

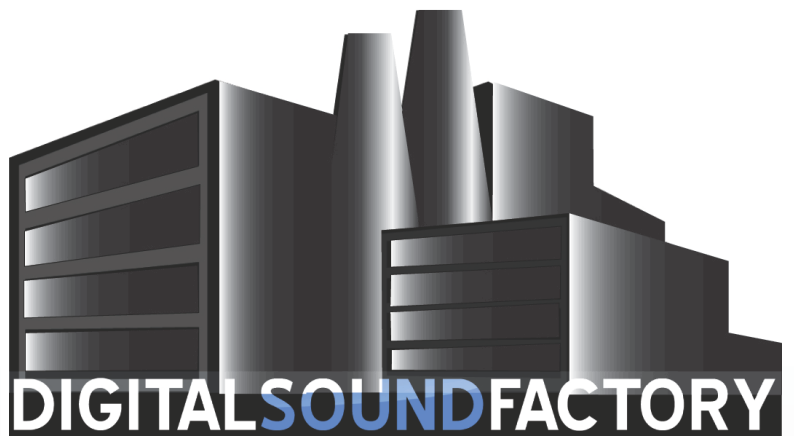
review

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interview

by Trusty



DIGITAL SOUND FACTORY

Products in Dimension Pro/LE format

Proteus Pack: ★★★★★

Well, what more can be said about the quality of these sounds? They are, as they have been since their release, some of the most sought after sounds in electronic music production. With over 3,500 patches total, this collection, that includes all the sounds from E-Mu's Proteus 2000, Mo' Phatt, Xtreme Lead 1, Planet Earth, and the PX-7 (Protean) hardware modules, is the most complete package of sounds one could hope for as a Dimension Pro/LE user. Incredibly, the whole collection, even mapped out in a software product, has less than a 300 MB footprint. Even more impressive is that these sounds are even better than they are played within E-Mu's own software.

While the sounds themselves are widely available in soundfont, Refill, and EmulatorX format, what makes this package for Dimension Pro the best option is that Dimension Pro's engine has the capabilities, with its clean engine and unique envelope generators, to take these sounds into entirely new directions of expression. As for the sounds themselves, E-Mu has always added a certain extra oomph to their patches which gives them both character and usability. While many of their hardware competitors were giving their ROMplers the widest pallets, made up of the most basic

and bland sounds, E-Mu seemed to have the attitude that quantity didn't have to yield poor quality.

Many of the sounds are genre specific, per their original modules. Most people, though, like to incorporate a wide range of sound selections into their music these days, and with the manipulability of Dimension Pro, this collection has everything one could need covered. Considering this whole collection is less than the cost of one of the single hardware modules, it is a no-brainer for Dimension Pro/LE users to get one of the packs or indeed the entire Proteus Pack. Some may claim that the sounds are a bit dated, but these sounds, when originally recorded, were so forward thinking in their release that they continue to fit perfectly in today's musical productions. Also, what is great about the collections is they weren't just samples transferred to the sfz format and "dumped in", but were also set up as actual Dimension Pro programs; the various parameters of the sampling synthesizer were adjusted to make the samples sound as close to the original modules as possible. In many cases, the Dimension Pro sound engine bettered the original hardware.

Price for the Proteus Pack: **\$299** download.

Individual sound collections: \$79 download, directly from Cakewalk.com

Both the complete set and the individual collections come with Dimension LE included for free.

Digital Sound Factory Volume 1:

★★★★★

The big draw to this expansion is definitely the Yamaha Conservatory Grand Piano, which was recorded at Open Path Studios in San Jose, California. The result of this sampling session is one of the absolute best sampled piano sound collections in all of software - or hardware, for that matter. Though none of the various piano patches exceed a gig in size (the closest patch, "Tweaked Dance Piano" is 975 MB), the sheer sound is remarkable, and the playability of the patches, amazing. These piano samples are also the basis for many of the layered and combination patches, which are also unequivocally outstanding.

