



Fig. 1 70 DVZ Strings lets you control every aspect of the library in real time.

Audio Impressions 70 DVZ Strings

Orchestral library offers advanced realtime control

BY ROB SHROCK

I'VE BEEN fortunate to work with great string orchestras both onstage and in the studio for years now. I also work with all of the major orchestral sample libraries and have the 200-plus tracks in my DAW template to prove it. When 70 DVZ Strings was sent to me for review, I thought there must be a mistake when I read the specs, which claimed that all string articulations were available at all times for each section and the whole library operated on only five MIDI channels and was around 8GB in size. How could that be?

70 DVZ Strings, the brainchild of noted composer Chris Stone, employs an innovative approach toward controlling samples. The DVZ Master Orchestrator application resides on the PC with Kontakt Player and allows the user to

control every aspect of the library in real time from the GUI without having to ever work directly in Kontakt. MIDI is sent from the DAW to DVZ, where it is processed and split into five MIDI streams (Violins I, Violins II, Violas, Cello, Basses) and sent back to your DAW and recorded onto separate MIDI tracks, where it can be further edited. Simultaneously, the channelized audio from Kontakt is also routed to your DAW. The whole system works in real time, in effect allowing you to play on your keyboard and hear the notes come back intelligently split among the various string sections. The effect is quite stunning, especially when you realize that this is happening in real time (see Figure 1).

A single LAN connection over Ethernet is capable of moving the entire MIDI back and forth, as well as the audio stream from Kontakt via either Vienna Ensemble Pro or Audio Impressions' AudioPort Universal software. Setting up a DVZ system properly is not a simple matter; however, the support team at Audio Impressions was very helpful in sorting out the details and getting me up and running. In my case, I was running Logic on a Mac, and eventually settled on using a separate MIDI interface and USB audio

SUMMARY

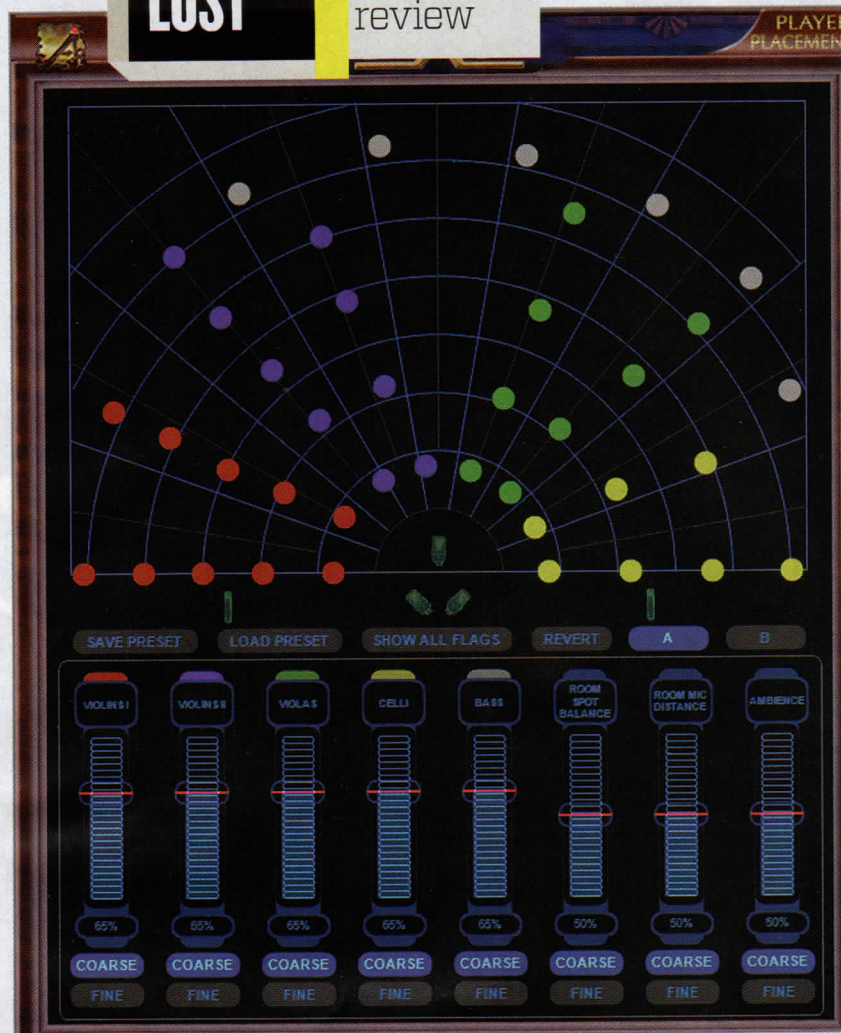
STRENGTHS: All articulations available instantaneously and operates on only 5 MIDI channels. DVZ technology intelligently divides incoming MIDI into *divisi* between sections and maintains appropriate player counts at all times. Smooth transitions from *legato* to *marcato* and various performance settings. Articulation changes are applied immediately.

