

The Crow Hill Company VAULTS - HARMONIUM



The Crow Hill Company announces the availability of VAULTS - HARMONIUM - bringing bellows to DAWs (Digital Audio Workstations) as its latest free VI (Virtual Instrument) monthly drop, allowing anyone to experience the timbral complexities and harmonic layers of its gorgeous and, some might say, quaint instrument namesake for the rest of their lives, abiding, as always, by the Edinburgh-based enterprise creators' collective Make Music, Your Music motto - as of October 24...

Its iconic appearance in Director/Writer Paul Thomas Anderson's 2002-released dark romantic comedy *Punch: Drunk Love* - look it up! - may make many think of the harmonium in a certain way. What is certain, though, is that the small free-reed organ was patented way before, back in 1842 by Frenchman Alexandre Debain. By being smaller and less expensive than traditional pipe organs, it quickly became popular through Europe, India, Africa, and the southern United States. Travelling through the north of the UK, harmoniums can still be found tucked away in the corners of many recording studios. Saying that, those that are there are not just set dressing; after all, the harmonium captured the hearts of artists such as The Beatles, Supertramp, Penguin Cafe Orchestra, and Tori Amos, all of whom featured it in their music.

Making music with a harmonium is easier said than done, however, since the

instrument in question generates sound by pumping air - using two foot-operated pedals joined to a mechanism that operates a bellows or by pushing and pulling a handle joined to the bellows back and forth with one hand - past a thin piece of metal in a frame and making it vibrate. Vibrations then resonate through the harmonium's wooden body, thereby producing the distinctive, church-like sound. Thankfully, The Crow Hill Company has succeeded in capturing this sound to produce VAULTS - HARMONIUM, making it much easier for many more appreciative sound-seekers to experience its musical magic. Composer Christian Henson - original founder of The Crow Hill Company - freely admits to being a big fan: "It's got to be one of my favourite instruments. It can bring a simplicity to music - dare I say it, a quaintness, but because of its timbral complexities, it's also massively expressive."

Enter VAULTS - HARMONIUM; re-enter Christian Henson - no stranger to working with samples: "With keyboards and samples, there seems to be a 'Once its triggered, you're off to the races' type of thinking. That's it done. It just isn't the case. And if you listen to stuff that's made with bellows - whether it be an accordion, an organ, or, indeed, a harmonium, you'll hear when they're being played that there's all sorts of timbral differences that are used after a note is played to make the instrument more progressive. If you play VAULTS - HARMONIUM without using the expressive features it sounds a bit 'Bontempi', whereas if you start using the TIMBRE control suddenly it comes to life. In addition to the expression that we've got here that bring out some of the upper harmonics, we've also got a selection of different recordings, which, again, have those different harmonic layers, and you activate them with velocity on this VAULTS... instrument - quiet has a more innocent feel, loud has a more 'church-y' feel."

Fortunately for everyone concerned, those recordings involved in making VAULTS - HARMONIUM are as good as it gets. "This particular harmonium was performed by Donald Shaw, a local hero up here in Scotland - one of the key figures behind the biggest Celtic folk festival on the planet, Celtic Connections; recorded at Castlesound Studios - one of my top five studios to record in on the planet; and produced by Stuart Hamilton - I'd describe him as the chef/proprietor at that studio," says Christian Henson, before resuming his guided tour of the instrument in question. "In addition to TIMBRE, the middle - ROOM - dial goes from the close mics to more of the room in Castlesound. We have SQUEEZE, which is a bus compressor; then we have a four-stage chorus - MOD - that, for me, just adds a little more emotive content; we have some SPLOSH, which is reverb; and then we've also put a bit of ECHO in there - if you just want to go really produced."

Promoting The Crow Hill Company concept is something that is clearly close to Christian Henson's helpful heart - hence his wider-ranging sign off: "You can find ...HARMONIUM at thecrowhillcompany.com; the VAULTS... offerings are very much the tip of the iceberg of the stuff that we're producing to encourage and inspire people to make music, their music. So make sure while you're there that you hop along to the HUB and have a look at all the different things that we've got going on - all the resources that we're making for you to have for free. I'd just like to

encourage people to make music, to make sound, to make noise, and to make friends... The Crow Hill Company is the place to do it."

VAULTS... releases from The Crow Hill Company - including ...HARMONIUM - are free for all to download and make music with for the rest of their lives from the website below. VAULTS - HARMONIUM installation and activation requires installation of The Crow Hill App - an easy-to-use app designed by the best in the business to provide seamless download, installation, integration, calibration, and organisation of The Crow Hill Company tools - available from the website below.

Although anyone adding a VAULTS... release to their account for free can make music with it for the rest of their lives, only six such releases are available to download at any given time - the oldest being 'rested' whenever a new monthly release is added. All is not lost for those who may have missed the boat, so-to-speak, since those VAULTS... taken out of rotation periodically reappear as donation-ware, with six rested releases already available as VAULTS ARCHIVE N°01 for a small donation to Love Music, a Scottish dynamic music inclusion and education charity that strives to increase its participants' confidence, musical skills, and well-being through an exciting range of open-access projects designed to remove all barriers to participation and increase diversity in music-making.

www.thecrowhillcompany.com

www.lovemusic.org.uk