

Acoustica Pianissimo

ACOUSTICA is a company specialising in simple to use and affordable software for music and audio recording and I decided to take a look at its virtual piano product *Pianissimo* which operates either as a VSTI plug-in or stand-alone application. There is a growing number of acoustic piano virtual instruments available today but *Pianissimo* is keenly priced at only \$68.95 for the download version and \$79.95 (plus shipping) for the boxed edition.

Pianissimo, currently only available for the PC, is a really easy program to install and operate. Once installed when you click on the *Pianissimo* icon the samples load up quickly and the stand-alone version is available to use. Naturally you will need to connect a MIDI keyboard to your computer and again it is preferable if this is a full 88-note weighted action to achieve the full benefits. The *Pianissimo* GUI is attractive being a large image of a grand piano with the lid raised and when you play your MIDI

keyboard the corresponding keys on the computer image also move.

As soon as I played *Pianissimo* I enjoyed the rich and vibrant piano tones with pleasing treble end and satisfying bass. I was also impressed with the excellent touch responsiveness that *Pianissimo* offers. I have tried many virtual piano instruments and often, whilst producing a pleasing tone, they may lack slightly in their degree of touch response. This is such a vital factor in achieving a really expressive musical performance or recording and *Pianissimo* excels in this area.

The stand-alone mode also offers a convenient recording system where you can record a piano piece with or without a metronome click and save as a MIDI file or other formats such as mp3 or wave file.

Raising or lowering the piano lid via the GUI also affects the sound with the raised lid presenting the brightest sound projection and closed lid slightly muffling the tone.

There are simple tone controls to adjust the velocity curve (to match your particular keyboard), sympathetic resonance, chorus and

EQ. You can also adjust the degree of hammer sound that is produced and this element coupled with sympathetic resonance contributes greatly to the pleasing realism of the resultant tone. *Pianissimo* offers sustain and soft pedal response but there is no sostenuto option available.

There are a number of preset piano variations on the overall sound but personally I liked the default solo grand piano best. You can choose from various reverberation settings and adjust the degree of each. Finally *Pianissimo* is also straightforward to load as a VSTI instrument within a DAW like Cubase, SONAR, Reaper or notation program like Sibelius 6.

Pianissimo is a pleasing product being a responsive and satisfying piano to play and also appearing to be light on CPU usage and represents good value as far as price and quality are concerned. If you require a decent grand piano sound at a reasonable cost then this could well be your answer. Further information about the software and a trial download is available from www.acoustic.com.