LIMITATIONS: Technically demanding and requires a standalone PC with a lot of horsepower and fast hard drives.

\$999 MSRP 70 DVZ STRINGS LIBRARY ONLY

\$3,699 MSRP AiDAW TURNKEY PC SYSTEM + LIBRARY (ALL THIRD-PARTY SOFTWARE INCLUDED)

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interface, which is my preferred method for a live performance setting and works equally well in the studio.

One of the main aspects of DVZ is that each “desk” of players is actually a unique set of samples and is recorded by different players. The Master Orchestrator GUI allows you to turn on and off the various desks and build an ensemble of any size you want, from a single player per section all the way up to a 70-piece (18-16-14-12-10) section (see Figure 2). Articulations can be automatically switched among *arco*, *tremolando*, *pizzicato*, “*Bartok pizz.*,” *col legno* and harmonics, and the effect is an immediate change in articulation with no new samples to load. You can use auto-bowing or specifically determine up or down, heel, mid or tip bowing. You can choose open strings, Sul II, Sul III, or Sul IV positions, and all employ different samples that transition seamlessly. *Con sordinos* are also available; however, a modeling approach is used rather than utilizing new samples. The effect is very well-done and believable.

Onscreen sliders allow you to vary performance parameters even further. One of my favorites is modulating between *Sul tasto* (bowing closer to the fingerboard) and *sul pont* (closer to the bridge). As you modulate between the bow positions, the sound changes in real time and sounds completely natural; this feature is not found in many other libraries. The time and pitch between desks can be spread—particularly useful for replicating the inaccuracies of players on fast runs.

All of these performance parameters can be controlled onscreen or assigned to an external MIDI controller in addition to your main keyboard controller’s pedals, wheels, and buttons. For my setup, I used an M-Audio Oxygen 8 for switching between articulations on the fly (see Figure 3). I have spent 25 years performing “strings” live, and I can do things in real time with this system that is simply impossible with any other setup. I can see a whole crop of live musicians using a roadworthy turnkey DVZ system onstage.

Once the main MIDI performance is recorded and channelized, you can also



Fig. 3 An example of an M-Audio Oxygen 8 mapped to 70 DVZ Strings.

Fig. 2 The Master Orchestrator GUI lets you build an ensemble of any size from a single player per section up to a 70-piece section.

edit each section individually, applying all of the above editing features to each section independently. However, one of the strengths of DVZ is that a lot of the work is already done for you if you have your controllers set up well, resulting in much less editing time after the fact.

I tested DVZ on a turnkey AiDAW PC system. Although more expensive than the standalone library, the system is guaranteed to meet the demanding specs and is set up and tested before shipped. The AiDAW also provides all the technical support necessary to get you up and running properly with the rest of your setup, while the standalone library provides an hour of technical support. In my opinion, anyone serious about string playing and recording professionally would be better served with the turnkey system rather than relying on building an appropriate system themselves.

Audio Impressions will be releasing a brass library soon, followed by woodwinds. Additional libraries and refinements to DVZ are also in development. ■