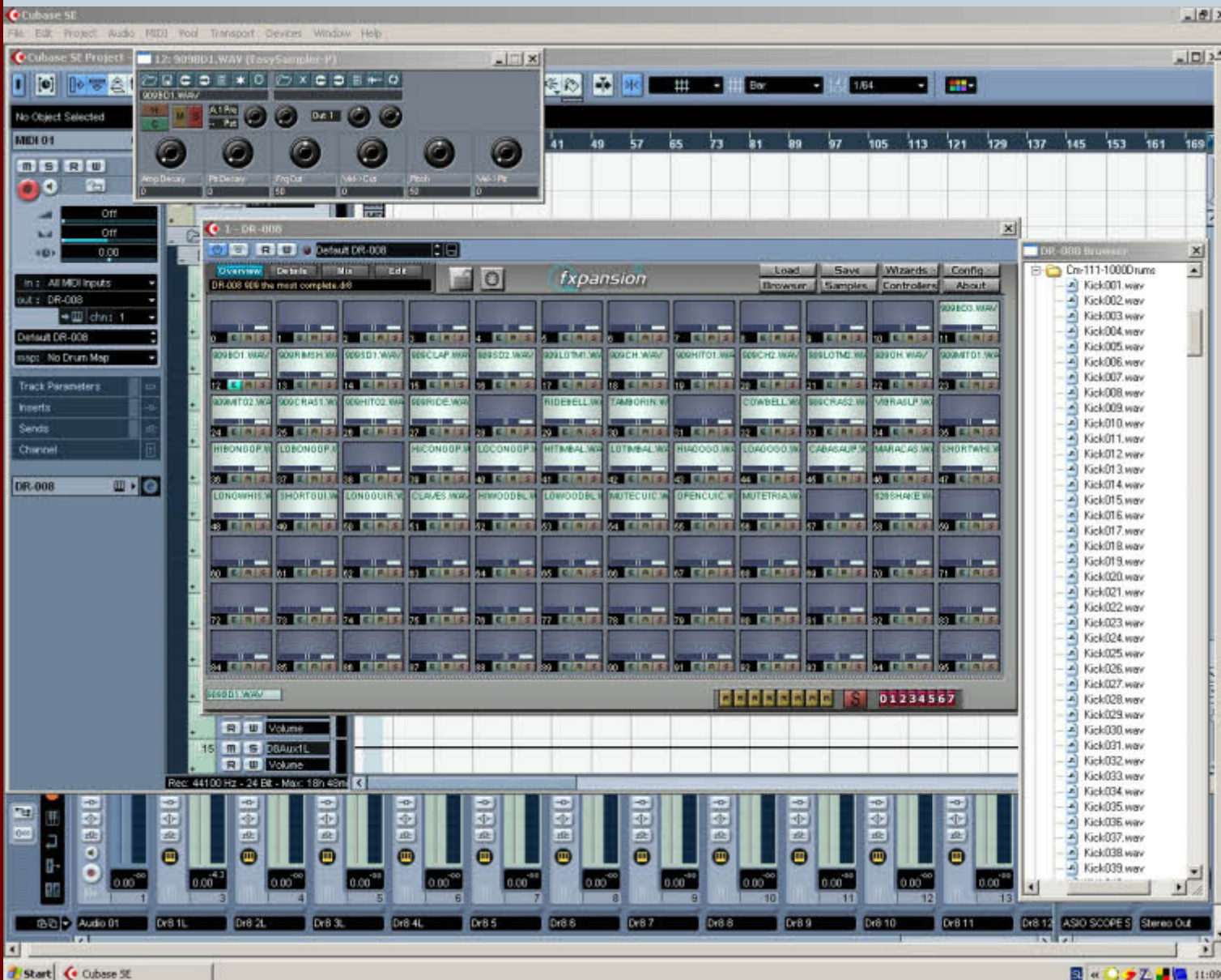


FXpansion DR 008 a drum sampler





Actually a Mercedes on a budget

by A. Arsov

No, it's not a mistake, they are still selling it.

