

Cinesamples – Drums of War

By Peter Lawrence Alexander / January 24, 2009

Drums of War is a killer dramatic percussion library for both the EXS24 and Kontakt at a killer, no-brainer price.



One of the problems (or possibly virtues) of being an L.A. snob is that when companies announce they have “L.A.” libraries, the first tendency is to respond, “Yeah. Right,” especially if the banner ads and website looks a little home made. Well, humbled again, folks, I have to tell you that *Drums of War* from Cinesamples are as good as their name, as well recorded as stuff in Los Angeles, but, and here’s the happy difference so far, way underpriced. And I mean, way under priced.

The next bit of good news is that they’re actual sample libraries, programmed for both Logic’s EXS24 and Kontakt. They’re available in either 48K or 96K.

Not sold at retail. Buy direct as a download from the Cinesamples website.

The Cinesamples core team consists of Mike Barry, Mike Patti, and producer/mixer/engineer Tim Starnes who was the music editor for the *Lord of The Rings* trilogy.

EXS programming was accomplished by Michael Meehan while Michael Patti was the lead programmer for the Kontakt version with scripting developed by Nils Liberg.

This is a solid team. And it shows in the quality of work.

WHERE RECORDED

Drums of War was recorded in New York City at the Manhattan City Studios. The website is worth spending time on for gaining an overview of a what a “film” sized studio looks like along with the many PDFs available detailing studio layout.

EFFICIENCY OF PROGRAMMING

I work on Logic 8.02 using a Mac Dual G52.7 GHz system with a Fireface 800 and KRK VXT 8 speakers. With either the EXS24 or Kontakt, *Drums of War* is efficiently programmed and uses resources well. Going through each program, the CPU meter in Logic barely moved.

EXS vs. KONTAKT

I tested programs using both the EXS 24 and Kontakt samplers. While *Drums of War* is big sounding (like huge) it's really startling comparing the same library to the audio engines on both samplers. While you have scripting with Kontakt, you have big sound with the EXS24. If I had to choose between the two, I'd pick the EXS version of *Drums of War* hands down.

ORGANIZATION ON THE KEYBOARD

DRUMS OF WAR - Multi (Kontakt Only)

*extreme bass - use caution monitoring

Envelopes and Dynamic Assistance

"Quick" EQ

Drums of War User Interface

Truly Random Round Robin alternations will display here

Custom Rolls

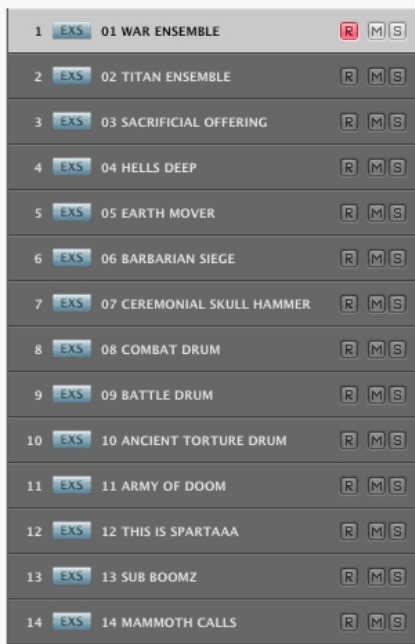
Pre-Recorded Rolls

Basic Playing

Whether EXS or Kontakt, the keyboard layout is the same. Basic playing begins at middle C. From C, C# to D, you have the same program. Starting at F below middle C you have trills (rolls) and at C an octave lower you can create custom rolls.

One advantage of drums being on C, C#, and D, is that the keyboardist, with some practice, can do flams and two-stroke ruffs. Other drum stickings like paradiddles, double paradiddles, triple paradiddles, single-stroke and double-stroke rolls are possible. Anyone having a Roland Octapad or its current incarnation with some 2B sticks can create some pretty dazzling percussion sections.

HOW IT SOUNDS



1	EXS	01 WAR ENSEMBLE	R	M	S
2	EXS	02 TITAN ENSEMBLE	R	M	S
3	EXS	03 SACRIFICIAL OFFERING	R	M	S
4	EXS	04 HELLS DEEP	R	M	S
5	EXS	05 EARTH MOVER	R	M	S
6	EXS	06 BARBARIAN SIEGE	R	M	S
7	EXS	07 CEREMONIAL SKULL HAMMER	R	M	S
8	EXS	08 COMBAT DRUM	R	M	S
9	EXS	09 BATTLE DRUM	R	M	S
10	EXS	10 ANCIENT TORTURE DRUM	R	M	S
11	EXS	11 ARMY OF DOOM	R	M	S
12	EXS	12 THIS IS SPARTAAA	R	M	S
13	EXS	13 SUB BOOMZ	R	M	S
14	EXS	14 MAMMOTH CALLS	R	M	S

All the adjectives apply: awesome, sweet, terrific, wow, cool, etc. Even as a percussion major, trying to really describe the sounds to you is difficult because all of the ensembles are using older European percussion, and no one, including producer Tim Starnes will reveal what the percussion is. What the web site says, which is what I can repeat, is that these sounds are *Lord of The Rings* inspired, and there's an homage in the liner notes to Howard Shore.

Since Mr. Starnes was music editor for the trilogy, we might be able to infer LOTR inspired means that a lot of the special percussion used in the soundtracks is here, too, and therefore, *All Quiet On the Western Front*.

Which is too bad since the last installment of the Trilogy was in 2003, six years ago. That's over half a decade ago! So telling a prospective customer that this percussion is LOTR inspired could falsely suggest that these are "old" sounds, when in point of fact, they're as fresh sounding as a new daily supply of cow's milk!

All of the demos on the web site are done within the context of a full orchestration. However, to bring out the full gamut of what's here, I think fourteen short demos (one for each style) with percussion alone playing the same exact rhythm would totally NAIL why you need this set in your sample portfolio.

KONTAKT TWEAKING CONCEPTS

In the PDF you can download, you'll find that Cinesamples came up with a very simple but clever way of explaining tweaking (see the oversized screenshot I did). On the Kontakt player, **Envelope** is sub-labeled *Attack* and *Decay*, **Velocity** is sub-labeled *Volume Response*, and **EQ** is sub-labeled *Boom*, *Body* and *Head*.

If there had only been a set of tricks and tips for the EXS24!

CRITIQUES

My primary critique, as with all the developers, is that the documentation could be better especially for the EXS24 since there are multi thousands of Logic users and only a few Logic libraries. Some programming tips and tricks for the EXS24 would be worthwhile since it's so under supported. If the company isn't going to tell us what percussion was used with which ensemble, then a one-to-two line description of each ensemble would be useful. Also, since the EXS doesn't display a piano keyboard like Kontakt, don't assume, come up with a keyboard diagram.

One thing that I missed was that while the low C is for custom rolls, I couldn't find an instruction set for it. If I missed it, I apologize.

THE RIGHT PRICE

The price for *Drums of War* is perfect. The 48K version in EXS24 and Kontakt is \$99. The 96K version for EXS24 or Kontakt is \$129 (Mac or PC). Payment is made through PayPal.

CONCLUSION

In tough financial times like these, you have to be sure that a purchase is really worthwhile. *Drums of War* is worthwhile, especially at \$99US. If you're doing scores that require serious big percussion, this is the library.

VIDEO DEMO

Michael Barry has produced an excellent video demo of *Drums of War* working inside Logic with Kontakt. When you listen to the strings on this demo – it's Mike's re-programmed version of QLSO Gold in Kontakt.

This article was previously published at the SonicControl website.