RELEASE
Adjust the volume level of the realistic release noises

EQUALIZER
A basic four-band EQ for simple frequency shaping

LEVELS
Mix the DI and amped signals and tweak the limiter

SLAP/PULL
Set the split between slapped and pulled strings

MODULATION
Apply a vibrato LFO with adjustable Rate and Depth

VINTAGE/ MODERN
Balance warmth and punch

OPEN STRINGS
Force individual open string sample triggering

SUB OCTAVE
Bolster your bass with a synthesised sub element

DEAD NOTES
Toggle all strings and frets to audible left hand muting

POSITION SELECTOR
Set a preferential five-fret range

KEYSWITCH EDITOR
Reveal keyswitch assignment menus

EFFECTS PEDALS
Four Pre and two Post effects pedals for sound design

Waves
Bass Slapper $69 PC MAC

The uniquely percussive sound of slap bass is something that every producer should have in their pocket – particularly at this price!

> Waves' latest plugin is built to emulate just one very specific instrumental technique: slap bass, the love-it-or-hate-it thumb-blasting style personified by the likes of Mark King, Bootsy Collins, Stanley Clarke et al.

Bass Slapper (VST/AU/AAX/standalone) is an entirely sample-based affair. Before you can use it, you have to separately download either or both of two sample libraries containing the 3700+ multisamples played back by the proprietary Waves Sampler Engine (WSE) that powers the plugin. The main 'HD' library uses lossless compression for maximum fidelity and weighs in at 4.9GB, while the 'SD' library uses lossy compression to reduce the footprint for laptop or 'draft' usage, at the expense of a hit to sound quality that may or may not be noticeable depending on the musical context in which it's deployed.

The raw samples were captured from performances by Israeli session bassist Or

Lubianiker, with the intention of encapsulating his particular sound in terms of the choice of bass, strings and preamps used. All the articulations required to construct realistic five-string slap bass parts are included, every one incorporating round robin variations and mapped to multiple velocity layers. As well as the basic slap sounds, the roster of articulations

"Helpfully, the mouse pointer switches between distinct 'slap' and 'pull' icons as it's moved around"

comprises mutisamples for hammer ons and pull offs, index and middle finger pulls, release sounds, percussives, slides and all sorts of special effects such as scratches, squeaks, harmonics and strums.

Pop music
Waves have done a great job of making Bass Slapper easy to play and keyboardist-friendly. First of all, a simple slider under the strings of the main graphic is dragged to set the dividing point between slapped and pulled/popped strings. Helpfully, the mouse pointer switches between distinct 'slap' and 'pull' icons as it's moved around.

Then there's the Position Selector, which sets a five-fret range in which certain notes are played for performance realism and tonal experiments, and enables adjustment of playing position to cater to polyphonic and legato monophonic play. Assigning the Position Selector to a MIDI control

The five Pre effects handle dynamics and modulation, while the two Post pedals serve up reverb and delay

"Bass Slapper is much more sonically versatile than the single multisampled bass at its core might suggest"

or keyrange makes it easy to effectively move your virtual left hand up and down the fretboard, just as a bass player would. There's also an Adaptive Position mode that shifts the position automatically according to the incoming notes.

The Dead Notes toggle flips the entire note range to the muted incidental hits that are part of any nuanced slap bassline. It's key to the expressiveness and dynamic controllability of the instrument as a whole.

The Keyswitch Editor houses a series of menus for assigning articulation switches, specific articulations (fast and slow slides, left/right-hand mutes, strums, etc) and other controls (Slap/Pull range, Position Selection, Legato Type, etc) to the octave C0-B0. And the MIDI Functions section facilitates transposition, round robin ordering, LFO pitch modulation (vibrato) and velocity map tweaking.

Slap happy

Plenty of sound-shaping options are provided, too, making Bass Slapper much more sonically versatile than the single multisampled bass at its core might at first suggest. The Vintage/Modern knob transitions from a warmer, darker, 70s kind of tone, to a much brighter, more contemporary report; while the Release knob sets the level of the release noise samples. The Sub Octave and Low Boost controls dial in a pitch-responsive sub-bass synth layer that's routed through the effects, and a low-end enhancement process that isn't (for low-frequency solidity regardless of effects processing), respectively.

The four-band EQ delivers basic frequency shaping, via Bass, Lo Mid, High Mid and Treble gain controls; and the Levels section is where the DI and amplified outputs are mixed, and the threshold of the onboard limiter is set. The Amp channel simulates an 8x10 cab and, of course, runs parallel to the clean Direct signal – the amp sim itself isn't open to editing, however.

Two stages of effects are included – see *Bass jumping* – and each block in the signal path

Take control of your articulations and many other parameters in the Keyswitch Editor

Bass jumping

Bass Slapper's onboard effects are styled on seven stompbox-style guitar pedals, each one hosting a small but effective set of parameter knobs and a bypass switch.

The first five pedals (Compressor, Overdrive, Wah, Chorus and Phaser) constitute the Pre-amplifier effects section (ie, placed before the amp in the signal path), while the last two (Delay and Reverb) are Post-amplifier.

The Compressor and Overdrive pedals bring the dynamics shaping (levelling and fattening) and distortion that are essential to any bass rig. Overdrive's wet/dry Mix knob and Hi Gain switch give it real versatility.

The dual-mode Wah pedal is a resonant low-pass filter, with cutoff modulated by audio amplitude (ie, envelope following) or MIDI note pitch. It sounds awesome – Bootsy would surely approve.

Chorus and Phaser hold no surprises, each offering variable modulation depth and wet/dry mixing.

While bass and reverb aren't effects one generally associates with fingered bass, they're rather more relevant to the pronounced transients of slap, hence their inclusion (in rudimentary form) here as Post effects.

A solid board, then, all in all. It's a shame they can't be reordered, though.

(Tone, FX Pre, Amp, FX Post and Limiter) can be bypassed individually using the five Power buttons. Together, the tone controls, effects and amplification parameters add up to a surprisingly capable bass sound production system that successfully and appropriately balances simplicity and depth.

A-slappin' the bass

Playing and programming convincing slap basslines with Bass Slapper is so easy it almost feels like cheating, whether you're just after a groovy sequence of slaps and pops for a disco house track, or something more 'human' for technically deeper genres and live performance.

As far as we're concerned, any virtual bass instrument these days has to be judged in relation to IK Multimedia's still-unique and utterly amazing physically modelled MODO Bass, which includes slap among its playing styles. Bass Slapper doesn't have the tonal range that MODO Bass's arsenal of 14 classic bass guitars offers, naturally, but the emulative end result is certainly on a par, if not better. It's also considerably quicker and easier to use, and lands at only a fraction of the price of MODO and most sampled rivals. What's not to love? **cm**

Alternatively

**IK Multimedia MODO Bass
cm241 » 9/10 » €360**
Genuinely amazing physically modelled bass plugin with slap on tap, amongst many other things

**Ample Sound Ample Bass P
cm209 » 9/10 » $119**
Gorgeous sampled Fender Precision emulation, complete with punchy slap articulations

Verdict

For Beautiful samples
Expansive range of articulations
Plenty of processing and customisation
NKS-compatible
Great price

Against No amp controls or EQ bypass
Effects routing can't be changed

For authentic sounding slap bass parts, Bass Slapper is flexible, powerful, convincing and ridiculously cheap

9/10