Plectra Series 1: 8-string Acoustic Bouzouki

A Kontakt 4 Sample Library

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for purchasing **Plectra Series 1: 8-string Acoustic Bouzouki.** This library was created by Dimitris Plagiannis, whom we are very happy to be working with on this new series of picked and plucked stringed instruments from around the world.

The first of the **Plectra Series** is a Greek bouzouki sample library. This library captures the unique sound of the bouzouki and simulates a realistic playing technique.

The instrument sampled is a professional-grade 8-string (4-course) bouzouki, made by Antonis "Larisseos" Theodorou, one of the most well-respected Greek luthiers. It was played by George Tsakarakas, a very knowledgeable pro musician, and recorded with top-of-the-line recording equipment. The samples were only edited, no processing took place.

The library is comprised of more than 1500 samples and a single Kontakt patch. Note and release samples were recorded chromatically--that is, every fret of every course, sampled at soft, medium and hard velocities, down and up strokes, hammer-on, pull-off, slide and tremolo articulations. There are also multiple takes for customary major, minor and diminished chords and multiple noise samples including body resonance, fret and pick noises.

Extensive scripting has gone into the patch. This script simulates real playing by processing the velocity, speed and legato of the played notes and applying a number of rules that affect the final sound, ie. appropriately positioning the notes on the correct fret and course, muting strings where needed, micro-tuning and fading sample attacks, and more. Additionally there are 12 keyswitches that allow full manual control of course/fret positioning and articulation. A detailed guide of how keyswitches function is given at the Keyswitch section of this manual. The script parameters can be adjusted in the Settings view of the User Interface. Details on these follow below, at the User Interface section of this manual.

We would like to end this introduction by wishing you an inspiring and creative experience. This virtual instrument was a labor of love, and we are proud to put it in your hands. We hope that it will help you make beautiful music!

Best regards,

Dimitris Plagiannis & Impact Soundworks

FEATURES

- 3,094 24-bit/44.1-kHz, full-length samples (no loops other than tremolo articulation)
- Close and room mic positions
- Chromatically sampled; all 27 fret positions, all 4 courses
- Soft, medium, hard velocity levels for each note
- Alternating down/up strokes for each velocity level
- Sustained, Hammer-On, Pull-Off, Tremolo and Slide articulations, all chromatically sampled
- Sampled major, minor and diminished chords, with all customary inversions
- Realistic playing noises layered at adjustable levels
- Automatic or manual control of course/fret positioning, articulation and up/down stroke
- Mono/poly voice modes, for solo or polyphonic playing (4-voice max, one per course)
- Real-time fretboard display of the note position/articulation for precise control
- Pitch-bend wheel triggered slides
- Basic effects suite (EQ, Compressor, Reverb, Limiter) in user interface
- Configurable engine settings, allowing finely-tuned instrument response
- 5 user preset slots that can be used as quick start points

DOWNLOAD CONTENTS

A single archive (bouzouki_8-string_acoustic.zip) containing:
- Bouzouki 8-String Acoustic Samples (757 MB)
- Bouzouki 8-String Acoustic Kontakt patch
- Documents (Bouzouki 8-String Acoustic Manual and Handmade Sounds License)
- FX default presets

PREREQUISITES

- Windows or MacOS system
- Native Instruments Kontakt v4.1.1 or higher installed

OPERATION

The playable range of the bouzouki is mapped on the keyboard between C2 and F5. A lower octave (C1-B1) is reserved for keyswitches that are used for articulation control. The instrument starts by default in Monophonic voice mode. This as well as the rest of the default settings are best for lead melodies, which is the most common role of the bouzouki in an arrangement. But settings can be configured in order to change the instrument's sound and response, with the use of the User Interface controls. Default configuration can be recalled anytime by loading the Default preset. Besides the User Interface, keyswitches and keyboard controls are used to switch between the various articulations.

USER INTERFACE

The User Interface gives access to parameters that control auto and manual response of the instrument. Hovering your mouse cursor over a control, brings up a short help text description inside Kontakt's Info pane. Make sure you enable the Info pane by clicking on the (i) icon in Kontakt's tool bar, at the top of the rack view. The Bouzouki User Interface has 4 distinct Views:

1. Performance View

This is the main view while playing the instrument. It describes exactly how notes are struck and which articulation was used. Especially in recording situations, it is a very useful tool. With this feedback you can follow the automatic positioning choices and decide if and where to refine, by using the appropriate keyswitch.

