

WHAT IS IT?

Enormous acoustic drum kit ROMpler with Groove Engine

CONTACT

Who: FXpansion
Web: www.fxpansion.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Awesome new interface
- 2 BFD's best drum kits yet
- 3 Much improved Groove Engine and mixer

PRICING

Upgrade from BFD2
£99



FutureMusic

Platinum Award

FXpansion BFD3 | £229

FXpansion's virtual drum kit has had a major revamp. *Ronan Macdonald* finds out if it's a rival-beater...

Released in 2003, FXpansion's BFD was the original acoustic drum kit ROMpler (albeit only beating

Toontrack's Superior Drummer to market by a matter of weeks). With its whopping 30GB sample library (seven kits), it gave the desktop producer everything they needed to program and mix convincing drum tracks, from the massively multisampled tubs themselves to positionable virtual mics, a basic mixing environment and a library of live recorded MIDI grooves. BFD2 followed in 2008, redrawing the interface, improving the groove engine, adding a set of analogue-modelled effects and piling on another 25GB of weight (ten kits).

Five years on, BFD3 sees FXpansion putting their digital drummer right back on top of the pile and finally making it the comprehensive yet approachable system it's always wanted to be.

BFD3's new look is cleaner, smarter and far easier on the eye than either of

its predecessors. With the interface in Kit mode, the Browser and Drum Editor are permanently available on the left and right-hand sides (unless you don't want them to be), while the centre section contains the mixer and the Kit display, the latter sporting a handsome 'blueprint' design that looks really cool and gives a good sense of the physical layout of the kit. Switch to the Effects page and the Kit is replaced by an effects rack; hit the Groove Editor button and the whole centre section flips to that page (see *Groove Engine*); or click Key Map to put the whole interface into its completely redesigned and supremely flexible new MIDI mapping mode. The GUI can be stretched from roughly 16:10 ratio to seemingly limitlessly wide (we gave up clicking the 'extend' button after the central logo disappeared off the right-hand edge of our 2560x1440 display), while the Browser now lets you save and load individual edited Drums with all their mixer and effects settings.

Here come the Drums

Selecting a Drum (BFD3's new name for Kit Pieces) in the Kit display brings up its parameters in the two-page Drum Editor. The first page, Tech, is where you deal with the basics, such as trim, pan, tuning, kick/snare bleed and ambient sends, while Model hosts controls for Damping, Choke Response, Cymbal Swell and Tom Resonance, as well as adjustment of trim, velocity-to-pitch/damping levels and AMG Variance. To deal with the last of these first, BFD's old Humanization and Anti-MachineGun Mode functions have been brought together in two new settings: Loud and Tone, applying randomisation to volume and velocity (and, consequently, triggered sample selection) respectively. Both are activated via the AMG button in the Dashboard, and depth-scaled independently for each Drum using its Variance controls.

The Cymbal Swell feature comprises a new set of eight DSP modelling algorithms that make rapidly repeated cymbal and hi-hat hits build in energy/wash like the real thing – and very successful it is too. Similarly, the new Tom Resonance and Spill controls enable tuning of the amount by which each Drum spills into the tom mics and causes the toms themselves to resonate. Being modelled rather than sampled, again, the results are amazingly

