ON THE DVD

WHAT IS IT?
A very effective Drum Replacer with a killer sample library.

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HIGHLIGHTS
1 Excellent triggering
2 Killer sounds
3 Easy to use

Slate Digital Trigger Drum Replacer | £199

Stuart Bruce finds out just how easy it is to get great drums with this much vaunted replacement plug

Trigger from Slate Digital comes in three parts, a trigger/sample player plug with layering capabilities, over 2GB of samples and an editor that allows you to make your own sample patches. Drum replacement is pretty much a standard feature of current Pop and Rock production and the bar is already pretty high. But Slate Digital head honcho Steven Slate has a big reputation as a provider of excellent samples to the biggest names in US production and his Steven Slate Drums have received plenty of accolades. Therefore Trigger has a good chance to take the crown.

The big easy

Triggering drums should be as straightforward as possible. Having taken the decision to replace the last thing you want is to be fiddling around for ages before you hear something new. Trigger certainly won't fail you in this department. Five minutes after installing it I had replaced my first kick and snare tracks with the absolute minimum of fuss.

The Trigger interface is very intuitive. Opening it on the track to be replaced reveals a Browser section where you access the big sample library, a waveform window showing the track to be replaced with graphical feedback on your trigger levels, and a six slot sample player with comprehensive level and ASR controls. Finally, you get control over the dynamic and velocity curves with a display to show what you've set.

Leakage suppression

If you have some nasty low end leak on a snare from a kick or a tom then the HPF setting in the top left corner of the waveform window can be brought into play. This simply filters out any unwanted low end in your trigger signal and can solve the problem. Particularly useful if triggering a low tom with lots of ring as that can cause multiple triggers.

What if your snare comes with lots of hat and kick or it's just so dynamic

that even a small amount of spill can trigger it? In the past I have found myself having to edit the trigger to keep things clean. With Trigger's Leakage Suppression tool, that could become a thing of the past. Instead of inserting Trigger directly on the track to be replaced, load it onto a stereo group and send the track to be replaced to the left-hand side. Find the sound you want and set it up so it triggers all the snares. At certain points in the track the spill will be triggering it too. Find a particularly bad passage and send the individual kick and hat tracks to the right-hand side of the group.

Adjust the Supp control and the red parts of the waveform are the suppressed part of the trigger signal. Bingo! You've lost all those false triggers without having to lose any dynamic control of the drum you are replacing.

Layer it up
Having sorted out your triggering issues the next thing you will want to do is get

on to the sounds. Like the rest of this plug setting them up and manipulating them is simple and powerful. In the Browser, the samples are arranged into drum type and then each individual sample set has its own folder within which you get various versions of the dry sample, dry with overs and pure ambience. Some of these are modelled on the sounds of specific bands such as AC/DC, Led Zeppelin and Nirvana and the rest are from Steven Slate's large collection of wonderful drum samples.

Within each sample there are multiple dynamic layers and multiple

Trigger's interface may seem overwhelming but its layout is very intuitive

Build Your Own Drum Sound

Trigger itself lets you pull in a WAV or AIFF file straight from the browser but if you have dynamic multi-samples and multiple hits the Trigger Instrument Editor lets you turn them into preset instruments. The browser window where you locate the samples, an articulation window to define specific articulations and the main area where you create the dynamic sample layers.

At the top of the main window you define how many rows and columns you have. Rows defines how many vertical dynamic layers (up to 127) and columns defines the horizontal 'round robin' number of

multi-samples for each dynamic layer. Having located your samples and defined the number of sample cells you need you simply drop into the relevant cells. If you have more than one sample for each dynamic layer, you drag them all in to the

first cell and the editor assigns them across the layer. Once they're in place, the AMG preset pull-down lets you define what type of samples they are and then you can define a new articulation and repeat the process or, simply save it.

hits to avoid the 'machine gun' effect, but there are also articulations. These are variations of the sound that you can change either from the Articulation window just below the browser, via MIDI or automation. For Kicks and Toms there are two articulations, Full and Aggressive and for Snares 4, Full, Rimshot, Soft and Hard. I got great results from these using automation as they really help to get as close as possible to what the drummer intended.

To load the six sample cells you simply click on one and then double click the sample you want to place there. Each individual cell has controls for level, pitch pan, sustain and release. You can mix and match samples from any of the sample sets. Use the dry from one with the ambience from another, take a fat snare, detune it and add a sharp attacking sound to it to give it a bit more cut.
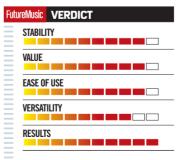
In the mix
The real test of a device like this comes when you balance your new drum sounds into the mix. Of all the drum replacement plugs I have tried Trigger is without doubt the best I have used.

> ## "There's something about the way that the sounds sit in the track that just makes mixing simpler"

There is something about the way the sounds sit in the track that just makes mixing simpler. Steven Slate has put a huge amount of effort into recording his sample libraries. Everything is done to analogue two-inch using great mics, pres, EQ and compression. The tonal variations offered give you an enormous palette.

The plug seems very CPU friendly so despite all the layering and manipulation going on, running five or six instances is easily possible, meaning you get to hear the whole sound before committing to it. Last but not least comes the price. Recording something of this quality would cost a whole lot more than £199 so not only is it a killer, it's a bargain to boot! **FM**

ALTERNATIVES

Drumagog Platinum
$379
Big and bold with built-in FX and will even replace a hi-hat. Currently the benchmark replacer and worth checking out.
drumagog.com

SPL Drum Xchanger
149 Euros
Great triggering plug with small but good drum library. Has the advantage of SPL Transient Designer, built in. Third-party libraries now available.
soundperformancelab.com

Toontrack Drumtracker
89 Euros
Standalone software that allows you to define the triggers and export them as MIDI so you can trigger your favourite drum sampler.
toontrack.com

FutureMusic **VERDICT**

STABILITY

VALUE

EASE OF USE

VERSATILITY

RESULTS

Fabulous sounds, excellent triggering, easy to operate and at a great price. Highly recommended.