2. Settings View
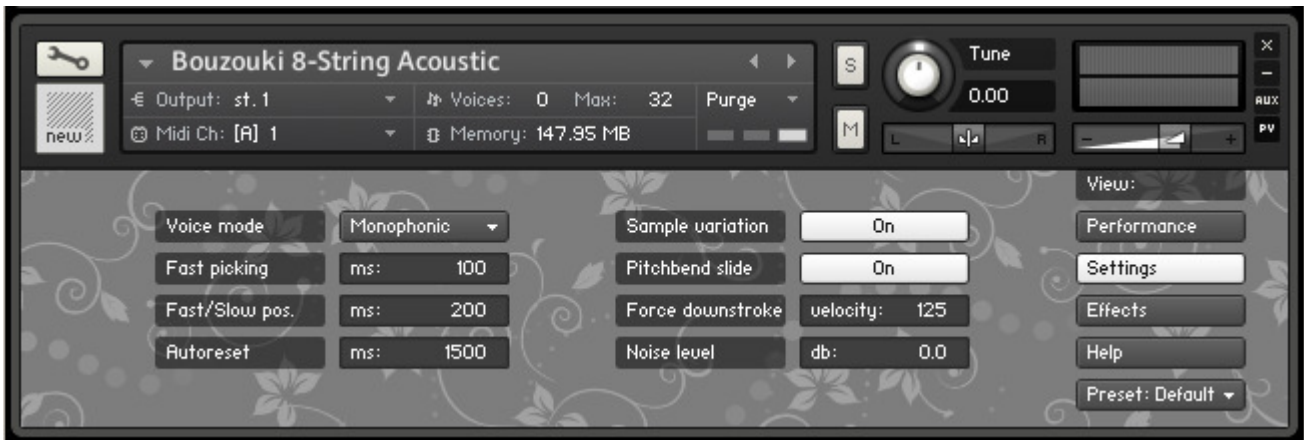
This view displays parameters that control the response of the instrument. These are:

Voice Mode (Monophonic/Polyphonic)

Monophonic mode allows only one note at a time to be performed, regardless of course and articulation. Polyphonic mode allows up to 4 voices at a time (one per course). The two modes have more differences than just the number of voices, they are focused on different styles of play. Monophonic mode emulates lead riff and melody playing, while Polyphonic emulates double-note melodies arpeggios and chords. As a result of this distinction, a couple of different parameters apply in each case.

Fast picking (10–200 milliseconds)

This is a special setting applicable to Monophonic mode and appears only when Monophonic mode is selected. When playing becomes fast, picking becomes less clear and dynamics are reduced. This effect kicks in when notes are played with time intervals smaller than this setting.

Chord threshold (10–200 milliseconds)

This is a setting applicable to Polyphonic mode and appears only when Polyphonic mode is selected, replacing Fast picking. This setting defines the time threshold between played notes, below which notes are considered as parts of a chord and are positioned on separate courses. The purpose of this setting is to effectively assist a live performance sound realistic. This can be easy or hard, depending on the notes of the chord and the order in which they are played on the keyboard. For double-note melodic phrases it almost always works.

Fast/slow positioning (1–1000 milliseconds)

This is a setting applicable only to Monophonic mode and appears only when Monophonic mode is selected. It defines the time threshold between played notes that switches between the fast and slow auto-positioning methods. Fast positioning method positions notes in such way as to keep fret distance travelling to a minimum. Slow positioning method prefers to use cleaner positions, at frets closer to the

headstock.

Autoreset (500-10,000 milliseconds)

This setting defines the idle time after which playing range comes back to a low fret position.

Sample Variation (On/Off)

This setting turns on and off the Sample Variation mode, which randomly injects tuned neighboring samples thus increasing the number of available samples per note and minimizes repeatability.

Pitchbend slide (On/Off)

This setting enables or disables the pitchbend wheel as a slide trigger control. If enabled, upward pitchbend movement triggers ascending slide and downward pitchbend movement triggers descending slide. Both slide directions travel long and they are not aiming at any target notes but rather as an expressive effect. The slide speed depends on the note velocity; higher velocities produce speedier slides.

Force downstroke (1-127)

This setting defines a velocity threshold over which the stroke direction is forced downward. This aims at assisting performances by hitting accented notes with down strokes and resetting the alternating order of the stroke. It is particularly useful for odd meter speed phrasing. This response can be altogether disabled by setting this value to 127.

Noise level (-100.00-0.00 dB)

This setting defines the level at which natural playing noise samples are mixed in with the tuned samples. Noises include finger sliding along the strings, bouzouki body resonance and tiny picking noises. They are natural to any recording, they are layered on top of the regular samples to add realism and natural grit to the cleanliness of pure samples.

