

Future Music

April 2008

It's hard not to find a place for this DVD's eclectic but oh-so-useable Rex2s, WAVs and Refills. Slo'Motion is a bizarre hybrid of street atmospheres and lazy, hypnotic, Ambient Rhodes, piano and guitar. Give your chill a warm Ambient fuzz or get really slack and drop out completely to slick soundscapes that'll have listeners gasping at your ingenuity. It's downtown Shibuya, it's Blade Runner neon, it's the sound of the urban future. If you're making downtempo Ambient or are engaged in soundtrack work, then this is an absolute must.

Rating: 9/10

Computer Music

May 2008

This elegantly-packaged library boasts a massive 7GB of content. Subtitled Tokyo Soundscapes, it focuses on lush, ambient loops that never go above 70bpm. Included in the package are 1995 loops and samples in WAV format, along with 876 REX2 loops and a 2GB Reason ReFill.

Everything on this two-DVD-ROM set sounds immaculately recorded. As you may have guessed, a lot of the loops have a Japanese slant to them, though not to the point where they're unusable outside of such a setting. They're just the thing for soundtrack composers and anyone looking to create atmospheric pieces.

Rating: 9/10

Virtual Instruments Magazine

Jason Scott Alexander

In contrast to the hustle-bustle atmosphere of Japan's largest city by day, this tranquil collection of cool "night-life" soundtrack clips couldn't be more appropriately named. Influenced by the strange, the surreal, the exotic, and the obscure, beautiful sounds are enhanced with special FX to create the illusion of a fast-paced city as seen through a cloud of anesthesia.

This 7GB library ships on two DVDs, one entirely in 24-bit WAV format; the other contains REX2 versions and a 2GB Reason Refill, complete with over

700 Combinator, NN-19, and Redrum patches (these are "rack" processors/instruments inside Propellerhead Reason).

The WAV DVD is divided into two main sections, with one folder containing endless loops and another solely for one-shot samples and cue sounds. Of the looped content, there are ten categories each subdivided by tempo (60, 65 and 70BPM). Unlike traditional construction kits that limit you to specific themes, Slo' Motion is made far more flexible by providing you with a sound palette that is arranged by tone colors, moods and textures. For this reason – and again, unlike with conventional libraries – I rarely found myself starting an arrangement by digging through the Rhythm or Bass folders. Rather, I'd first set well, Toyko and back. While it's useful, I found the folder of Bass loops to be the least memorable on the disc; from loop to loop, the same dubby sub-tone doesn't really change, for me the patterns weren't especially inspiring.

But creativity flows once again through the chaotic sounding Noise Loops (people movers, airport intercoms, crowded markets, entertainment districts, etc.). That also applies to the Nature FX (wild birds and habitats), and the indefinable motion-special FX Loops. Rhythmically speaking, the Gamelan & Thumb Piano (Kalimba) folder offers an assortment of truly majestic metal and wood tones that are repeated over and over or the mood texturally and build up rhythmically later.

A good jumping-off point, the Soundscape Loops folders each contain upwards of 50 fully evolving pads ranging between two and four bars in length. At 60 BPM, that's a 32-second loop! Mostly variations of ambient minor-chords, the mood is generally soothing and serene, but it can cast an eerie shadow all the same.

The majority of tones seem to be based on heavily processed guitar, organ drone, wavetable synthesizer, fizzling analog oscillators, and formant waves. But several have a distinct "found sound" feel, including the creatively edited street scenes – replete with subtle traffic/subway/machinery noise and unintelligible pedestrian chatter. (Who would have ever thought train brakes in need of greasing could be so calming?) One pad I found particularly cool could be described as a time-stretched ship horn echoing off in the distance, layered on top of a dull, muted-knocking harbor bell, with mysterious mist rising off the water. Unlike that description, the samples are abstract and extremely malleable to suit whatever purpose you have in mind. But this kind of imagery is typical of the entire library, and it's wonderfully creative sound design.

The Chord & Tone Loops folder contains oodles of Bladerunning Rhodes; Eno-esque piano, synth and guitar; Mellotron string and flute and film-noir spectral synth sequences – each filtered and processed to, presented as hypnotic, arpeggiated patterns. Discrete Percussion highlights several Asian bell instruments, chimes, drums, wood blocks, shakers, crashes, gongs, finger cymbals and "tings," again struck in brief patterns that are often spliced, reverse and pre-layered for drowsy effect.

The synthetic-mannered Rhythm Fragments folder is akin to being stuffed inside an old-fashioned clock and hearing the sprockets, springs, and flywheels whirl and flutter about with each pendulum swing. Finally, gluing everything together are three folders of Rhythm Box loops. These chilled-out timekeepers are completely vintage, culled from early Roland TR-series machines and even rarer valve-driven organ beat box rhythm sections. Pretty damned groovy stuff. The second half of the collection presents six instrument folders, each containing a slew of one-shot chords, dissonant tones, and casual riffs. Samples are typically no shorter than five seconds, but many stretch ominously past 15 seconds. Such is the case with the Synth Pad Chords folder.

The Electric Pianos folder contains 186 Rhodes tones that run the gamut from dark and perversely mangled to beautiful and delicately sublime. Drenched in tremolo-distortion, pedal-wah, tape delay, and oozing filthy circuit grime, the retrofuturist meter is set to max. Consistent throughout the entire library, effects choices here are always tasteful and never outshine the message that the music is delivering.

The Guitars folder offers 87 tones of electric, acoustic, and synth varieties with much of the attention given to spacey rises, spectral chords, and slides that sound as though they belong in an Asian spaghetti western: peculiar and totally fun. Hundreds of mixed FX, rhythm box and percussion single-hit samples round out the pack.

What I love most about Slo' Motion: Tokyo Soundscapes is its simplistic and emotional approach to making music. With meticulously chosen loop points, you can assemble elements layer upon layer in near endless fashion without once having to worry about bar length, style, song structure, meter, or quite often even key. Magically, the elements all seem to work together no matter how they are combined. Modern music for antique hearts: this is a must-have collection of beautiful, sexy sounds for the urban romantic.