Prepared Electric Piano demo and paid packs for Caustic 2
by Les Productions Zvon

PHOTO : LOUIS LAFONTAINE

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For these packs, I took samples from our Prepared Rhodes sample set. It's kind of "best of" as I made a selection among those that, IMO, are best suited for use in Caustic. The free demo pack has 16 samples, 16 PCMSynth presets and 4 Beatbox kits. The paid pack adds 63 samples, 53 presets and 25 kits for a combined total of 79 samples, 69 PCMSynth presets and 29 Beatbox kits. Both must be installed to have the complete content.

The sampled instrument is a real Rhodes electric piano that was prepared as John Cage and others prepared an acoustic piano. That means inserting springs, plastic tubes, pins, all kinds of objects inside the piano. These objects when touching the strings or the tines change the sound of each key played. All the notes can be radically different from each other and often the original sound is not even recognizable. The result is an instrument that is much more percussive in nature. This has been done quite often with acoustic piano but rarely with a Rhodes.

Even if there are some clean sounds, these are "dirty" samples. When you put things inside a Rhodes, a lot of things happen sonically, like strange vibrations and resonance between the objects and the tines. Even the release of the key produces artefacts on notes. All sounds have their natural decay, none is cut or looped.

Besides the reduced number of samples, the main difference between the regular computer version and the Caustic version is the lack of programs where each note of the keyboard plays a different sound with velocity layers. This is because: a) Caustic does not support velocity layers, b) these programs use more memory, c) they are best played on a real keyboard in my opinion. On the other hand, the Beatbox is very well suited to play and control these percussion type sounds.

In the regular computer version, I used 39 of the samples to make patches simply from one sample mapped across the keyboard. These make fun semi-tuned percussion instruments. They're all here (minus 1) but I have added 40 more in the Caustic pack that are not in the computer version. So this pack is also more than just a best of!

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Things to keep in mind:

- Sample names refer to the notes of the actual prepared electric piano, not the pitch heard. "di" means sharp in French.

- The PCMSynth presets use only one sample so the speed and length of the playback change across the keyboard. Most of them are in the Play once mode - samples play for their full length, some are in the Note On/Off mode - samples play from the Note On to the Note Off. I choose one or the other based on what I thought would generally be more useful but don't hesitate to change modes to suit your needs. Some of these samples have long durations in the lower octaves.

- Be careful with the volume when listening/monitoring, some of the samples generate a lot of low frequencies when transposed down and highs when transposed up. Protect your hearing and equipment!

- All the PCMSynth presets are intended to be used as semi-tuned instruments and none are perfectly tuned but some are more in tune than others. To help you easily determine those who are, I have added a T or a S at the end of the names of some presets. So, in regard to tuning, there are 3 categories of presets. The T indicates those that have the better tuning, the S indicates the second best tuning and the ones with no letter are the instruments where the samples have no clear and specific pitch information or the pitch moves widely. Most are either a few cents sharp or flat and in some instruments the relation between the intervals changes. For instance for a given instrument, C4 may be sharp and C2 is flat. I feel that it's true to the percussive nature of the set and it also is more interesting.

- Some instruments are well suited to play melodic lines and even chords. But remember that the original intent is to offer a range of percussion hits.

- As most instruments cover a few octaves, it's a good idea to check the sounds across the whole keyboard. You may prefer the sound of specific octaves over others. The root note, where the sample is heard at normal speed, and playback mode can easily be seen on the PCMSynth's Sampler Information Panel.

- For the Beatbox kits, I more or less grouped the samples in alphabetical order. This grouping may not be ideal for composing but it's a good way to quickly audition the samples and have some fun with them. 79 samples offer a lot of possible combinations, so don't hesitate to make your own kits that will best suit your needs.

- There are 13 basic kits (Demo 01, 02 and PE 01 to PE 11) where the samples are pretty much as is and 12 kits that are variations (Demo var 01, 02 and VAR 01 to VAR 10). The variation kits correspond to the PE kits that have the same number but the playback of the samples is tweaked in the Beatbox. I have shortened the decay and/or transposed the samples.

- There are also 4 kits that I simply named "mixed kits" because they combine samples from various kits. They are examples of more "artistic" kits.

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Details

The table below lists all the PCMSynth presets with the sample used for each and its root. The fourth column indicates those that are in the demo. The samples at the end were not used to create a PCMSynth preset.

