and release times of the presets, but in some cases, reducing the attack envelope phase does not result in the immediate volume shape that you might require. Clearly, some instances have slow attack elements built in, but then again, that's what you want for most cinematic pads.

There is also filter control, in both low-pass and hi-pass formats. Both cases appear to exhibit a slight degree of resonance application, which sounds lovely, but is again prescribed,

with no ability to alter. It's also interesting to note that the low-pass cutoff operates as a mirror image, counterintuitive to what you might use elsewhere.

I could use a little more control for editing, but the overall sound quality and content is undeniably good. In fact, it sounds utterly amazing! This is an expansion pack, so newcomers need to purchase the host EZKeys package as an accompaniment, which is also offered as a package deal! **cm**

Web timespace.com/www.toontrack.com
Info £129/£155 including EZKeys package or £47/£60 for expansion pack only

Alternatively

Spitfire Audio - Cinematic Pads £29

Modestly priced pads pack created through the processing of symphonic orchestral recordings

Sonic Couture - Geosonics cm196 » 9/10 » £139

Some utterly beguiling textures created from pure noise

Verdict

For Beautiful collection of pad sounds
 Categories for easy auditioning
 Extensive MIDI/note builder for non-keyboard players
 Useful shaping control for tone/volume

Against Not great tonal control
 Requires host EZKeys package

Another classy Toontrack product, distilling the concept of the cinematic pad into a format that's useful for all

9/10

EZ Playability

What sets Toontrack products apart from some other products which offer similar useful constructs, is the quality of their sound. The MIDI element of all of the Toontrack lineup is exemplary, easy to use and very effective. As a keys player, you may not require this element, but don't disregard Toontrack on this basis, as you'll be missing out on some fantastic sounds. The fact that they also categorise their products means that once you are in the Toontrack zone,

adding new sounds and expansions is easy and comparatively cheap. In some cases, an absolute bargain for what you get. Apart from all shapes and sizes of acoustic and electric piano, the Hybrid Harp library is another case in point. Brimming with originality and uniqueness, these sounds will set you apart from others that rely and exist with onboard sounds from DAWs, making Toontrack very worth exploring. Your music will thank you!