

ProjectSAM Symphobia 2 £979

PC MAC



Part two of the Symphobia story offers yet more top-flight orchestral manoeuvres

> With the 2008 release of Symphobia, ProjectSAM provided a package of orchestral Kontakt instruments to complement those from the likes of VSL. Instead of offering fine-grained control over individual instruments, Symphobia's content used recordings of the orchestra (and various groups therein) playing as a whole, giving quick access to the kind of sounds and 'effects' that it would take weeks of programming to achieve with traditional orchestral packages. The package offered playable ensembles (strings, brass, woodwind, etc) as well as ready-made hits, stings, risers, suspense beds and suchlike.

Symphobia 2 is the logical next step, although interestingly, it's not version 2 but *volume 2*. It doesn't replace the original nor contain any of the same content, so you can use it in conjunction with Symphobia 1, or as a product in its own right. It's in Kontakt 4 format, with the Player supplied.

All together now

Instruments are still based mainly on samples of the orchestra and sections thereof, with a few solo instruments and other cinematic-sounding goodies tossed in. In total there's 33GB of data.

It's divided into five categories: Full Orchestra, Individual Sections, Legato Ensembles, Dystopia and Miscellaneous. Dystopia is volume 3 of ProjectSAM's weird, dark library of atmospherics and mangled sounds (volumes 1 and 2 are found in True Strike 2 and Symphobia 1 respectively). The Miscellaneous category features concert hall noise and orchestra tuning.

You get 11 preset multis offering genre- and atmosphere-specific sound 'palettes' spread over 88 keys, with descriptive names like *Fairy Tale* or *Before The Ship Goes Down*. These give an idea of the power of Symphobia 2, and the sounds are beautifully played and recorded.

Loading up the Full Orchestrator instrument reveals both a sumptuous, 'widescreen' sound, and the new instrument interface. At the bottom left is a toggle switch for mic position: close or



stage. Above this is another set of options dealing with release tails, extra octaves, keyswitching, sample selection mode, transposition, etc.

The central panel enables selection of articulations, and the right-hand area presents envelope, filter, reverb and dynamics controls. These are all improvements on Symphobia 1, where the editing options were less immediate and you had separate patches for mic positions. Some instruments also have articulations not found in Symphobia 1 such as major and minor trills, and crescendo and decrescendo samples. While it's mainly about the ensembles, the solo instruments are great too, particularly the uilleann pipes – what a welcome surprise!

Symphobia 2's price means it's for serious composers only, but there's no denying that it's an absolutely top-quality package. It wouldn't work as your only orchestral resource; but then it doesn't attempt that. Combine it with Symphobia 1 and you have a world of orchestral tricks up your sleeve. Once you've experienced its magic firsthand, you won't want to be without it. **cm**

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System requirements

PC Pentium/Athlon XP 1.4GHz, 1GB RAM, Windows XP/Vista/7

Mac Intel Core Duo 1.66GHz, 1GB RAM, OS X 10.5

Alternatively

Sonic Implants Complete Symphonic Collection
N/A >> N/A >> £1147

A more complete orchestral solution with strings, brass, woodwind and percussion

Garritan Personal Orchestra 4
cm147 >> 9/10 >> £109

It can't conjure up Symphobia's big-screen sound, but for orchestral on a budget, it's hard to beat

Verdict

For Stunning sound

DXF dynamic control

Switchable mic position

Great legato instruments

Easy access interface

Efficient sample management

Against Nothing, if you can afford it

A magnificent-sounding collection that complements the usual orchestral libraries with its full-on approach

9/10

What a performance!

A major new performance feature for Symphobia 2 is the DXF control, available on appropriate patches. It enables the playing strength – but *not* the volume – of the sound to be varied using the modwheel. The natural overtones and higher frequencies from the instruments ramp up as if the players were bowing and blowing harder, and the sonic benefits of recording the full orchestra playing like this are clear to hear. DXF is available for many Legato Ensembles, too.

Speaking of which, the all-new legato ensembles are excellent. While competing products offer solo legato instruments, here you get whole orchestral sections and combinations of sections and instruments. You can use the full transitional samples, or engage Autospeed, where transitions are 'trimmed' to allow for faster passages. The instruments themselves sound exactly as expected, and use of the sustain pedal is key in maximising the realism factor.