EastWest Voices of Passion – Part 1

By Peter Lawrence Alexander / August 10, 2008

When you think about vocals in film, the tendency is to think of big dramatic choirs like those found in *Ben Hur*, *King of Kings*, *How Green is My Valley*, *Duel of the Fates* from *Star Wars*, *The 13th Warrior* and others. For this big choral sound, there have been several choir libraries in recent years developed by Eric Persing, Nick Phoenix and Peter Seidlaczek to capture its essence. One of the next ventures in producing this big choral sound is from Vienna with their new Sopranos library, which, as we understand it, in late 2008 or early 2009 will be released as a full SATB library within the Vienna Instruments family. Also in development, with no announced release date, are the Garritan Choirs which will feature lyric singing capabilities with multilingual capabilities.

However, in recent years, while the trend is still to use a big choir, a new trend has emerged featuring the power of the single voice.

We can go back to James Horner's skillful use of this scoring technique in *Apollo 13*, and Hans Zimmer's in *Gladiator*, to name two.

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How often have composers silently wished they could capture that sound for their own productions, especially when budgets don't permit the additional of live musicians, and where producers on the cheap on Craig's List are looking for the "big boom" within a $3500 budget requiring 30 minutes or more of music.

Enter EastWest's *Voices of Passion*. Not only is *Voices of Passion* a genuine problem solver in this regard, it is, in it's own right, a superb musical tool expanding the compositional and production range of the composer in or out of Hollywood, and therefore, a library to have.

VOP is part of the PLAY family of software instruments. So in this first of two parts, I'm spending time with the PLAY aspect of VOP. Next week, we'll look at the musical/production features.

Installation

I'm keeping this in "lay" terms. When you install the first PLAY library, you're setting up a place on the C-drive (or what the PLAY manual calls the active drive) where all the libraries are stored. You then have the option later during installation to place the samples on different drives.

Having already reviewed Storm Drum 2, I talked about some installation issues that you can reread online at www.filmmusicmag.com. Now, with VOP, or any other PLAY library that would be your second in the series, there are a couple of issues to take note of. When you install the second PLAY library, the program information is automatically installed on the active drive. But, a couple of screens later, you're given the opportunity to install the samples on a different drive. Unfortunately, this aspect of the installation is a little unclear and isn't clearly explained in the manual.

My suggestion is for EW to post a screenshot or two on the Soundsonline site to clarify how/where to install the samples to another drive.

Post-installation, I ran into an issue in Logic 8 where I couldn't get PLAY to open. This was because I had one of the original disks. The simple cure was to install and run the most current PLAY update. Once I did that, I had no problems.

Opening PLAY

Once you open PLAY, you first get the generic PLAY interface. You click on the BROWSER button and you're then taken to this screen, (Example 1):

EXAMPLE 1

This screen shows the content of your hard drive and the PLAY libraries that are installed. On my system, you can see SD2 and VOP. In this screen you select which PLAY library you want. Once you select the library you want, the screen changes color reflecting that library's "skin" color. To use a literary term, you're then taken to the table of contents of that library where you pick the sound you want. For that you click ADD. If you want more sounds, up to 16 per instance, continue to click ADD. If you're trying out sounds or just want one, after you've selected your new sound, click REPLACE. The new sound is loaded and the older one is overwritten.

Up to this point, regardless of the PLAY library, you're working with the same GUI (graphical user interface).

But, when you click to go to the GUI for that specific library, the design slightly changes.

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Here's SD2

Here's Voices of Passion

Look at the two screenshots and you'll see that the interface for each is different, even to slightly relocating the Browse button.

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For further comparison, here's the new GUI for Quantum Leap Symphonic Orchestra (QLSO)

And now Quantum Leap Pianos.

Notice that with QL Pianos, you have the same mic controls as with QLSO which enables you to "place" QL Pianos appropriately in the mix with QLSO, Platinum or Gold.

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As an overview observation, with Vienna Instruments, which operates on a similar precept, there's only one GUI for every library. So everything works within that fixed system. With PLAY, the interface changes, based on the need and design of the program.

Where the Development Path is Leading

Given recent announcements from the Vienna Symphonic Library, I think it's clear that the path being taken by both EastWest and Vienna, while similar in some regards, is vastly different.

With the release of *Appassionata Strings II* and the forthcoming *Chamber Strings II* (featuring muted strings), Vienna is clearly on a dedicated path to having the most comprehensive orchestral libraries going. With the Expanded Brass and Saxophones, Vienna (if they haven't realized this yet) now is the second company to offer composers for concert band the opportunity to create for the virtual concert band. This is a very big market and it will be interesting to see if VSL actively pursues it.

By comparison, seeing the development of PLAY up close, demonstrates that EastWest is creating a more well-rounded path of "studio" libraries empowering the composer to produce in multiple styles, genres and media.

This last point is important because more and more what writer's have to do to write full time is to take on varied projects outside film/TV work, but which require the same dramatic thinking as film/TV work.

Fortunately, we have tools like *Storm Drum 2* and *Voices of Passion* that enable us to do just that. And that's a good thing.

NEXT WEEK: *Voices of Passion Part II* which looks at musical/production usage.

This article was previously published at SonicControl.tv

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