

MENU

Select your view from the menu, for instant access to sample loading, editing and more

MOOD

Alter your tonal colouration, for a more intense or relaxed sonic performance

PERFORMANCE

Control of Legato, portamento, Con Sordino, etc

MULTI-MODE
Load samples for multitimbral playback, within a single Opus instrument

CONTROL
Instant access to MIDI CC implementation and sample playback sensitivity



REVERB

The Opus player provides onboard reverberation, along with the distant miking signal

MICROPHONES
Balance the four miking signals, to create your ideal instrument blend

KEYBOARD

A useful visual aide indicating active sample zoning

EastWest Hollywood Fantasy Orchestra – String and Brass Sections

\$399/\$149 **PC** **MAC**

Magic awaits us in this new orchestral library, as we prepare to be transported to another world via the back of a wardrobe, or Platform 9¾!

> When it comes to orchestral and cinematic sample libraries, EastWest's catalogue is pretty formidable. Their Hollywood-styled sounds embrace orchestral, vocals, world and even rock and pop, with some formidable technologies, such as Word Builder, which allows the user to get a sampled choir to sing an inputted lyric.

Fantasy islands ahead

Having provided the industry with some of the finest orchestral sounds around, some years ago EastWest decided to place more emphasis upon their spiritual and literal Hollywood home, with a series of Tinseltown-inspired packages, adopting soundstage acoustics and a leaning toward the cinematic. These packages were

quite a hit, but did leave us begging the question, 'where next?' The answer, it would appear, would be their new and unraveling Hollywood Fantasy Orchestra, which is being released over a series of months, one section at a time. At the time of writing, we've been exploring the String and Brass sections. The question is; do they cast a spell?

It's unwise to think of HFA: Strings and Brass as direct competitors to usual orchestral sample libraries...

Amazing fantasy

The first unavoidable conclusion, which unravels relatively quickly, is that Fantasy Strings should not be considered a replacement for your more conventional string library. You can pretty much work this out from the instrument cohort, which is substantial, but far from the string section norm. EastWest make no bones about this, as they highlight that certain instruments have been adopted, not so much as a replacement, but to act alongside.

Instead of first violins, three Hardanger fiddles occupy the top slot. An instrument which originates from Norway, these fiddles have a very pure sonic identity, which is instantly familiar. Their folk-like tendencies are perfect for Celtic lead lines, while their noticeable lack of vibrato enforces this purity. It is much the same sort of story in the lower echelons of the string section, where the cellos have been swapped out for three Viola Da Gamba. These also adopt a stable sonic character, originating from the baroque period, where it was unfashionable to play with vibrato.

There is something very stunning about the overall sound of these two instruments in combination, and while they might not be to the taste of all, there are doubtless occasions when they will prove their worth, particularly in lead or soloistic settings.

If you yearn for more traditional string incumbents, EastWest do provide you with suitable alternatives. Eight violins and six violas have been sampled in octaves, providing a more traditional and thicker texture, as an upper string colour. The bottom end range of this patching only extends to the note C, in tune with the lowest note of the viola, and not the low G of



Hollywood Fantasy Brass supplying low-end brass with aplomb!

the violin. On a similar tack, EastWest also provide six cellos and four basses, in octaves, mirroring the top end of the string section.

Curiosity shop

Where the fantasy elements begin to expand, is with the inclusion of some real curios. The

first of these is three hammered dulcimers; an incredibly underexploited colour, perfect for providing texture to a cinematic cue. There are also three lutes and two different incarnations of hurdy gurdy.

One undeniable point is the sheer volume of content represented in sampled form. Quite apart from the substantial instrumental selections, the articulation quota is huge. Taking a case in point, the dulcimer samples are split into three sections; Long, Effects and Keyswitch. The Long articulations account for 10 different styles of playing, ranging from single hits, to sustained tremolos and repeated notes. Regardless of the nature of your music, this range of articulation should have you covered. This ethos extends throughout the entire string library, although the more we unravel, the less we might think of this as an out-and-out string package.

Apart from Fantasy String's cinematic, game and trailer-music tendencies, it's the purity and closeness of the samples that engages us the most. You do have EastWest's usual collection of microphone signals available (namely close, mid, main and surround) and plenty of round-robin triggers where you need them. There's capacity for editing to suit your cause, but these samples adopt the trademark EastWest sound,





It's the perfect companion to more traditional libraries, particularly for those leaning toward the composition of cinematic, orchestral or gaming scores



Through the new Opus interface, accessing and adding patches is a blissfully simple process

with a relative brightness and capacity to cut through a mix, just when you need it.

