

EastWest **PC** **MAC**

# Quantum Leap Pianos €392

Sampled pianos tend to be on the large side, but this one is absolutely *enormous*. Is bigger really better, though?

> This is the latest title to join EastWest's range of Play-powered instruments (see Gypsy, Storm Drum 2 et al) and could be the largest single-instrument ROMpler we've ever seen. Weighing in at 263GB, it's a 35-DVD monster, covering four famous concert pianos from Bösendorfer, Yamaha, Bechstein and Steinway.

Given the library's scale, it's no surprise that you can install each piano separately, but even so, it still took us the best part of a day to get the whole thing onto our drive. Like other Play instruments, the interface and skin are tailored to the specifics of the instrument, and it has the same familiar browser that gives you access to all your Play libraries.

Moving on to the pianos themselves, each has been sampled from three positions (room, close and player perspective) and your choice of miking aspect (all three can be used together) combined with various articulations, make up the patch. There are also a number of sound modification aspects, including an AHDSR envelope, convolution reverb, stereo spread, velocity sensitivity and level and pan controls. Possibly the most interesting parameter, though, is the lid position slider, which offers a continuous range of options from closed to open.

## Four to the floor

You may be wondering how such large libraries are implemented, considering that not many of us have 263GB of RAM installed. Like other samplers, it's achieved using a combination of disk-streaming and a preload buffer. However, Play also includes five engine options to help you fine-tune streaming behaviour. To give you an idea of how it works in practice, using engine level 3 and a 512-sample driver buffer for the fully-fledged Steinway D (with all available articulations) with all three mic options loaded, our RAM usage was 506MB and our load time a few minutes. You can, of course, load 'lite' patches, reducing memory usage and load times



considerably - perhaps you could load up the full patch for the final mixdown only.

Sound and expression are all-important with acoustic pianos, and this bundle seriously delivers. From the quietest pianissimo to full-on, pedal-down rumble, the sound is wonderfully accurate, but also different from piano to piano.

We looked for level, sound and layer inconsistencies, but any we found were minimal. We found that the three mic positions sounded very different, and with four separate pianos and that lid control (which is akin to a subtle low-pass filter), we felt spoiled for choice. Of course, nothing's perfect, and the sheer scale of QL Pianos means that those patch load times can be tedious. We also found that selecting additional mic positions didn't always cause them to load up, so we had to reload the full master patch.

The bottom line, though, is that if you're patient and want real acoustic piano sounds, Quantum Leap Pianos is one of the best we've heard, and actually offers great value compared to the competition. **cm**

Contact [www.soundsonline-europe.com](http://www.soundsonline-europe.com)



## System requirements

**PC** P4 2.5GHz, 2GB RAM, Windows XP SP2, Vista 32 or 64

**Mac** G5, 2GB RAM, OS X 10.4 or higher

## Test system

**PC** Apple Mac Pro dual 3GHz, 3GB RAM, OS X 10.4.11, Logic Pro 8

## Alternatively

**Garritan Steinway Concert Grand**  
N/A >> N/A >> \$399

This officially-endorsed virtual Steinway is released soon

**Vienna Symphonic**  
**Bösendorfer Imperial**  
N/A >> N/A >> £180

Samples the same kind of Bösendorfer as QL Pianos

## Verdict

**For** Fantastically realistic sound!  
Each piano has a clear signature tone  
Good articulations system  
Useful 'lite' patches

**Against** Long patch load times  
May require its own hard disk

QL Pianos is one of the very best piano emulations we've heard, which makes its gargantuan size easier to swallow

9/10

## How to be articulate

**Get beyond the basic 'keys down' nature of acoustic piano, and realism is all about the subtleties of each instrument. To achieve this, Quantum Leap Pianos includes seven articulations: sustain, sustain with pedal, repetitions, repetitions with pedal, soft pedal, soft pedal with sustain pedal, staccato and release trails.**

**Each is effectively a separate set of samples, and you'll find that 'lite' patches only include the main three (sustain, sustain**

**with pedal and release). From a pure 'making noise' perspective, the sustain pedal sound is wonderful. However, we were also particularly impressed by the repetitions articulation, which switches the sound to a slightly different timbre when note repetitions are fast (the sound of the real thing alters subtly when you hit a note quickly in succession). Also excellent is the mapping of staccato mode to your MIDI controller's mod wheel.**