

Forest Kingdom

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WHY BUY

- + Splendid ethnic flutes with true legato
- + Deep sampled percussion
- + Imaginative and effective sonic landscapes (pads)
- + Sensibly priced

WALK ON BY

- More voices would be good
- Dull-looking GUI

A great library for anyone into New Age music production, nature documentaries and games scoring. Outstanding ethnic flutes, imaginative pads and many sonic surprises. Highly recommended.

★★★★★★★

Eduardo Tarilonte has been a professional composer for some 15 years and attributes much of his success to making his own private samples libraries, which helps him to create his own musical identity. He's now producing commercial libraries for Best Service, the latest being Forest Kingdom, inspired by Mother Nature herself, this 7GB library features flutes, harps, percussion, fantasy creatures, voices and sonic landscapes, all powered by the new Best Service Engine 2 samples player.

Flute fantasy

Flutes play a big part in this library, comprising a full set of panpipes (four instruments covering high and low registers), Bulgarian piccolo flute, a double flute, Kiowa native American flute, a traditional Chinese flute and an African fula flute. They've been recorded with numerous ornaments and, where appropriate, with real legato and portamento. It's a fine collection with enough material to cover many aspects of ethnic playing styles, from chromatic melodies to sung and spoken effects. The African fula flute set, which features some splendid singing through the mouthpipes, is particularly effective. The pan pipes, too, contain percussive staccatos with spoken words, phrases, whispers and breath noises.

Two harps are included – an acoustic Celtic harp, which has a beautiful tone, and an electric harp, which although attractive in its upper register becomes rather boomy lower down. This is easily cured by cutting the lower frequencies, which can be done with the Engine player.

All the percussion has been deeply sampled, with most patches having up to 14 velocity levels and four roundrobin. The content is extensive and we couldn't resist trying out the five war drums first, which make truly thunderous noise but can also be played very quietly (great for building tension). Other categories are Metal (cymbals, bells etc.), Ocean Drums (some great ambient textures here), Shakers, Wind Chimes, Wind Tubes and an assortment of ethnic instrument such as water pumpkin and rain stick (the former being the intriguing sound of a hollow half pumpkin played over water).

Primeval pads

Pads are often the most uninteresting sounds to audition and review but there are some real beauties in Forest Kingdom. There are dozens to choose from with names such as Jungle Temple (a clever fusion of what sounds like harp, bird calls and assorted percussion), Meditation Forest (a magical blend of bells and wind chimes) and the menacing rumble of the old Druid Forest. Each pad can be tweaked and consists of layers that can be mixed and automated.

The sheer number of bird calls in Forest Kingdom could almost amount to overkill, but, if like us you like birds, you'll love this collection. They live in the Fantasy Creatures section, an assorted suite of sound-designed creatures such as the Lost Valley Beast, White Mountain Gorilla and a variety of small swamp creatures.

Voices are on the sparse side although there is a beautiful rich Ethereal Female Solo Voice with real legato and a choice of different consonants and vowels. Apart from her, there are a few male chants and mantras but no solo male performances. Although understandably hard to source, more ethnic human performances, particularly solo, would be welcome. Lastly, there's a collection of swishes and whooshes both dry and processed that conjure up, to our ears at least, the sounds of blow pipe and images of stealthy natives.

At your Service

In use, the rather murky-looking GUI is very simple and intuitive, featuring a mixer plus volume, pan, pitch, envelope and EQ colour controls along with automation preset. Deeper editing probably won't be needed in most cases but there's always Engine's Pro Edit section should the need arise.

We loved this library for its originality, freshness and musicality, particularly the flutes. The sound design is well thought through and implemented and it's not inconceivable that entire New Age-style compositions will be constructed using Forest Kingdom alone. Its main use, though, will inevitably be for film soundtracks, documentaries and games.