Insights: Rumble

By Jose Herring / February 22, 2012

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Jose Herring, our reviewer for Rumble, is an L.A. Composer and a Juilliard graduate.

Many of today's Hollywood film and television composers have grown up through the public school marching band system including myself. From this perspective I was eager to get my hands on Rumble produced by Sample Logic and System Blue.

A collection of samples featuring DCI world Champions Blue Devlis drum and bugle corps and drum arranger Scott Johnson recorded at Skywalker Sound by Leslie Ann Jones, the sound quality of Rumble is one of its greatest strengths. Rumble then is intended to serve the needs of three distinct classes of musicians: the working media composer, the dedicated sound designer, and the marching band directors across America. These three perspectives give Rumble a unique place in the crowded Virtual Instruments market.

Perspective 1: Media Composers– Film, TV, Games, Records
The best way to evaluate Rumble is of course to focus on its use. So I'll dive right in. Rumble is a quick way to add cutting edge sound design leads, melodic patterns, rhythms, pads, loops, atmospheres, hits, etc. into your productions. When first opening Rumble you're immediately drawn to the simple way in which the library is organized, making it easy to get to the sound you're after.

There are two main categories, **Instruments** and **Multis**.

The Instruments folder is divided into two subsections "morphed" and "traditional", and the Multis section, divided into several subsections with descriptive names such as "big hits" and "construction beds", and so on. The morphed section of the Instruments folder are the basic sound design patches of Rumble. Here lies one of Rumble's greatest strengths.

Diving into the Morphed folder, I pulled up a patch from the "melodic" subfolder and immediately started to play. You gotta love it when you play a patch and it immediately starts to inspire you to write music.

And that's what these patches do.

I immediately start to hear musical uses for the sounds. Of course if these were just stock sounds then that use would be limited, but they go far beyond that. On all the of the patches I previewed I was able to use the mod wheel to modify a set of predesignated filters. Another great feature is that a lot of the fx used to modify the basic samples can be accessed in the "Master" section from the front panel. Using Kontakt's MIDI learn function, I was able to assign these FX and control them using my Korg NanoKontrol. These are great features for getting a more useful and personal sound. Of course I wouldn't be satisfied if it where just a one short loop type sound, instead though, there's an arpeggiator as part of the patch and I was able to play chords and get some interesting harmonic patterns extremely quickly.

It would take a long time to explain all the folders and patches so I won't go into that. I'll conclude that the Morphed folder in Rumble gives you many, many options for creating and editing quick sound designed patches for use in all types of hybrid type scoring and record work. Here you'll have access to editing FX, delays and sequenced patterns, all on the fly using common controllers, making this section a player's dream rather than a tweaker's nightmare.

Moving onto the Multi's section, this has got to be one of the most pleasurable experiences of this library. Talented composers and sound designers such as Trevor Morris have lent their expertise and created a set of multis that are not only kick ass sounding, but are playable as well. So you're able to create these amazing sonic landscapes, impacts, etc. on the fly playing straight from your keyboard. You'll have to play this thing to believe it, but the amount of expression you can get by playing your keyboard and using the mod wheel is astounding. Quick, easy to use and very effective.

Perspective 2: Dedicated Sound Designer's Perspective
Many times those of us who take sound design seriously like to "roll our own" as it's said. That is, not content with using the sounds that "everybody else has", we dig in under the hood of an instrument to create our own sounds. From this perspective Rumble doesn't disappoint in the least bit.

It was not long before I was hitting the little wrench tool in Kontakt to find out how each Instrument was built. There you can add your own fx to the patches, further tweak the fx parameters to your liking, etc. Of course you'll need to have the full version of Kontakt to do this. I'm using Kontakt 5, though the library will also work with Kontakt 4 and up.

Here, though, you'll also find the first weakness (though not really, more explanation later) of the library. If you play the individual sample you'll find that the sample itself is based on a processed drum sound. So, straight from the patches, it's hard to build your own sound from scratch. But, not to worry, also included in Rumble are some great sounding naked one shots and loops sans processing that you can easily start to build your own sounds from. One of the things that I was doing was to start by pitching down a bare sample drum an octave for deep hits. Using Kontakt's built in delays you can start to create rhythms. Adding Kontakt's built in FX you can automate filters, EQ's, et al. For further processing outside of Kontakt, routing an instrument to a specific output into your DAW is, of course, standard practice.

The key here is that the sample quality of Rumble is so high that you can pitch down, mangle, filter, lather, rinse and repeat many, many times over and over again and still have a great sound at the end. As we all know this isn't possible in a lot of libraries of lesser quality. Also, the sounds are expressively played so you never really lose that humanness of the strike and makes loops from single shots sound impressively musical.

Perspective 3: Marching Band Composer/Arranger
Marching band directors and arrangers for bands have a reason to rejoice. At your finger tips you have plenty of traditional marching band percussion organized into instrument and multis aptly named, "traditional".

Recalling my days of being a drum major at the University of Arizona, this is a full and complete set of almost everything you need to hear your arrangements and drum compositions, before the first rehearsal.

All of the drums have been carefully mapped out on the keyboard, making integration with notation programs pretty straight forward. Also, a nice added feature that can be used to get the creative juices flowing are the ensemble patches and the section patches. That way instead of trying to hear an idea using just individual drums you can get a sketch of an idea using full ensemble patches, much like I do with the piano on orchestral arrangements. And for the times when the ideas just don't seem to be flowing, or you're new to making percussion tracks, make sure to check out the loops and arpeggiated folders under Rhythms in the traditional instruments folder of Rumble.

Ok. A lot of things covered here, so I'd like to conclude my review with a brief summary of the strengths and to mention one weakness of the library.

There are plenty of reasons for all types of creative musicians to have this library. It's a quick go to library for film and TV composers and sound designers and record producers wanting some really deep contemporary sounds right out of the box. Many parameters can be easily assigned making it easy to fit the sounds and loops into any musical context without ever having to look under the hood, but for those who like to roll their own sounds, there's plenty of good sounding unprocessed drum hits to start building your own sounds. High recording quality and expressive playing make it possible to apply extreme torture methods to the sounds without it turning into mush. I processed some of the hits dozens of plug-ins deep and was still able to have a good sound at the end of the chain. So for those that can't afford to recorded top class drums in an A+ facility to design your own sounds, this is a good place to start.

Drum composers/arrangers for marching bands and corps have at their finger tips drums that they can use for arrangements. Pretty complete set with lots of different types of mallets, felt, wood, etc. are captured here and in a really nice sounding room. So your arrangements can be realized before the rehearsal allowing you to be ready to go on Day One of band camp with hot new drum compositions and/or arrangements.

Now, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention one thing that this library is not. This library is not a deeply sampled drum library like Tonehammer libraries. MIDI mock-up artists that want deeply sample drums with 8 velocity layers and 8 RR per drum, had better look elsewhere. This is not that library. But, that being said, it's a great library for all the uses outlined above, and I've always thought that even deeply sampled libraries don't particularly sound that realistic anyway. So if I want "real" sounding drums, I'm usually playing and recording real drums with real drummers anyway.

Again the market for this is people that want excellent instrument for sound design capabilities and people that need a sketch of marching band or corps drums. For these purposes, Rumble exceeds *very* well.

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