

EZ MIXER

This ever-present section enables you to make quick adjustments to the mix

X-DRUMS

The basic kit is pretty big, but if it's not Bozzio enough for you, expand it with the X-Drums

ENVELOPE

Want more attack? You can shape the amplitude envelope of each drum here



TOONTRACK SUPERIOR DRUMMER 2.0



ESSENTIAL SPEC



PRICE
£189

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

PC: P4/Athlon 1.8GHz, 1GB RAM, 25GB HD space, Win XP/Vista, RTAS/VST host Mac: Dual G4 1.25GHz, 1GB RAM, 25GB HD space, OS X 10.4, RTAS/AU/VST host

DRUMS

12 drums; three hi-hats; four rides; 27 crashes; cowbell

EFFECTS

Compressor, gate, transient, EQ, filter

COMPATIBILITY

DFH Superior and EZdrummer libraries

CONTACT

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£189 Want a cheap drum kit that sounds like a million bucks, takes up no space and won't wake the neighbours? Lee Du-Caine's got one right here...

Toontrack released the popular Drumkit From Hell sample library in 2002, followed up by DFH Superior, which used the same samples wrapped up in a plug-in with a graphical interface. Superior Drummer 2.0 is the latest percussion package from Toontrack and it works as a plug-in or a standalone program. The team recorded the library at Avatar Studios, New York with session wizard Nir Z atop the throne. Like its esteemed predecessors, the software uses many thousands of samples of individual drum hits, recorded with multiple mics.

Build

Fire up SD2.0 and you're greeted with the Construction screen where you can easily cobble together a kit from the available drums and cymbals. You can drop in extra pieces using the X-Drum feature - since SD2.0 can import libraries from other Toontrack percussion products, you can use this to mix and match elements.

Each drum/cymbal has its own settings, including tuning and an amplitude envelope. You can choose from sticks, rods and

brushes, felt and plastic beaters, engage a 'no snare' option for certain drums and utilise numerous playing techniques (sidestick, rim shot, flam and so on).

The other main screen is the Mixer, with channels for every mic, bus and output. You can also apply effects (EQ, compression, gating, filters and transient-shaping), set bleed levels and configure sends.

Toontrack's EZplayer Pro MIDI arranger/organiser is also included, which scooped a four-star rating in a review last issue (page 98) and comes with many MIDI grooves.

Hands on

SD2.0 sounds great right out of the box. Drummers will enjoy switching around snares and cymbals - it's a neat way to 'try out' cymbals (all Sabian, by the way) to hear how they sound in a full kit context.

Levels are adjustable via the Construction screen and there are mixer presets for various styles and eras. You'll be at home with the Mixer screen as it's exactly like mixing a live kit, with multiple mics where appropriate - for example, top and bottom on the snare. The effects are simple yet highly effective.

As you're no doubt aware, when recording, each mic picks up the other drums too. Because Toontrack recorded each hit coming through every mic, this characteristic is preserved, so the results are eerily convincing. Best of all, you can change the bleed levels - such as the amount of hi-hat coming through the snare mic - which you certainly can't do in the real world!

Verdict

SD2.0 is a highly impressive package and possibly the best in its class - the only real grumble might be that you don't get more kits included in the package. Thanks to the flexibility sound-shaping features, though, the tone can be made to suit practically any genre of music requiring a drum kit. The sound is incredibly lifelike, the interface is as streamlined as can be and the kits load up quickly too, which could be vital on stage. Value-wise, for the price of a low-end snare drum, you can enjoy the sound of a high-end, expertly tuned kit recorded in a great room using expensive studio equipment. **A**

Rating ★★★★★