

The Heavens for Rent

EastWest Composer Cloud in Use...By the Month

BY MARKKUS ROVITO

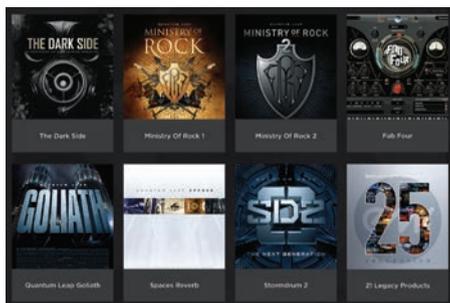
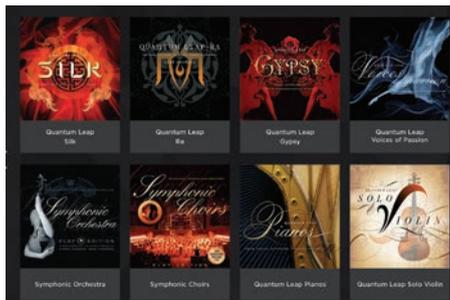
Faraday Future, the latest in re-envisioned American car companies, is talking about launching in 2017 with a subscription service. Just what you needed, right? A tidy charge for advanced high-tech electric vehicles that you forget is added to your credit card balance every month. However, the point is that a single vehicle doesn't fit every need. And why should you own three cars when you could subscribe to Faraday Future and take an SUV for long weekends to the mountains, a compact car for trips to the store and the sports car for pretending you're someone you're not?

The same concept loosely applies to some of the software subscriptions that have trickled out and that audio pros can no longer ignore. In 2011, Adobe first took the plunge with making all of its products available on a subscription plan called Creative Cloud. Reception was chilly at first, and while complaints about pricing still persist, the plan persists, as well. The fundamental advantages of Creative Cloud make sense, price notwithstanding: You get access to a single program or all of Adobe's software when you need it. You download only the programs you need and can suspend the subscription if you want to and pick it back up later. Cakewalk introduced a subscription plan, and Avid followed suit with Pro Tools and other software. The subscription model helps users by lowering the cost of entry to expensive industry-standard programs and helps the developer with steady, residual income rather than erratic cash flows that center on releases and updates.

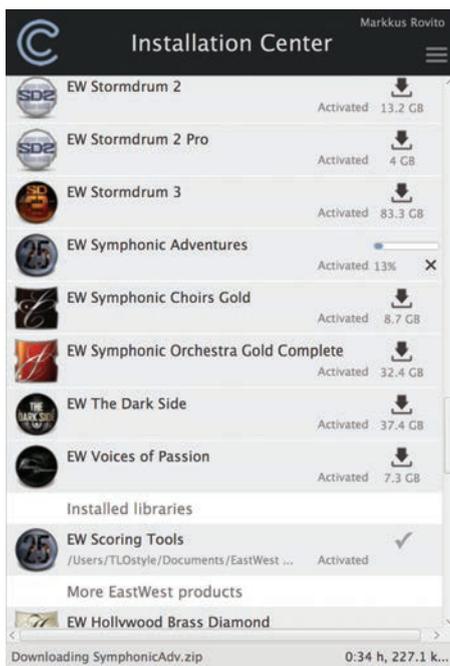
It's now been almost a year since EastWest launched Composer Cloud in April 2015, and it appears that the plan will stick. As the company that basically invented sample libraries in the late '80s, EastWest has since amassed perhaps the most comprehensive and voluminous body of pro-quality sample-based instruments under one roof. If you had to pick someone to pioneer a subscription-based selection of virtual instruments, it would probably be EastWest.

ALL FOR ONE

For \$29.99 a month, you get access to all 51 of EastWest's titles, which heavily skew toward orchestra



Pictured are some examples of Composer Cloud products.



