

# FXpansion BFD

BFD takes drum programming to another level. Brad Watts gives it some stick.

When it comes to building synthetic drum tracks there's plenty of plug-in options or samples that will do just fine. Acoustic drum programming, on the other hand, typically follows the age-old method of triggering single hit samples or drum loops. It can be fiddly work. One of the few advances seen in drum programming for years has been ReCycle and then REX files. For anything more tailored, you end up recording a bona fide drummer. Unfortunately, recording drums requires a number of conditions. Firstly you need a drummer and a kit (doh). Then you'll need at least three microphones for kick, snare and hi-hats. You'll then need mic preamps and enough inputs into your recording system. A nice-sounding room would also help along with enough leads, mic stands and compressors. Add to that the know-how and experience required to pull a decent sound together and it's all looking like a lot of faffing about. Realising this, you hire a proper studio, complete with engineer at anywhere between 200 to 1,000 bucks a day. Well, now there's another way to do it.


BFD is the most recent plug-in from the UK software developers, FXpansion. The plug-in utilises a 9GB sound library of primo drum recordings along with a purpose-built plug-in (I'm told a further 22GB of library is in the works). The FXpansion team has recorded classic drum kits using the best mics available, in a proper recording environment with proper recording engineers. Once the 24-bit samples are loaded into the BFD plug-in you, the lucky user, can add or subtract the levels of the Neumann U87 room microphones, the AKG C12 overheads and the Crown PZM mics. Even microphone width and distance from the kit is adaptable. If that's not enough control you can also change the balance between the top and bottom snare mics and the front and rear kick mics. All these moves are represented graphically within the plug-in with separate faders. Sound interesting? It sounds bloody good, I can tell you.

What this all means is your kit sound can be tweaked to a degree not possible with the comparatively static option of traditional sampling. For habitual tweekers, or, in fact, the folk who are used to mixing a real kit recording, the BFD plug-in allows each individual mic to be parsed out to 17 separate channels within your host software. Each channel can then utilise its own effects and processing. A preference setting even allows bleed to occur between these channels. Individual drums can also be tuned and adjusted for dynamics. But that's not all! (Sorry, no steak knives.) Within the BFD plug is an automated drummer and a large library

of grooves – a set of groove maps, a dozen loops and associated single hits across the keyboard. Grooves are also represented as standard Midi files for the inveterate tinkerers out there. Should you decide the supplied grooves suit the occasion, you can then tweak 'human' aspects of the performance such as variances in hit velocity and timing. Swing and quantising is also adjustable via a graphic displaying – a robot and a beatnik (robot for strict timing adherence, and the French beatnik for the groovier end of the timing scale).

Of the sampled kits my favourite is definitely the Ayotte. Other kits built-in to the install include DW, Ludwig, Pearl, Slingerland, Leedy and a Lucite kit. Up to 46 velocity layers make up each hit for extraordinary realism.

Consequently a kit can end up being up to 1.5GB in size. Retrieving the sounds utilises RAM and FXpansion's disk streaming technology. Consequently it's advised to install the 9GB library on a separate (and fast) drive to your operating system. Be aware, BFD takes up a large amount of processing grunt.

Personally I found BFD to be a godsend, as it's already saved me having to record drums on two tracks already. You really can get some fantastically realistic results with it. Oh, and what does BFD stand for? According to FXpansion, big, and drums. The 'F' can stand for whatever you like. Use your imagination. 



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## Price

• \$599