

Output Analog Strings \$199

Unlike Spitfire's LCO library [below], Analog Strings Output is all about processing and manipulation. Those who've used their Signal and Exhale instruments will know that Output pay great attention to the ways in which core sample content can be dynamically morphed using scripted rhythmic processing. Their Analog Strings library is no exception, and once again features a beautifully designed graphical interface at its core, which makes full use of the wider edit window possibilities added in Kontakt 5.6.

The core (39GB) sample content comes from orchestral recording, analogue synths and unusual sound source captures. It's noticeable that – even without processing – these are of a very high quality. The software engine is brand new, and allows two sample layers to be processed and controlled using dual tape loopers, dual arpeggiators, 'flux' sequencing, advanced modulation

routing and four sliders for macro control of multiple parameters.

You truly realise how good this instrument really is when you start browsing through its 500 presets. They're of almost uniformly high quality and would be usable for all kinds of music – from soundtrack scoring to underground dance or outright pop. There's clearly something potent in the mix of 'real' and old-school synthetic elements that works very well here. Creating your own patches is straightforward once you've mastered the various pages, and is helped substantially by the onboard help overlay. However, if this isn't your bag, the keyword search system will help you find the right patch with the minimum of fuss. As with Output's other instruments, CPU usage is on the high side, but overall this is another strong release. **Bruce Aisher**

www.output.com

VERDICT 9.0

Spitfire London Contemporary Orchestra Strings £299

Over recent months, we've taken a look at a range of Spitfire products that make use of interesting and unusual mic positions and recorded ambience to deliver engaging results. London Contemporary Orchestra Strings, on the other hand, places the emphasis on interesting playing techniques. This is not to say that there's no ambient character, but the recording room is quite dry, making the Room Mic samples tight and the Close Mic versions intimate. A convolution reverb is employed within each instrument – though it can be dialled out – and there are a number of effected layers and full mixes that up the interest.

The LCO are known for their collaborative approach to ensemble playing and have worked with a wide range of artists across many genres, including Radiohead, Actress and Frank Ocean. This library distills this approach by covering a range of

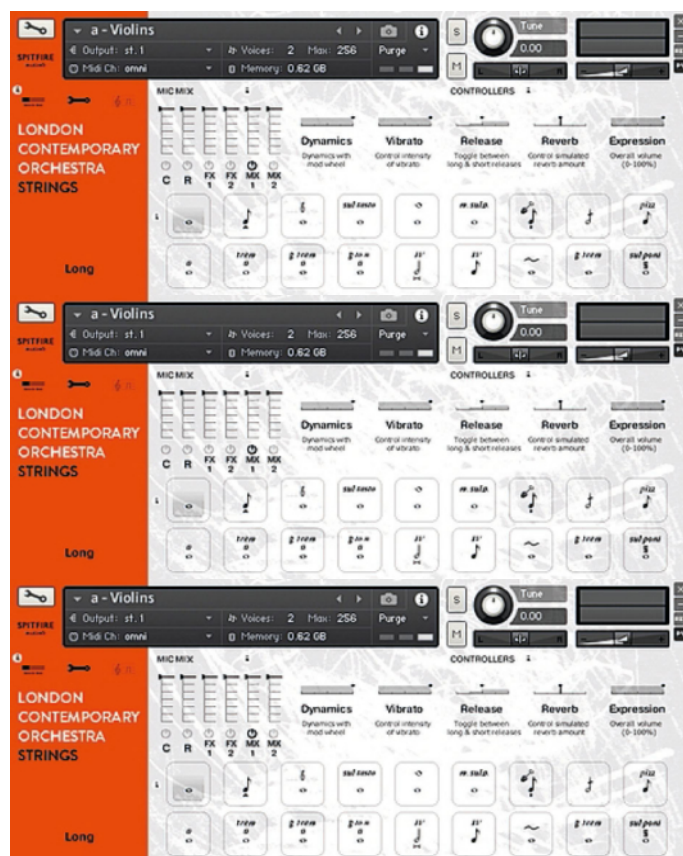
articulations that are new or rarely heard. The odd granular and scratchy tones are particularly engaging, but you'll also find strange vibrato and aggressive shorter styles. They all have a very contemporary feel that would work in a range of more experimental contexts, especially when combined with electronics. The shortest articulations work particularly well in their 'Pumped Mix' guise.