Composer Cloud Installation Center

instruments and percussion, symphonic choirs and the like, but also include massive drum collections, ethnic instruments, sound design tools and wide-ranging instruments for different styles or rock and electronic music—more than 9,000 meticulously sampled instruments. A premium Composer Cloud Plus subscription adds another 6,000 or so instruments recorded with various selectable mic positions for a yearly charge of \$599. Students can access any seven titles at a time for \$14.99 a month.

Producer and founder of EastWest Doug Rogers told us that offering the entire catalog as a subscription changes the game as fundamentally as when EastWest released the first commercial drum sample library in the '80s. "If you can't afford the best instruments, your composition will never sound as good as those from professional composers, and that's a frustrating experience," Rogers told us. Composer Cloud levels the playing field substantially, giving students or beginners the same sounds professionals use for an affordable, pay-as-you-go price. Like Adobe's plan, which EastWest studied, Composer Cloud lets you pause the subscription in monthly increments if you desire.

That broad access to sounds also helps out professional composers who've already racked up plenty of credits and awards. Chance Thomas has worked on projects that have won both an Oscar and an Emmy. He's carried the legacies of Hollywood blockbuster scores into the game world by doing game music for *Lord of the Rings Online* and James Cameron's *Avatar*, as well as scored major original games like *Heroes of Might and Magic* and *DOTA 2*.

"Composer Cloud instantly gives me options I didn't have before—options I may not have even been looking for," Thomas told us. "It comes with so many new sounds at my fingertips, the door to experimentation is always open."

Currently, Thomas is working on a documentary series about Detroit, where he had to re-create a little Motown magic. Composer Cloud let him fill in the R&B sounds, guitars, basses and synths that he didn't already have to

complete the task. "Composer Cloud is broad enough to take me from the '60s to current sounds," he said. "I've been pulling from 56 Strat, Drum 'n' Bass, Funky Loops, Fab Four, Phat and Phunky, Joey Kramer Drums, Smoov Grooves, and Ministry of Rock 1 and 2."

Thomas not only has a foot in the Hollywood establishment, but he's also an educator serving on the board at Full Sail and BYU and has written the book *Composing Music for Games*. He's seen Composer Cloud take hold in both the high-end and student market. "A big augmented reality company has their entire team of audio A-listers signed up to Composer Cloud, and they love it," he said. "Each has a subscription authorization on their machine, and the audio artists share the library between them for easy, seamless collaboration." Likewise, Thomas sees Composer Cloud as supremely effective in a university music program. "Giving all the students access to these sounds would definitely make it easier to collaborate with each other, and for the professors to make tweaks to the students' tracks. Sure wish I'd had that when I was in music school!"

NO RISK, NO REWARD

In my hands-on trial with Composer Cloud, there was a moment of mouth-watering giddiness when it hit home that all of EastWest's



sounds—nearly 1TB worth of them—were just sitting there on the screen waiting to be downloaded and used. Such a thing was unfathomable to anyone on a limited budget before Composer Cloud. This window to the musical gods was the EW Installation Center software, a simple utility that shows you which libraries are installed and lets you choose the location of additional libraries to install.

When you have a Composer Cloud license, you just need to install this software, install the Play instrument engine software, download instrument titles and then use them as you normally would, either in standalone mode or as plug-ins within your DAW. You don't need to register all the individual titles separately, and you can re-install titles as needed.

It all looks simple, and is simple to use, but creating it was anything but simple for EastWest. When the company started discussing the concept following Adobe's Creative Cloud in 2011, there was no existing system to handle the huge data collections in EastWest's library, so the company had to code it all from scratch.

"It was a monumental undertaking with a lot at stake," Rogers said. "We knew we couldn't afford any mistakes. When you make a switch that big, you want to deliver a complete, easy-to-use system to be sure your

Primacoustic... better design, better



"The ease of install really allowed us to experiment with placement and with the quality of the treatments, we achieved the sonic balance we were looking for!"

~ **Tommy Lee**

Founding member - Mötley Crüe.



"Being able to fine-tune a room on site makes all the difference. The Impaler mounting system make the panels easy to install and let you make adjustments without trashing the surface. It works!"

