

NEW GEAR

EXCLUSIVE

ALL YOUR EXISTING

MIDI grooves can be used with Funkmasters EZX - an important point to remember

CLYDE'S STAR-STUDDED

kit is on show in the kit selector (Jab'o's has a bright orange finish, in case you're wondering)



ESSENTIAL SPEC



SET THE LEVELS BY CLICKING

on the mixer. It comes complete with a great-sounding plate reverb channel

PRICE

£55

FORMAT

EZX expansion for EZdrummer or Superior Drummer 2.0

JAB'O KIT

Yamaha Maple Custom; 22" kick; 12", 13", 16" toms; Yamaha Mahogany 14"x6" snare; Meinl 14" Byzance Medium hi-hat; Meinl 16" Byzance Medium crash; Meinl 18" Medium ride; Meinl woodblock

CLYDE KIT

Yamaha Birch Custom Absolute; 20" kick; 12", 13", 16" toms; Yamaha Birch Custom Absolute 14"x7" snare; Meinl Byzance Medium hi-hat; Meinl 18" Thin crash; Meinl 20" Medium ride; Meinl woodblock

REQUIREMENTS

PC: PIII/Athlon 1.8GHz, 512MB RAM, Windows XP, 1.2GB drive space, EZdrummer or Superior Drummer 2.0
MAC: G4 1GHz, 512MB RAM, Windows XP, 1.2GB drive space, EZdrummer or Superior Drummer 2.0

CONTACT

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TOONTRACK FUNKMASTERS EZX



£55 Rhythm's very own sex machine Lee du-Caine breaks out in a cold sweat over Toontrack's funky virtual drum kits

The latest EZX expansion pack for Toontrack's popular virtual drum kit software puts at your disposal the kits and grooves of two of the funkiest drummers of all time: Clyde Stubblefield and John "Jab'o" Starks.

The pair are best known for their work with James Brown, with both appearing on the seminal *Sex Machine* album. As well as their direct influence within the sphere of drumming, the grooves of Stubblefield and Starks have featured heavily in genres such as hip-hop and drum'n'bass due to them being frequently sampled. In fact, the website for the pair's band - The FunkMasters - claims them to be the most sampled drummers of all time.

Build

Funkmasters EZX can be used with EZdrummer or Superior Drummer 2.0. The former method is simpler and shows an

eye-popping custom graphic for each setup, although Superior Drummer 2.0 does give you more options.

The kits are comprised of many samples of single drum hits, all played by Clyde and Jab'o on their own setups and recorded at Sound Kitchen in Nashville. In the software mixer, there are mic'd channels for each kit piece, a room mic and overheads (stereo), with additional channels to introduce a vinyl effect and reverb.

Articulations include sidestick on snares; rimshots for snare and toms; and crash, mute, ride and bell for cymbals. Deft hi-hat work is a staple of funk, and there are plenty of variations here, such as closed, tightly-closed, tip or shank, four degrees of openness, open and closed bell, and pedal splash/chick. And there's a woodblock too!

There's a whole load of MIDI grooves for the kits, many of which were performed by Clyde and Jab'o.

Hands on

In use, these kits sound excellent. Clyde's kick and snare exhibit the tangy resonance heard throughout his playing, while Jab'o's are more damped and militaristic. Clyde's cymbals are brighter, with a pingier ride, and his toms a tad punchier. While obviously ideal for funk, the kits work in many styles; for example, Jab'o's is great for real-sounding metal, due to the tight and consistent kick and snare.

The mixer's vinyl effect is okay, but the reverb is a real standout, being sampled from a hardware plate reverb - it conjures up the cavernous boom of much-sampled funk drum breaks like those of James Brown's *Funky Drummer* (performed by Stubblefield) and the JB-produced *Think (About It)* by Lyn Collins.

The MIDI grooves are divided into straight 4/4 and 6/8 flavours, as well as swung 4/4. They're useful for composing and jamming, and also hold educational value for drummers, since you can play them at half speed or even put them in your sequencer to see exactly what The FunkMasters are playing, complete with the microscopic timing variances that drum tab cannot convey.

Verdict

There's little to complain about here, and this EZX will thrill producers and drummers alike. Granted, some might prefer more cymbals, but for Superior Drummer 2.0 users this is easily overcome simply by utilising the X-Drums feature to add them. **A**

Rating ★★★★★