

PRODUCT TESTS

iZotope Iris & Resonant Sound Library

By Paul Lau

Where to begin? Trying to relay exactly what iZotope's Iris actually is would be like trying to describe the intricacies of a Rembrandt or Picasso piece – yet it's as clever and simple to operate as an Etch A Sketch.

The first thing that came to mind while I was exploring Iris' interfaces and features was the word "unique" – particularly regarding its design and functionality. This isn't just a typical sound library that lets you pick a cool clip and use it; it's a creative tool that should excite you and inspire you to develop and create your own original sounds.

The layout is sleek and organized in a way that allows you to have up to three different samples loaded at a time, along with a sub-oscillator waveform. This allows you to blend different samples and create some cool, original content.

So what are some of the other unique and standout elements Iris offers? When I first saw the way the samples are displayed in Iris, it felt rather unfamiliar to me. I'm used to only a waveform view that is displayed by amplitude and time, but with iZotope's Spectrogram, the sound is displayed by time, amplitude, and frequency, which are visually represented through brightness in 2D view and through both brightness and height in 3D. This allows users to see when the sound happens, which harmonics are present, and how strong they are. You can also view sound in the traditional waveform view via a slider in the bottom left that allows you to balance your ideal view of the audio file.

Some options in the display allow you to have just one sample displayed at a time, which you can alter and edit, and then you can also have all displayed, which for me was the most useful. Here you can see the action! You can load quite simply from a pull-down menu called Sample Folders, each of which has individual files so you can start building your own creative sound/blend and layers.

I also explored the patches, which have preset layers and blends of very interesting and usable sounds. On the left side of the interface, there are a number of visual



selection tools such as the "Lasso" for free-hand drawing, "Brush" for more fluid selections with adjustable brush sizes, and the "Magic Wand" for selecting whole regions with similar spectral profiles. These are very easy to use and all you have to do is grab a tool and sweep over the waveform and something audibly different happens instantaneously. You can also zoom, rearrange, invert, loop reverse, and pitch-shift.

Another way of altering and editing your sample sound is through a set of synthesizer controls, which include envelope shaping, a tempo-synced LFO, and ADSR controls. There is also a global filter envelope and LFO for entire patches. With that said, iZotope has also included a number of DSP effects like distortion, chorus, delay, reverb, and filters to add to the colour of your sound. Iris is very open-ended and can load any sample waveform from a previous library or newly-created sample to rejuvenate within the program.

So who is the ideal user for Iris? Everyone from musicians and composers to engineers and sound designers. You don't need a designated physical keyboard hooked up. If you simply want to design new sounds and create soundscapes, you can do so with the onscreen keyboard and a mouse; however, you wouldn't be able to play chords – just single notes – and you

won't get the most out of the Pitch and Mod wheel controls. The Iris is also stand-alone or can be used as a plug-in.

The New Resonant Library is the latest addition to a stellar library of samples and sounds from iZotope, comprised of acoustically inspired patches. The Resonant library is definitely more percussive in its characteristics, with samples drawing from the family of bells, glockenspiels, kalimbas, and vibraphones. There are also unusual sounds based on cans, tubes, and lampshades and also featuring metal, wood, plastic, and other pitched percussion sources.

What always astounds me is the sheer dedication it must take to gather these samples and acquire the clearest and most precise recordings. The Resonant library is just another arsenal of starting points that should launch you onto a path of inspiration and creativity.

iZotope's Iris offers a true blend of intuitive musical technology and visual editing, and while the technical specifics of what's going on "under the hood" could be overwhelming to some less-advanced users, the user experience is very simple and the manipulation of the visual representation of the spectrogram is key. The ultimate highlight is the end result – what you hear when you create something you've never heard, or that nobody else has heard for that matter. Now that is priceless.

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