A little humanity

Following the lead of the String section, the Brass volume offers four sets of instrumental samples, along similar lines, but arguably less disparate.

The most abstract of the set is represented by three Alpenhorns; traditionally associated with German and Swiss folk music, these instruments are instantly recognisable by their long conical horns, which extend way out in front of the player. There is a characterful and unrefined quality to these samples, as three instruments are layered, providing plenty of humanistic detuning. It's likely that the Alpenhorns will be most useful for devices such as drones, but in tune with brass instruments which play very low in register, you might find the drone to be a little unpalatable and uncouth!

However, the remainder of the brass content nicely complements our more traditional brass libraries. Flugelhorns are a very popular instrument, which bridge the gap between the trumpet and French horn sections. Also recorded in groups of three players, there is an endearing mellow quality to the samples, which provide a beautiful sonority, when you don't



The ComposerCloud+

EastWest were one of the first companies to offer a subscription model, which has now been adopted by many others in the sample and virtual instrument marketplace.

The ComposerCloud+ option requires a degree of explanation, but could completely revolutionise the way that you work. Once signed up to ComposerCloud+, you gain access to the entire EastWest sample library collection. This not only includes orchestral libraries, but cinematic libraries, thundering drums, reflective pianos, stunning vocals, and a broad array of world sounds, as well as effect plugins, such as their renowned Spaces II convolution reverb. The beauty of this concept is that you gain access to

thousands of pounds worth of samples, from the moment you sign up to the subscription. This arguably represents an incredible deal, and exceptional value for money. As with all subscription models, this only remains the case if you are regularly using the sounds, and certainly one thing that EastWest cannot be accused of is not providing good quality content.

The remainder of the Hollywood Fantasy Orchestra is being released in sections. Upon release you will have instant access to these libraries as part of your subscription plan. If you are a student, there is also educational pricing on ComposerCloud+, allowing top-end content, on the tightest of student budgets!

want the brashness of a bright trumpet section. By a similar token, the Wagner Tubas straddle the void between French horns and trombones, with a similar sense of sonority. Traditionally, played by French horn players in certain symphonic settings, these instruments have become very popular for certain forms of dramatic scoring, and will prove useful alongside traditional brass instrumentation.

In line with the string edition, EastWest also provide a tutti low brass contingent, made up of trombones and tubas, but playing in unison rather than octaves. At higher volumes, the brightness can become a little overwhelming, as raspiness enters the sonic fray. This has become a popular colour, in certain cinematic settings, but will probably require a considerable degree of compression to keep under control.

Final opus

As we mentioned from the outset, it's unwise to think of Hollywood Fantasy Strings and Brass as direct competitors to the more usual orchestral sample libraries, particularly ones from EastWest. The included content, across both library sections, will bolster commonplace instrumentation available elsewhere, but provide a helpful breadth of different colours that can add to the composer's toolkit.

The requirement for these libraries to use EastWest's Opus sample player will significantly add to the enjoyment factor. The general layout and navigation of Opus is a firm step up from their previous Play sample player, providing easy and instant access to all samples and articulations, both in individual and key-switched forms.

Due to the make up of many of the included instruments, dynamic range is nowhere near as extensive as it might be in more traditional libraries, and in some instances, you might be left asking whether there is any dynamic control at all. This is really dependent on the instrument you choose to work with, but there are some nice tricks available, such as the ability to alter bowing, through the use of the modulation wheel, while using the Viola Da Gamba sample.

Hollywood Fantasy Orchestra represents a new and exciting volume of samples, that will be the perfect companion to more traditional libraries, particularly for those leaning toward the composition and production of cinematic, orchestral or gaming scores.

Web www.soundsonline.com
Info Also available as part of the ComposerCloud+ subscription, from \$19.99 per month). Educational discounts available

Alternatively

Cinesamples Viola Da Gamba
£144

Purity and dynamic control in a single Kontakt instrument

Orchestral Tools Metropolis Ark 2
From €22

Brass sonority, recorded at quiet dynamic levels and available to purchase as individual instruments

Verdict

For Stunning alternative collection of mystical and imaginative sounds
 Ideal complement to more orthodox orchestral libraries

The ComposerCloud+ option is very cost effective

Against It's not for everyone, and less valuable without orchestral library support elsewhere

The Strings and Brass are both absolute winners. EastWest have created another rich repository of lush, tailored instruments

8/10