

Credland Audio Big Kick

Formats: Mac & PC AAX 64-bit, VST; Mac AU

Big Kick is one of those specialist plug-ins that, as soon as you install it, makes you wonder how you ever managed without. It doesn't do much — just kick drums, that's it — but it does them easily, quickly and without fuss. As usual with these things, I downloaded the plug-in and my installer code and dropped it into a session. It is pretty straightforward to use: editing is easy and the plug-in comes with an array of factory sounds to choose from. These cover most of the standard drum-machine fare such as 909 and 808 sounds, as well as a vast selection of genre-grouped sounds. Their arrangement into banks makes it pretty easy to find a rough sound to start working on.

The plug-in interface is split into three sections, with a fourth hidden section that can be opened as needed. At the top is the Sample section, where you can either load a factory setting or a sample from your own library. Handy buttons help you switch through sounds in the banks without having to go back to the drop-down banks menu. A decay knob shortens or lengthens the sample, a gain control adjusts the volume, and a high-pass filter lets you trim the low end to help your sample sit happily alongside the next section, entitled Body. This is one of the key elements of the plug-in: the attack sample provides the character of the kick, but it is the body that supplies the weight.

The Body section has various controls that alter the way the main part of the kick will sound, from sweeping resonant sounds to solid hard 'thuds'. The rate at which the note falls and even the start note itself can be set using these controls and a drop-down pitch menu. Attack, hold and decay controls adjust the length of the sound. All the controls are optimised for kick drums and are fast and easy to use. There is a 'body mode' that can be switched between Original and Tough, the latter producing a harder sound. The last section provides master level, editing and saving functions. There is also an auto-play function to make editing easier. Between the sections is a simple waveform screen that shows you a graphical representation of what is changing as you edit.

The Wave button opens the fourth, hidden window which gives you some more options. Saturation can be added using the rotary Drive control, with a range of character options such as Dirty, Clipper and the intriguing WT-C, which is described as a "warmer sawtooth sound". Next to that is a handy phase control. This can be used to adjust the phase of the kick, which is really useful for bringing out its punch against bass lines or drums you already have in your track. It's amazing how much this control can help you tighten up your beats.

It seemed sensible to take the plug-in into a few clubs to give it a decent workout. I used it over several different sound systems, all with decent-size subs, and it performed well. The ease with which Big Kick can be tailored and the range of sounds it can produce is superb. It sounded full and rounded when needed, and hard and fast when called upon. This is a simple concept, but it's executed in a very clear, ergonomic way. For anyone involved in dance music it is a must, and even if, like me, you only use sampled kicks every now and then, this is a great one-stop shop for finding a sound quickly and easily. I can see it creeping in to more of my sessions every day! Jon Burton

£39.94 including VAT.

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