3. Effects View

The Effects view is a front end to some of Kontakt's internal effects. We decided to include a basic effect suite in the User Interface for quick and easy access. These are EQ, Compressor, Limiter and Reverb; effects that are particularly helpful not only to the resulting sound, but also to achieving realistic performances with virtual instruments. Configurations of these effects are stored with saved User Presets.

There are 2 buttons for each of the 4 effects, an On/Off switch and a button that opens the edit mode of the effect. Each effect comes with the standard knob controllers. A help text description appears in Kontakt's Info pane while hovering the controls with the mouse cursor. Of course, by editing the instrument you can additionally replace these effects with any other from Kontakt's vast effects library. Please refer to Kontakt operation manual for more info on its effects and their parameters.

4. Help View
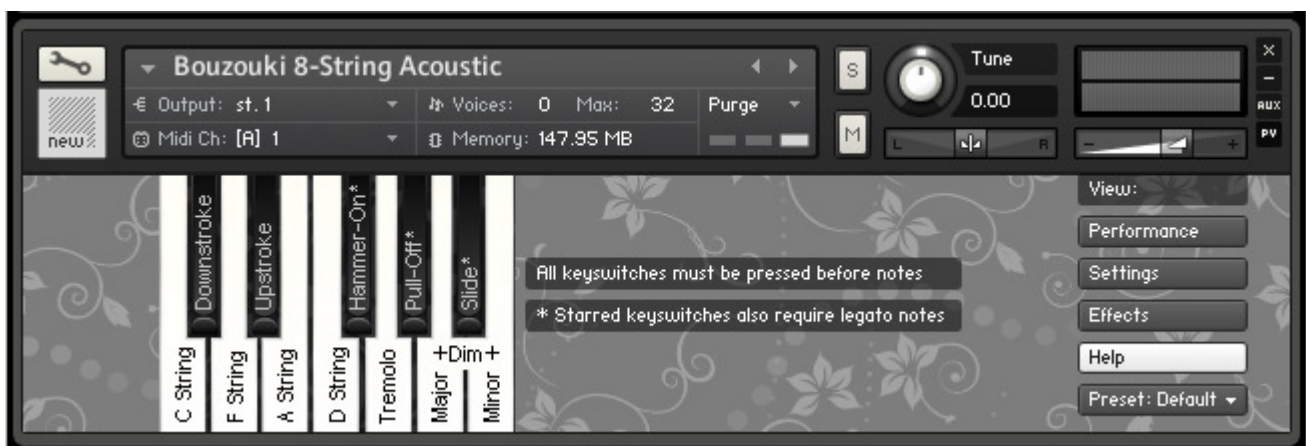
The Help view displays a legend for keyswitch mappings as a convenient reminder. Keyswitches are great tools but can be confusing before getting used to using them. Next chapter is about keyswitches.

