With PLAY 1.2, Spring Comes Early for EastWest

By Peter Lawrence Alexander / March 19, 2009

EastWest's PLAY 1.20 struts its stuff with its new Advanced Streaming Engine.

A few days ago, EastWest released the new 1.2 update of PLAY. By version number, 1.2 is a yawner. But what came with 1.2 was the introduction of EastWest's new Advanced Streaming Engine for PLAY. Translation – this is nothing to yawn about.

Reaction. Casey blew it out the ball park with a grand slam home run. User smiles are teething out on both Mac and PC platforms and on both sides of the Atlantic. In a bad global economy, posts are appearing saying, "I always wanted to buy _____ (insert your favorite PLAY library), now I think I will." There is joy in Mudville.

What's so hot about a software update that would cause such a panoply of praise?

Answer: seeing is believing.

In the brief 8-minute video posted on YouTube, you'll see developer Nick Phoenix running a hearty string ensemble from QLSO Platinum with 400 stereo voices streaming off a single 7200 RPM drive in a system with only 6GB of RAM. That's "just" QLSO. Then there's the new *Symphonic Choirs* demo with Word Builder, and finally, a sharp little demo with the QL Piano demonstrating how Mr. Phoenix's 8-Core Mac Pro running Logic 8.02 responds when the piano pedal is in the down position.

It's heady stuff.

And after watching these demos, I have four words to say: spring is here. Early.

And none too soon.

With the economy teetering and tech faltering, the industry needs, that's right, needs EastWest to succeed, probably more than any other sample library developer. That's because the PLAY libraries, from the beginning as Mr. Phoenix pointed out in a forum, were designed for 8-core systems and beyond. In other words, the future present.

The PLAY libraries demonstrate in a time of soft tech sales, the why of a new machine, specifically, a powerhouse quad-core or eight-core system. The immediate beneficiary of such demonstrations is Intel, because their CPUs power both Mac and PC platforms. The second beneficiary is Apple, who already has an eight-core system ready-to-go with its Mac Pro.

Because of design, EastWest's Quantum Leap Symphonic Orchestra PLAY Edition can stir the imagination of the public, not to mention the hearts of hundreds of thousands composers in the U.S. alone, by demonstrating how one machine harnesses the sound of a symphony orchestra – literally, on a desktop.

This is the main event. And it's legitimate news perfect for late night and CNN's AC360.

Then there's the price. Just a few years ago, the full edition of QLSO was just under $6000 and ideally you needed a studio with 4-5 computers to run it.

No more.

Now, for under a $1000 street price most anyone can now buy QLSO Platinum, a price that's comparable to half a month's rent on a two-bedroom apartment in parts of Los Angeles. Which means the dream is achievable. On a "bare bones" Mac Pro system, a customer can get away with a headphone mix and for a while, ignore the need for a combo audio card/MIDI interface.

On U.S. colleges campuses alone, that can begin spurring a steady demand for thousands of unit sales from faculty and students alike since Mac's can be bought at special academic pricing, as can Logic, as can now EastWest libraries.

EastWest has one other major benefit they can exploit over any other competitor – they're in Hollywood. West L.A. more precisely, but close enough for jazz, as musicians are fond of saying. And many, if not most, of their leading customers who are heavyweights in film/TV production are just half-a-commute away, giving EastWest star power to produce formidable MacWorld-like public demonstrations.

There are other libraries that fit on one machine, but none have the price and the Hollywood*oomph* to drive power system sales like EastWest.

This is a PR fest waiting to happen.

For Apple sales prospects, EastWest needs a few Apple-like training tutorials demonstrating PLAY with Logic and GarageBand.

And with Finale and Sibelius having heavily focused academic distribution both here and abroad, EastWest video tutorials teaching instructors how to implement PLAY products within these programs are definitely needed.

Such promotional efforts could drive EastWest PLAY products into new sales avenues, provided the sales vision matches the development vision.

It's also good for California. In a state with over 10% unemployment, here is yet another demonstration from the musical technology sector that the spark of innovation and entrepreneurship is alive and well. That has to be an encouragement.

Is the 1.20 update as good as being said on the forums?

It is. Before press, I had just enough time to test 1.20 on a G5 dual 2.7Ghz system with 4GB of RAM running Logic 8.02. I tried it with QLSO *Platinum*, *Gypsy*, *SD2*, and *Ministry of Rock*. It is far more efficient and system friendly. And yes, on the PC, too, judging by confirming reports coming in from owners of Cubase and Nuendo.

One thing is for sure, a new corner has been turned. Now it really is time to PLAY.

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