Not to be out done, found in this volume are a selection of synthesizer, orchestral, woodwind, and keyboard sounds as well, along with the occasional brass and choir patches. With the meticulous sampling and the sound design within the Dimension engine, Digital Sound Factory has filled certain

gaps within the Dimension Pro stock collection, while matching the high standard set by the factory bank and free expansions. All the character, creativity, and excellent use of the Dimension engine is found within each category of sounds. Don't let the piano focus be misleading - this collection, all around, delivers the goods with sounds that are extremely playable and musically useful.

An attention grabber for me was the bass patches. They could have easily been an after thought to round out the collection and up the total patch number, but even here, the basses stand out and will easily find their way into productions.

Whether you like knocking, thumping, pumping, or booming basses, the ones here are sure to be crowd pleasers.

This collection can't be highly recommended enough. It is an absolute "must have" for any serious Dimension Pro or LE user. The uniqueness is so much there in the character of the sounds, that they lend themselves to many types of music, effortlessly. For this first volume of original patches for Dimension Pro and LE, Digital Sound Factory delivers an outstanding collection.

Price: **\$59.95**

Digital Sound Factory Volume 2
Classic Keys: ★★★★★

Question: Why does a relatively new sampling synthesizer need a sound set of classic sounds such as those from Jupiters, Moogs, Junos, ARPs, Trons, Clavs, and Prophets, and the rest of the usual suspects that one would find in a collection titled "Classic Keys"? Answer: Why not? For years it has been the dream of many to combine the engine horse power of modern synth capabilities with the sonic fire power of the classic synthesizers. Volume 2 delivers the goods.

The sound samples themselves are very high quality, as to be expected

from Digital Sound Factory, but the creativity in the patches make this a most welcome addition, as well as serving to round out the original stock sound content for Dimension Pro. These essential sounds were rather lacking in the original content, as the synthesizer patches were lending themselves more to certain electronica sub-genres over others (okay, they mostly sounded like Trance-only sounds). An in depth survey of the patches generates a lot of excitement and reveals much of the potential that can be unleashed with this sample set. There is a good balance of the standard sound fare one would expect in a collection like this, as well as the usual character and

creativity expected from Digital Sound Factory. Many of the synth lead and the synth string patches scream for a place in any tracks one could create - their warmth and presence demands it.

However, the two sound categories that stand out most are the Effects and Electro Mechanical selections. Some very creative layering and tweaks in the Effects category, and some very punchy Clav and grimy Tron sounds are present in the Electro Mechanical category. It is a shame that the latter category has the smallest selection of all the patch categories. More attention to that area would have been a very welcome prospect for this collection. Perhaps next time. In fact, they are so good, it is hard - almost impossible - not to wish there were more.

Also, an honorable mention for the top spots in this would be the combination patches. These types of sounds are probably going to be the most used by everyone who obtains this volume. The combination and effects patches really show what Dimension Pro can do with excellent source samples.

To think that these sounds have been covered before in other products, and thus aren't an essential addition to the Dimension Pro patch selection, would be a



serious error. There are plenty of stand-out sounds that would serve as a slate from which to go beyond just the preset and into new sonic territory - all thanks to the incredible, yet familiar, sound. The excellent and creative use of piano

sounds in Vol. 1 is continued in Vol. 2, as a nice bonus - as are the organ sounds, that have been improved upon from the first volume. The only drawback in this collection - besides the absence of more patches in the Electro Mechanical category - is the synth bass set - which is odd, considering the excellent ones present in Vol. 1. And it would be assumed (given the source material) that these would be even better than the previous bass sounds. No matter though; the tweak-ability of Dimension itself can make up for the lack in this area.

If one had to choose between volume 1 or 2, I would recommend acquiring them in that order. But both are highly recommended.

Price: Included with Sonar 8 Producers Edition. **\$59.95**, otherwise.

Note: All patches are set up in Dimension .prog files but also in the standard sfz format. In fact, within Dimension, the sfz files can be accessed independently of the .prog files, so users can layer up to four of any sfz they wish. Moreover, the sfz format can be used with many sampling synthesizers available on the market (including an upcoming version of Wusikstation). So be sure to check your specs and see if these sounds will work in a product you already own. >>>