You'll find the usual Spitfire attention to detail, including the excellent Ostinatum rhythmic engine. It isn't cheap – which may put off those looking for an all-round string collection – but this library remains an inspirational writing tool, and an easy way to add cutting-edge string sounds to your audio armoury.

Bruce Aisher

www.spitfireaudio.com

VERDICT 8.7



Looptone Lack of Afro Heist Themes | £29.95

www.looptone.com



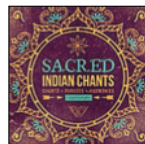
Bank job and heist movie soundtracks have always been a fertile ground for diggers to pull samples from. To match the rollercoaster moods of such flicks, arrangers brought in tough brass sections and bongo maestros for the epic chase scenes, and plaintive string and moody rhythm sections for moments of cinematic suspense and character contemplation. It all made for funky grooves that hip-hop and breaks heads could loop up and make their own. Lack of Afro (aka Adam Gibbons) is clearly a big fan of the genre, and he's more than adept at putting his own spin on it, whilst giving a nod to past masters like Lalo Schiffrin and John Gregory along the way. Over 11 complete song kits he and his merry band of live musicians score what would be a bold and brassy movie, were it to exist. Bubbling Rhodes riffs, waspy Moogs, double bass licks and more get proper workouts under his watchful eye as he manages to capture a perfect balance of mood, tension, groove, exhilaration.

Roy Spencer

VERDICT 9

Loopmasters Sacred Indian Chants | £29.95

www.loopmasters.com



Time to take a chill pill and get that chi centralised with this pack of spiritualised chants and vocals. Recorded in Chennai, the capital of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, with some of the region's finest voices, this unique pack captures a solo and ensemble performances that will give your goose bumps goose bumps. With 297 individual dry and processed files, across 2.48GB of content, you get a fair brimful of vocals for your Rupee. And amongst the mellow loops are a myriad mantras, plenty of prayers, assorted hums and omms, and other sacred-sounding sing-songs to slot nicely into your more laid-back beats, or deeper House excursions. *Roy Spencer*

VERDICT 8

Splice Sounds StéLouse Sample Pack 2 | \$7.99/mo

splice.com



StéLouse (pronounced "stay loose") is back with another delectable slice of slick samples. Volume one of this series was straight-up

Future Bass, with a calibre of dope one-shots, synth racks, loops and Massive and Serum presets. Volume two sees StéLouse digging on his Rock past (he wailed an electric guitar in a band before all this), so you get far more growling bass and heavy drums fills this time around. There's a hundred original drum and synth loops, one-shots and presets to play with here, and as a bonus, he's even included three of his own personal Ableton processing racks to help your own productions stay loose. In short, the longhaired Denver native keeps the momentum of volume one up and running and, as suiting an ex-rocker, turns the volume up to 11 on this one. *Roy Spencer*

VERDICT 9

Splice Sounds Synthwave Massive Presets | \$7.99 / mo

splice.com



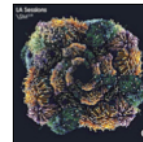
It's time to put down that Rubik's cube and roll up them jacket sleeves, as the Splice Sounds squad gets all retro on your ass. For their latest pack of Massive presets they've gone back to the time that fashion may have forgotten but synth lovers everywhere remember fondly: the '80s. It was a pioneering decade for analogue gear, and

they've lovingly recreated some iconic sounds for you to get to grips with. Sonically, the choice is varied and the quality high, and with Massive's built-in macros, you'll be tweaking and twiddling until the cows come home. *Roy Spencer*

VERDICT 9

Sample Magic LA Sessions | £34.90

www.samplemagic.com



With a sunny disposition and full of seriously rich pad work and soul-stirring chord progressions, LA Sessions' sounds are, for the most part, Tropical, with a splash of Disco. Everything is key- and tempo-labelled at 124BPM, with bonus MIDI files where possible. Luscious melodies abound, and super-clean clicks, claps and drum hits join them, just waiting to be sprinkled over the top. The piano work is a joy, and the bass crate is full of riffs you'll be coming back to again and again. The mildly cheesy Baker Street-esque sax workouts don't even sour this delightful pack of inspired, and inspirational, samples. Bring on the summer! *Roy Spencer*

VERDICT 8

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