



Toontrack EZKeys 2

€179

PC MAC

We can all use a little pianistic virtuosity in our productions, and Toontrack's much anticipated update keeps you right on the EZ track

> The piano is a complicated beast! It can be tricky to play well and provides plenty of challenges on the recording front, not to mention the cost of the instrument itself. But EZKeys 2 could get you out of a pianistic jam, while providing you with the unique sound of one of the most coveted pianos in the world.

Talking Italian

The first and arguably most obvious update to EZKeys is the inclusion of a new core library. This is centred exclusively around a Fazioli 212 grand piano, a 6'9" instrument, manufactured by the bespoke piano company, based in Italy. Fazioli have a highly enviable reputation for beautiful European-sounding instruments,

with endorsees such as legendary musician, Herbie Hancock. The sample capture of this Fazioli was undertaken at Riksmixningsverket Studio in Stockholm, Sweden. The new core library claims around 4gb of your hard drive, with plenty of pianistic and timbral options available. While only the Fazioli is included at the library's core, Toontrack have captured sustain, sostenuto and una corda pedalling, with a number of classic microphones, all fed through a Neve 8068 console. Unsurprisingly, the Fazioli sounds sublime; it's not entirely pristine in timbre, in part due to the closer miking available from the studio environment, but this is very firmly a positive, as it sounds far more believable and musical as a consequence. There is no

mixer page, in favour of three pots, located within the main Keys page, allowing the signals from Hammers, Overhead and Ambience miking to be blended. The Ambience mics provide some excellent interest and colour, captured by a pair of Neumann KM84 condensers, set up in the direction of the control room's glass, capturing a signal rebounding against the window. A basic see-saw tone control is also provided, along with access to onboard reverb and control of the hammer and pedal noise.

Colouring Faz

Being Toontrack, 15 preset piano colours and mixes are provided, along with a series of heavily-effected patches, moving the piano

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away from its normal dwelling place and into more cinematic, contemporary domains. The take-home fact is that Toontrack have sampled one of the most highly-prized pianistic instruments currently available with their usual care and attention to detail. It sounds beautiful, with enough variation in edited presets to satisfy just about all production scenarios.

From MIDI to mix

Apart from the samples, Toontrack have firmly brought EZKeys 2 up to date by including elements seen elsewhere in their product line. The Bandmate facility is available, where you can drag and drop audio or MIDI onto the plugin, leaving EZKeys to suggest ideal pianistic accompaniments for your track. In a similar sense, the Suggest Chords feature will do exactly that, alongside a very healthy contingent of MIDI file content, organised by musical style and genre with clearly defined suggestions for placement within a song. This content is all editable, either by way of altering a chosen chord or through the grid editor.

Standing alone

We love the fact that EZKeys 2 ships as both a plugin and standalone application. You can treat it as a notepad, on its own, building entire song forms within the plugin, ready for export to your DAW, or you can choose to run in Sync with your DAW. You can, of course, simply use it within your DAW in the conventional way, too. That's the strength of the EZ lineup; it's highly adaptable to whichever way of working you're most suited to, but with enviable results at every turn. Added extras aside, useful as they all are, this is a worthy package for anyone who might

need gorgeous-sounding pianos. It all sounds very fine indeed, with plenty of fine-tuning tools to help you to the finish line, and even provide numerous routes down the road of inspiration along the way. **cm**

Web www.toontrack.com



Toontrack have spared no expense capturing the sound of the Fazioli

Going all Toontrack

You know how some people are perhaps overly enthusiastic about certain companies? Well, Toontrack are not lacking in the fanbase department, and their users are broad, far and wide, stylistically. This is in no small part due to the Toontrack ecosphere; once you equip yourself with a product, such as EZKeys 2, you gain access to a host of expansion packs which aim to cater to genre-specific requirements. This is the same for their other EZ products, namely EZBass and EZDrummer.

Not only can you build up a hugely expansive library, across a number of rhythm-based instruments, but these products sound insanely realistic. In the case of EZKeys 2, you can expand your library to include 80s Synthwave, Cinematic keyboards, Fender Rhodes and Uprights (and that's just a small sample), all from within the same EZKeys expansion product catalogue. These expansion packs are, however, due to be reversioned, to take full advantage of EZKeys 2.

Alternatively

Plugin Boutique Scaler 2 £59

Scaler 2's ingenious detection system will turn your chords into an authentic-sounding piano part

e-instruments Session Keys Grand S \$99

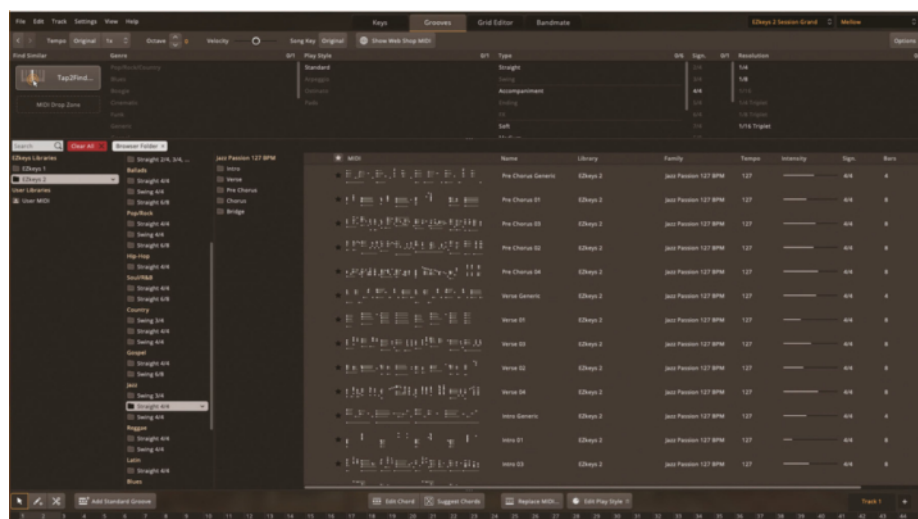
This package provides phrases that lock in to your DAW-based composition

Verdict

For Brand new core library, featuring a beautifully sampled Fazioli grand piano
Significant microphone options
Very large library of categorised MIDI files
Standalone and Plugin operation
All MIDI is fully editable, within the plugin

Against Nothing we can think of!

A truly superb update to the existing EZKeys package, with the substantial addition of one of the world's finest pianos, in a sampled format



EZKeys 2 is rammed full of beautifully performed MIDI content, helpfully organised via genre

9/10