A while ago I've decided to equip myself with a decent drum sampler. I wanted one with sample preview and all the other fancy things that such a sampler needs to have. I had downloaded Native Instrument's Battery 3 demo, installed it and found it's changed a lot since the last version. Honestly though, I didn't like this novice at all. Too much unnecessary ballast for my taste. After seeing the price, my wife didn't like it either.

Was there any life before Battery? Suddenly I remembered that one of my friends, a rhythm freak, told me a few years ago, "Man, I bought DR 008. It's the ultimate drum sampler, in every way a must have! "

I Googled it and discovered that FXpansion is still selling it. For 55 euro you get DR 008 along with 1.5 gigabytes of drum samples, 200 midi drum patterns, and 500 synth drum presets. Oh, and yes, I almost forgot to tell you – it is not just a sampler, it's also a drum synth.

Wow – it seems a total bargain.
Thank you, FXpansion!



**Installation:**

Installation was a breeze and after trying it out and browsing through the manuals I found that it had everything I need. There was only one tiny imperfection – the skin is pretty out of date. OK, they had stopped developing it in 2003 and we all know that VST Instruments had this cheesy look back then. Anyway, it seems just a small drawback for this kind of a full loaded sampler. Old and not too fancy looking, but otherwise ... It's like a Wartburg. Icho, an old friend of mine, told me about his out of date car, "Wartburg, my dear friend, is like a brothel. You feel a little ashamed when you are entering or getting out of it, but when you are inside – man, it's simply fantastic."

On the technical side:

Graphics aside, the DR-008 has up to 4 stereo and 8 mono outs. There are 128 pads of which 24 are visible at once; others can be reached through the so called octave buttons. You can choose between various view modes. In the Overview mode there are: edit, solo and mute buttons with a pan and volume slider. Details mode has got all that plus a choke button, output selection, note number and aux

selection. There are also Mix and Edit modes, first with a detailed volume fader and pan knob and second with all those mix details - adding some extra module controllers. But we'll get back to these modules in a little while.

The DR-008 also offers an excellent sample preview. If you have already recorded some notes or if you play notes through a midi keyboard, then double-clicking on the empty pad opens an Explorer-like window and you can browse through your library looking for the right sample. Any incoming midi data triggers the currently highlighted sample. If you just want to find a sample without using midi, open the Browser menu. A right-click triggers a sample preview for the highlighted sample and after finding an appropriate one - simply drag it onto the desired pad.

And here is my favourite preview option: holding the shift button while selecting a Load menu allows you to preview different kits in a song context. Just find your directory with pre-saved kits and ride along just as your heart desires.

So far, so good - but we are just getting started.

**On the spiritual side:**

Modules: this is where all the fun begins. Every pad can load one module. The Easy sampler, Ultra sampler, Quad sampler and Velo sampler are modules for sample manipulations. ADSR, reverse, distortion, velocity layering, filters etc, are all represented. I am content. Winter evenings are bound to be an endless fun.

Other modules vary from different drum synths to flam generators, auto rolls and a 16 step drum sequencer with eight assignable channels. Pretty weird, this last one is. It almost fits in a Borges' short story: There was a sequencer with a drum sampler which contained a sequencer and this sequencer can trigger drum samples etc ... Anyway, it supports midi import directly from windows explorer.

If you are looking for those big, multi layered fatty sounds - with the DD Layer module you can layer up to four cells together to be triggered by a single press of a key.

Back to the point:

As you can see, the DR-008 has got almost everything: a bit of Wartburg, a piece of Borges and besides that, a sample preview, kit preview, various modules, layering abilities, a 1.5 gigabyte drum library, 200 midi patterns and it even comes in VSTi, DXi or standalone versions.

I don't want to pressure anyone by saying that everyone needs to buy it. I simply have my copy and am very happy with it. It's exactly what I was looking for - a drum synth - a sampler with sample preview and various editing possibilities. At only 55 euro a piece, and as I told you at the beginning, it's a Mercedes on a budget in a Wartburg disguise ;-)



The Dr-008 is a discontinued product and there will be no further upgrades. Before you buy it - register on the FXpansion site and browse through the forums to find out if it will work with your DAW. I've tested it successfully with Cubase SE 3 and Ableton Live Lite 6 on a Windows XP platform.