



Best Service Synth-Werk £219

PC MAC

From one of the biggest soundware companies comes a synth ROMpler with a very specific Germanic flavour

> Synth-Werk is a sample-based synth instrument with an unashamed nod towards the sounds of German electronic music pioneers Kraftwerk. Housed in Best Service's Engine player (see *The little Engine that could* boxout), it runs as AU, VST, RTAS or standalone.

The 8GB sample set is arranged across 13 categories ranging from the obvious (Bass, Pads and Synths), to the more specific (Melody, Stacked, Chord, Computer, Effects and Organik). There's also a Voices/Choirs/Vocoders folder and a Drums & Rhythm folder. Rounding things off is a folder of 'originals', which includes sounds from the Stylophone and TI Language Translator. Also worth mentioning is the fact the whole library is provided in both German and English, with patches launching in blue and green interfaces respectively. Wunderbar!

The Quick Edit screen is the most comprehensive we've seen on an Engine release to date. Options start with basic modification such as sample start point, portamento and unison, going on to pitch and start point randomisation, and LFO-to-volume settings. You've then got a multimode filter with ADSR envelope and a step modulator for the filter with over 40 presets. Effects start with tone controls (brilliance and an additional high-pass filter), before taking in reverb, delay, phaser, flanger, bit reduction and a limiter. Rounding things off are a volume envelope (AHDSR), stereo width, pan,

dynamic range and overall pitch. Finally, you've got an arpeggiator, step sequencer, and solo and legato options.

Glowing report

Once you get beyond the tastefully retro *Tron*-like glow of the Quick Edit page, the next thing you'll notice is the quality of the sounds. Most load up very quickly and make little use of the onboard features, apart from the sequencer and effects. That leaves you free to take the sounds further afield, modifying them to taste.

We found the combination of arpeggiator or sequencer (both tweaked in the Pro Edit page) and filter with effects worked very well with such carefully designed source sounds. Many of the patches load with ready-made sequences or filter step-modulation, providing plenty of movement and a wonderfully organic feel. For Kraftwerk fans, some sounds will seem very familiar, and the Chord Sounds and Computer Sounds folders represent a treasure trove of riches. This Germanic flavour is consistent across all categories.

A couple of gripes, though... Firstly, individual processing sections are too easy to deactivate by clicking close to the faders. Secondly, patches are labelled by category and numbered, eg, Computer Sound 026. This is certainly efficient, but it's also instantly forgettable, and doesn't indicate whether the sound is sequenced,

arpeggiated or neither. Finally, it's worth saying that you won't find any super-saw leads (actually, there's no leads category at all) or ready-made club sounds here; this is all precision electronica in its heritage, yet full of character at the same time.

You'd be hard pushed to find a better bunch of sounds along these lines, and the authenticity factor is very high. Given that such patches can be hard to coax from run-of-the-mill soft synths, we'd say this makes Synth-Werk a highly desirable package, and Kraftwerk devotees in particular should check it out. **cm**

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Alternatively

Kontakt 5 Retro Machines Mk2

N/A » N/A » €69

Tidy retro synths with eight variations per patch - great value

Waldorf PPG Wave 3.v

CM162 » 9/10 » £119

For authentic Teutonic sonics, this emulation is an excellent choice

The little Engine that could

Last year, Best Service teamed up with Yellow Tools to develop the Engine player. Now at version 2, they have a growing number of products in this format. Much like NI's Kontakt library packages, you can't use Engine sample libraries in any other system - but seeing as they bundle in the Engine software, this isn't an issue. Also similar is that all your Engine products are available from one plug-in, with the option to combine instruments or 'layers'.

The software itself is a 'player' version of Yellow Tools' Independence sampler, plus a custom Quick Edit page. Again like Kontakt, this gives you simple access to a multitude of parameters. However, here everything appears on the one screen, unlike many Kontakt libraries. There's also a Pro Edit page that allows more detailed access to envelopes, LFOs, arpeggiator settings and so on, although there's no route to directly working with the underlying sample set.

Verdict

For Excellently crafted source samples
Simple, powerful Quick Edit interface
Very quick load times
Lovely organic feel to many patches

Against Patch naming too functional
GUI fiddly in places

An outstanding selection of ready-to-go Kraftwerk-style synth sounds

9/10