Program	Sample	PCMSynth Root	
Africa Java (T)	E4_v3	B3	
African (T)	F1di_b long vel 3	A0	
Almost Plucked (S)	A1 vel03	C#2	
Another pluck (S)	A1di vel04	D#3	Demo
Balafon EP (T)	A5di_v5	F6	
Bamboo too	F4di_v3	D#5	
Bamboo you	C4_v2	G#2	Demo
Boxy drop (S)	C5di_v2	A#4	
Click click	G3_V3	D#2	Demo
Clockoo	C6di_v2	A#3	Demo
Depth	F3di_00 fort	A3	
Distorted space	D6di_var4 med court	C4	
Don't know (S)	d3_v2	F#3	Demo
Double hit	E5_double	C5	
Dreamy (T)	C5_b_v1	G5	Demo
Droplets (S)	F6di_v2	A#3	
EP like (T)	A5di_v3	F6	Demo
Fairy tale (T)	C5_b_v1	G4	
Frog jump	B5_v4	D#5	
Fun hit	E2 vel04	E3	
Fun perc	A4di_v3	C4	
Going bass (T)	G1di_v4	G1	
Going up (T)	G1di_short v4	G1	
Hard hit 1 (S)	E6 med_var1	A#1	
Hard hit 1_loop	E6 med_var1	A#1	
Hard hit 2 (S)	E6 med_var1	A#1	
Hard Hit short	E6 short_v3	B1	Demo
Harp like (T)	C2 long vel02	F2	Demo
Heavy spring (S)	D6di_var3 med	C3	
Hit it	E2 vel03	F2	
Honky funk (S)	F1 vel 2	A1	
In a hurry (S)	G2 vel02	B2	
Javaneese (T)	D4di_v2	G4	Demo

Kind of wood	C3di_v3	G#1	
Knock	F6_var bit softer	C4	
Lookin for a tunin 1 (S)	E6 long_v2	A#1	Demo
Lookin for a tunin 2 (S)	E6 long_v1	A#1	
Magic (T)	A6di_v1	F#6	
Metallic madness	E3_v3	E3	
Moving out 1 (S)	E1a vel 4_edit	G1	
Moving out 2 (S)	E1b vel 2	G1	
Music box (T)	A5di_V1	F6	
Night music (T)	F3di_03v1	C3	
Night soft (T)	F3di_03v1	C3	
Noisewriter	F5di_variante sec	D2	Demo
Old hit (ST)	G5_variante	C4	
Pitch a curve (T)	C2di vel04 shorter	F2	Demo
Reso Wood 1	G1_vel 4	C2	Demo
Reso Wood 2	G1_vel 5	C2	
Rimring harp (T)	A4b_v4 long	D5	
Roasted nuts (T)	F3di_01v3	C3	
Screwball (S)	d2 vel02	F2	Demo
Sharp bass (T)	C2 shorter	F2	
Sharp Kalimba (T)	F1c vel 1	G#1	Demo
Short change (T)	B6_vel 3	F#5	
Singing bass (T)	C2 very short vel02	F2	
Small Ben (ST)	C3 vel02	G#2	
Small tremor	B3_v3	D#4	
Soft gong	E5_v3	C5	
Spring in Bali (T)	D6di_long v2	A#2	
Springy	G2di c_vel03	D#2	
Squeaks	F1di_b short vel 3	A0	
String wood (T)	C4di_v2	F4	
Toughy	G2di b_vel01	B2	
Vibra Orient (T)	A2 long vel02	F#2	
Vibrating East	A2 short vel03	A#2	
Woods done it	F2 vel02	C2	
Wrong echo	C6_st	C4	
Zest of gong (S)	C3 vel02	G#3	
Beatbox only	A2 long vel03		
Beatbox only	B1 vel03		
Beatbox only	B5_variante		
Beatbox only	B5_variante2 soft		

Beatbox only	C3 short vel02		
Beatbox only	C5_b_v2		
Beatbox only	D5di_v3		
Beatbox only	D6di_b_v2		
Beatbox only	D6di_v1		
Beatbox only	F4_b		
Beatbox only	F4_v4		
Beatbox only	F5di_v2		
Beatbox only	E1a vel1		

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Every note was prepared by Maxime de La Rochefoucauld who is also internationally known as a composer and a builder of mechanical musical automatons:
http://www.cooptel.qc.ca/~maxime.

Note that this is a subset of the Prepared Rhodes available for various samplers:
http://lesproductionszvon.com/zvon_PR.htm

What some people said about the regular computer version:

"A lovely sample library ... You are not going to find these sounds anywhere else. I auditioned the samples one by one and I got incredibly itchy to start messing with them right away - they are so inspirational and musical."

Ronnie on rekkerd.org, September 2009

"Each note has a different mechanical preparation and was recorded for its full duration at several Velocities. These make exceptional semi-tuned percussion instruments. For more conventional playing, presets are provided that map a single sound across the keyboard."

Len Sasso in Electronic Musician, April 2005

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Also visit our Caustic page: http://lesproductionszvon.com/caustic.htm

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