EastWest QLSO PLAY – First Look

By Peter Lawrence Alexander / August 10, 2008

In early July, Sonic Control's Peter Alexander was given the opportunity to have a sneak preview of EastWest's Quantum Leap Symphonic Orchestra Platinum in the new PLAY software instrument. Here are his first impressions.

EastWest has finally begun shipping its flagship [Quantum Leap Symphonic Orchestra](#) sample library with its new PLAY software instrument. QLSO is unique of all its competitors in that it was recorded in a major concert hall in the Pacific Northwest using three different mic positions (close, stage, and hall) and having all the players recorded in their seated positions. The result is more realistic orchestral sound.

The Three Mic Positions
The Close position could also be expressed as the conductor's position. In this position, you're hearing the instruments on stage as the conductor would. The Stage position is behind the conductor akin to the orchestra seats in a concert hall. The Hall position is about halfway to three-quarters back behind the conductor's position.

Professional composers most often use the Stage position in their recordings for film, games, and TV.

Four Versions Available
QLSO Silver – This is the entry level version because it has fewer articulations (playing technique for the individual instrument) than Gold and Platinum. It's the least expensive with a list price of $295US. It runs on one computer.

QLSO Gold – Usable on one computer, QLSO Gold contains all the articulations used in the Platinum version for the Stage version (plus additional articulations for Close and Hall positions). This is the most popular of the QLSO versions and costs under $700US. This is a significant price decrease since originally QLSO Gold was priced at $1895.00.

QLSO Platinum Complete – this is the high version of the program containing all three mic positions. Previously, professional composers would have spread QLSO Platinum across four different computers, one computer for each orchestral section (strings, brass, woodwinds and percussion). But because the PLAY software instrument takes advantage of the new 64-bit technology on both the Mac and PC, one dedicated computer with five hard drives can now produce an entire sampled orchestra. Whether Mac or

PC, a minimum 8GB of RAM is required for the computer. Platinum complete is also recorded in 24-bit while Silver and Gold are 16-bit.   Originally $5995US, this library has been reduced in priced to $1195US.

QLSO Platinum Plus – This is the entire Platinum library in both 16- and 24-bit. To save on computer resources, the composer does their work in 16-bit and then the final rendering in 24-bit. This is the newest version of QLSO with a list of $1295US.

My First Introduction to QLSO
My first real introduction to EWQLSO came right after it was initially released more than two years ago. I went to the beautiful EastWest facilities in West Hollywood and took with me my recording engineer, Ben Maas of [Fifth Circle Recording](). The reason I took Ben is that before he became a full time recording engineer, Ben earned his Masters in Performance on clarinet from USC. As such, he has broad ensemble performance experience. Music history has shown that having live performance experience is a great help to writers. And this case, it's been a great help to Ben because as a player, he knows what to listen for as a recording engineer.

When we heard those very first demos at EastWest, what I learned from Ben about QLSO was this: *write and adjust the volume levels*.

There was no need to EQ QLSO. EQ is a technique enabling you to adjust the volume within a narrow range of sound. Since it was recorded with all the players in their seated positions, there was no need to pan (adjust the seating positions so that the violins are in the left speaker and cellos in the right speaker).

This meant then, and more so now, that with QLSO, the composer puts the majority of his time towards writing music, and not having their time wasted with technology to get everything to work.

Solid Features
Whether you're new or already familiar with QLSO, here are some features I as a composer really appreciate.

Rich sound – Before the update, QLSO Platinum was already a 24-bit library. However, with the new PLAY audio engine, it struck me that the sound is much more brilliant than previous.

The ability to pan – Previously you could also pan instruments in QLSO. But with the newly designed PLAY software instruments, you have the option of panning with knobs in the Microphones section. In either Platinum version, you can adjust panning for the Close, Stage and Surround Mics. This now gives you two locations to work with panning, here, and above the volume fader.

Setting the microphone positions – This is great feature that's only available in the Platinum editions. Only two libraries besides QLSO have been recorded with the orchestra in their seated positions, the *SONiVOX Symphonic Collection* and the older Miroslav Vitous library, which has since been rereleased by IK Multimedia as the *Miroslav Philharmonik*. All the rest are recorded in the center stage position with a fixed microphone position. Other libraries promoting pre-panning have been programmed, not recorded, into those onstage positions.

Thus, to get libraries to match and blend has been a time consuming trial and success process, which frankly, is a huge time waster. No more. If you want to use these other libraries with QLSO, you can now adjust the mic position with QLSO to get the better fit, and in less time.

Fast mic position change – To switch between or add a mic position in either Platinum version, you just click the appropriate button and in a few seconds, voila, change! When you change or add mic positions, PLAY automatically brings up the matching set of articulations. Very thoughtful programming. **Note:** Gold and Silver are stage position only so this feature isn't available on those versions.

Reverb selection – This to me is a great option. Using the original recordings, QLSO has been reprogrammed from the ground up. With it, as with all the PLAY libraries, are several dozen convolution reverbs including those recorded within the hall where QLSO was recorded. A convolution reverb is where the sound of a specific concert hall or recording studio has been recorded, then edited so that the sound of the instruments are heard as if they were in that specific recording location. By comparison, standard hardware reverb units work by mathematical algorithm to create the reverb sound.

Scripting
You have three scripts to choose from that you can turn on or off: Portamento, Legato and Repetition. Portamento and Legato automatically put you into monophonic mode. This means that you can only play one pitch at a time on the keyboard instead of a chord.

For Educators and Students
Our teaching experience with Alexander University online classes is that for use on a single computer is that QLSO is one of the easier sample libraries to work with since the student's time is focused on writing first, then working editing volume levels. Whether for the individual student or a school lab, while more expensive, QLSO Gold would be a wise purchase since it has all the articulations of the larger Platinum versions for the Stage position. QLSO has been used in hundreds of movies, TV episodes, even for *Cirque du Soleil* in Las Vegas. Students learning with QLSO learn on a program that can be used daily in film/TV production. So what's learned in the classroom can be used in life. QLSO integrates with all the Mac and PC sequencing programs (Apple Logic, Cubase, Digital Performer and Sonar), Pro Tools, and the current version of Finale.

CONCLUSION
There are literally tens of thousands of composers in just the U.S. who graduated from music school never having had their orchestral pieces performed, even by a school orchestra – if it had one. With QLSO PLAY, the dream can be resurrected.

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