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## **Steven Slate Drums Platinum, EX Edition, and Essential Rock/Pop Volume 2**

The thought of replacing drums may seem outright offensive to many of us. After all, aren't we supposed to be recording things? But sometimes we're called to mix projects that we did not track. Other times a client may want a contemporary commercial sound. In those situations replacing the drums might be your best option. But if you want the results to sound convincing, you can't use just any sample library. We put Steven Slate Drums Platinum EX edition through months of scrutiny. The following is what we found.

As a mix engineer, bad drum sounds can paint you into a corner, not to mention damage to a band's sound. For all things rock, the Steven Slate drum samples have been the saving grace of many of my clients. Simply put, the samples sound great, and can take a mediocre project with no budget to a higher level, or conversely can be blended with already great sounds for a stellar outcome.

First, a short anecdote: a recent project (with less than ideal sounds) came to me with the instructions "We don't care what you do to the drums, just make us sound like Big Name Radio Band XYZ." I usually laugh when I read mix notes like this, but knowing the quality of the Steven Slate Drums samples, I decided to take it as a challenge. After two minutes of browsing, I had matched the kick and snare of Big Name Radio Band almost perfectly, blended them with the original drum sounds, and, given the quality of the original sounds, the band was blown away.

The Steven Slate Drum (and cymbal) samples were prepared meticulously: tuned to perfection, cut to two inch tape, digitally transferred with high end converters, and finally processed by Steven Slate himself with vintage and modern analog gear.

The samples are accessed through the SSD Virtual Instrument, powered by Kontakt Player 3, which is a standalone or RTAS-VST-AU plug in that can be easily integrated into your DAW. Should you be recording your epic rock opera in your dorm room, the SSD comes with keyboard mappings and a universal mapping for all Roland V-Drums. We conducted our tests using Drumagog (reviewed Tape Op No 69 Jan/Fep 2009). However, at press time, SSD explained that they will be discontinuing support for Drumagog so they can focus on their own drum replacement application, Trigger. (We hope to review Trigger in a future issue as it promises unique features and algorithms).

One great thing about the SSD samples is that they are versatile. There are over forty kits in the platinum library, thirteen of which are models of classic artists and albums, while ten more are hybrid kits that use multiple layers of samples to create larger than life sounds.

Additionally, for those of you who have been frustrated by machine gun-like results with previous samples, new to SSD 3.5 is Yellow Matter's new Advanced AMG software that ensures your double kick drum will never bring the cops to your front door. And, before you feel guilty of having powers such as these, consider that top industry mixers such as Mike Shipley, Chris Lord Alge, Jay Baumgardner, and many others have used SSD samples in their work.

One interesting aspect of the SSD library is the option of room mics. There are two sets of room mic sounds, which are meant to be blended with your sampled drums, or with your existing drum sounds, for added size and space. The first set was recorded in a large warehouse with concrete walls, and the second was sampled at NRG Recording Studio A, which is a great sounding drum room.

Perhaps it's most unique feature, is each kit is presented using the "Z system". Each sample set is processed in one of four ambient spaces, providing a non-cookie cutter approach to drum samples. The Z1 mono sets have a slight amount of overhead micing. Z2 sets are stereo samples, and have heavily compressed far room mics that are mixed in with closer mics. Z3 mono sets are unprocessed dry sounds. Finally, the Z4 sample sets offer isolated room sound of each sample. Best of all, you can mix and match Z systems. So, there is nothing stopping you from using very direct Z3 sounds with Z4 ambience. You're not stuck with a drum set that feels like it was dropped into the mix from a store bought box.

List is \$500, but street price is about \$250, making the SSD Platinum library very worth the asking price. And it can enhance a project like few other libraries on the market.

[www.stevenslatedrums.com](http://www.stevenslatedrums.com)

- GH ([www.treelady.com](http://www.treelady.com)) and Dave Hidek ([www.theworthyghosts.com](http://www.theworthyghosts.com))