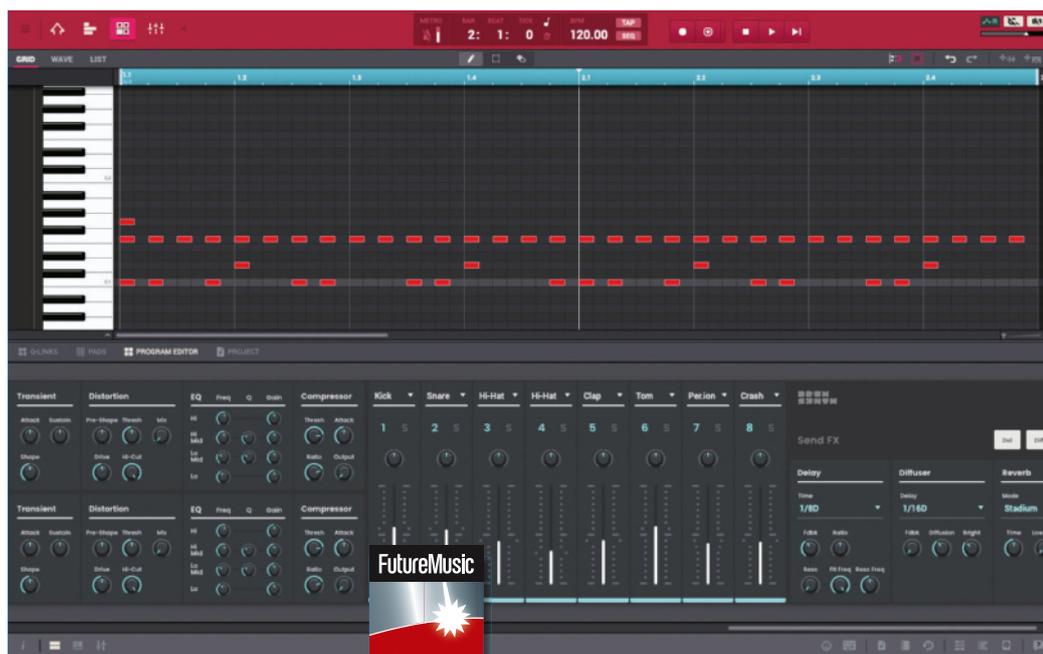


Akai MPC 2.9 Air Drumsynth Free

The ever-expanding MPC range now comes with a native drum synth. Dan 'JD73' Goldman gets tapping...

CONTACT WHO: Akai **WEB:** akaipro.com **KEY FEATURES** Single drum synth plugins include modelled kick, snare, clap, hi-hat, crash, ride, tom and percussion. All plugins also available across the pads as one multi-plugin. Dedicated effects include delay, diffuser and reverb send effects. Other shaping effects include transient shaper, compressor and distortion. Dedicated Drumsynth mixer also included





Akai's MPC software is now a hugely powerful ecosystem, working both as standalone software in its own right and also powering the hardware MPC range including the One, Live/Live II, X (and Force). Since its first release in 2012, it's grown into a very well-respected product with many powerful features. Firmware 2.9 brought with it a very nice free addition – a dedicated drum synth (called... Drumsynth)!

Firstly, hats off to Akai for releasing this as a free update – but does this mean it's no good? Far from it! Drumsynth offers eight modelled engines which are all plugins in their own right and all eight engines can be used on a single MPC track as a multi-plugin/kit (you can't combine a drum synth multi with samples currently). Available engines include Kick (with 10 models including 808, 909, natural, driven and clipped), Snare (with seven models including 808, 909, natural and ring), Clap (three models), Hi-Hat (with seven models including noise, complex, 808 and 909), plus several rides and crashes, a good selection of toms and a percussion model that contains rimshots, clave, cowbell, congas, bongo, tambourine, darbuka, timpani, shaker, tabla and an FM synth. So

there's a really decent amount of models and variations to work with and they all sound rather good (save perhaps for the tambourine).

There's plenty of detailed sound shaping onboard, with each model in an engine having its own distinct set of shaping parameters. For example, the snare has eight velocity-targetable parameters to mess with (including tune, noise, noise colour, hold, decay and stereo width) while the ride includes tune, decay, spike, hi-pass, reso and stereo. You can dial in these sounds to taste easily to fit many styles – and there are plenty of varied preset kits too. Importantly, you don't need to endlessly scroll through your samples anymore to find the right sounds quickly – you can get up and running fast using Drumsynth alone.

Like other MPC plugins/sounds, each engine is fully automatable but each engine here also has a dedicated transient shaper, 4-band EQ, distortion and compressor. Again, the results are surprisingly solid – I'm impressed! Send effects (with

per-engine sends via the mixer) are included too including delay, diffuser and reverb and whilst they aren't the greatest effects in the world, they nonetheless do a solid job of putting your sounds into a musical space. Finally, a mixer allows you to level things easily (but there is no live level metering). As a long-time MPC user, I can't fail to be impressed by this free update and I for one can see it getting a lot of heavy use! **FM**

FM VERDICT

9.0

A great drum machine in its own right – sounds on the money, is easy to use and it gets you making beats faster. What's not to like?

Hats off to Akai for releasing this as a free update



THE PROS & CONS



Surprisingly powerful and integrates well within the MPC ecosystem

Gets you making beats very quickly!



The screen doesn't change to reflect which pad is pressed in the multi-plugin. No choke groups

Some sounds need more variations (the hats and tamps)

You can't mix your own samples with Drumsynth sounds using the multi-plugin