KEYSWITCHES

The 12 keyswitches are mapped on the keys C0 – B0. This is the lowest octave of a standard 5-octave keyboard. All of them are the 'hold' type, meaning that they are active only while they are held. Upon release, the action switches back to the default state. Keyswitches are grouped in functional categories, as described in the image below.
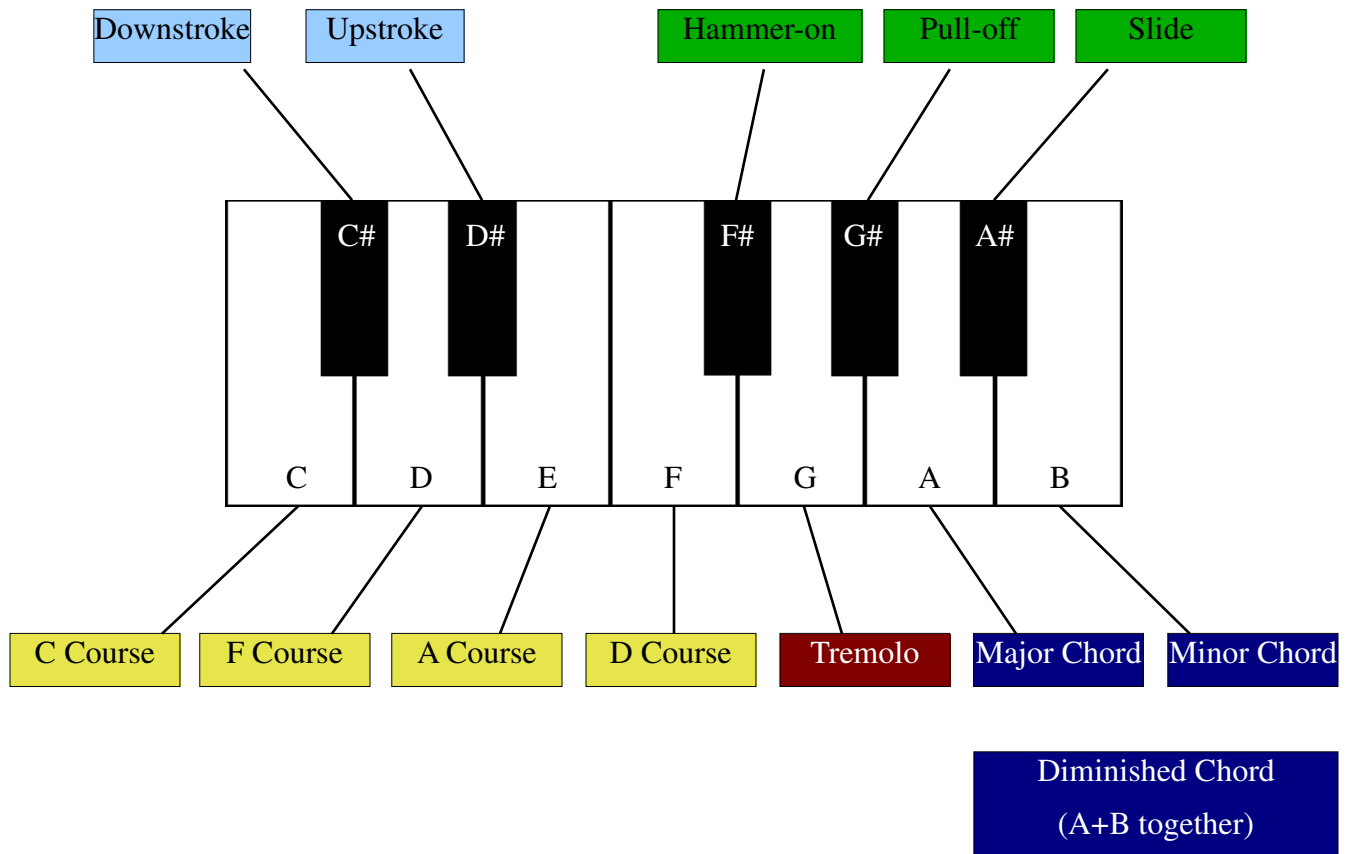
C, D, E, F : Course override

While held, these 4 keyswitches override auto-positioning and force the use of a particular course (course: pair of strings) if possible, or its closest course if not possible. They can be used in combination with all articulations, except chords (eg. together with tremolo, they dictate in which course the tremolo will take place).

C#, D# : Stroke override

While held, these 2 keyswitches override auto-stroking and force a particular direction of the plectrum stroke. Together with the above 4 course keyswitches, they allow full manual control of the way a musical phrase is played.

G : Tremolo

Activates tremolo articulation while pressed. During tremolo, modulation wheel acts as a +10dB volume slider.

F# : Hammer-On

Hammer-On is a technique that replaces the standard way of picking the strings with a sharp tapping of a fretting-hand finger down on the fingerboard behind a fret, causing a note to sound. It is a very common Greek bouzouki playing technique.

Activates Hammer-On articulation. While held, all upward legato notes, up to 3 semitone intervals, become hammer-on notes. Hammer-on resets its status every time it is performed--that is, a second consecutive upward legato note will not become hammer-on, but a third one will.

G# : Pull-off

Pull-off is the opposite technique of Hammer-On and performed by plucking a string by "pulling" the string off the fingerboard with one of the fingers being used to fret the note.

While held, this keyswitch activates Pull-Off articulation for all downward legato notes, up to 3 semitone intervals. Similarly to Hammer-On, multiple consecutive Pull-off notes can not be performed.

A# : Slide

In real stringed instruments, an ascending slide can be performed by starting at a number of frets below the marked note and "slide" upward--that is, move stepwise diatonically between the initial and final notes. Descending Slide is the reverse downward action.

Activates Slides, both ascending and descending. While held, upward legato notes become ascending Slides, while downward legato notes become descending Slides. The speed/duration of the slide can be controlled by the velocity of the target note, while the volume of the slide is controlled by the velocity of the initial note.

A, B : Chords

While A or B are pressed normal keys do not trigger notes, they trigger recorded chords instead. Keyswitch A triggers major chords while keyswitch B triggers minor ones (eg. Keyswitch A + D note = D major chord, Keyswitch B + D note = D minor chord). Notes are always considered as the chord's root note and each octave will produce another inversion of the chord. Holding Keyswitches A+B together triggers diminished chords.

CREDITS

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Additional editing by Christos Rigas.

Bouzouki made by Antonis "Larisseos" Theodorou.

Bouzouki played by George Tsakarakas.

The following people have directly or indirectly helped this product come to life. We are grafetul to:

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Theo Krueger

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