~ **David Rideau**

Engineer/producer - Janet Jackson, Sting, TLC, George Duke and Jennifer Lopez.



"The Primacoustic is up and kicking butt at my new studio in Santa Monica. I love the way the control and tracking rooms sound now... and so does everyone that records here!"

~ **Butch Walker**

Engineer/Producer - Avril Lavigne, Fall Out Boy, Pink, Sevendust, Hot Hot Heat, Simple Plan, The Donnas.

"I love the way the control and tracking rooms sound now... and so does everyone that records here!" ~ Butch Walker

customers have a positive experience. It's a big risk financially, but we are confident that it's the right move."

Composer Cloud got off to a tenuous start right off the bat, when about a month after the launch, EastWest lowered the price from \$49.99 to \$29.99, a hefty 40 percent drop in price. That's a lot of money off the top for EastWest, but psychologically, it's a huge difference for the customer between \$30 and \$50 a month, or between \$360 a year and \$600 a year.

With the new price, they seem to have found the sweet spot, where if you're a serious composer who wants these sounds, it almost seems stupid to not get Composer Cloud.

Another great benefit to Composer Cloud includes first access to new EastWest products. There have been five new products since Composer Cloud debuted, so as Rogers told us, the monthly price stays the same for more products, so the value to you increases over time.

So is Composer Cloud actually a bad deal for EastWest? With the price drop and access to all the new products as they come out, is there less incentive for EastWest to continue to put out new and better products? Rogers said no.

"Subscriptions provide predictable and regular revenue for future development and timely launches of new products," Rogers said. "Compos-



Doug Rogers

er Cloud allows us to plan ahead and embark on even bigger projects, and our products have always been created based on the needs of top composers, either because nothing existed, or because we could make much better instruments than those in the marketplace."

However, the big gamble—and potentially the big payoff—probably comes from new EastWest customers. These are the aspiring or small-time composers, the bedroom or project studio hip-hop and electronic producers

who look at something like the EastWest Hollywood Orchestra bundle for \$700 on sale and say, "I really want those sounds, but...not today." With Composer Cloud, they can get all those sounds and everything else for \$30...today. They can also pause the subscription after their project's finished and start it back up later. That all makes it seem as if EastWest is in the Mafia; it's an offer you can't refuse.

If that's not enough though, EastWest can fall back on your ego. That's right, your ego will force you to buy Composer Cloud if you try the free one-month trial. For example, my favorite orchestral piece written with Propellerhead Reason's Orkester sound bank, was—I thought—pretty good. But once I took that MIDI information and substituted sounds from EastWest's Hollywood Brass, Hollywood Strings, Solo Violin, Symphonic Choirs and others, now I know that I'm a friggin' genius. ■

performance, amazing results!



"I put up Primacoustic Broadway Panels on the walls and MaxTraps in the corners. The difference was amazing... the room went from unruly to tight and controlled!"

~ Daniel Adair Drummer - Nickelback.



"We've got a mixture of bass traps, diffusion and clouds and the result was phenomenal. It ended up costing less than 25% of the custom solution and it turned out very cool."

~ Keb' Mo' - Grammy winner, roots-legend.



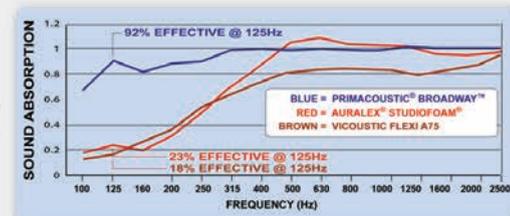
"Not only does my room sound amazing, it's also really beautiful!!!" ~ John Rzeznik - Goo Goo Dolls.

"Not only does my room sound amazing, it's also really beautiful!!!"

~ John Rzeznik

www.primacoustic.com

Primacoustic Broadway™ high-density glass wool acoustic panels perform well where the others fail, in the critical low frequencies.



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