

Mac PC What is it? MIDI-controllable effects keyboard **PRICE: €149**

CONTACT: info@sugar-bytes.de WWW.sugar-bytes.de INFO: Upgrade from Artillery, €49; upgrade from Sugar Bundle, free

# SUGAR BYTES **computer music** INNOVATION Artillery 2

With its sizeable arsenal of tempo-synced effects, Artillery 2 aims to have you armed to the teeth for your next live performance...



▲ Artillery 2's various effects can be assigned to zones on your MIDI keyboard

## ▶ SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

PC/Mac: 1GHz CPU, 512MB RAM

## ▶ TEST SYSTEM

PC: AMD Athlon 3700+ 2.9GHz, 2GB RAM, Windows XP SP2, Echo Indigo IO, M-Audio Oxygen8, Ableton Live

## ▶ ALTERNATIVELY

### Korg Kaoss Pad

N/A >> N/A >> £324

It's ruled the hardware area of the 'performance effects' market for years, and at a price comparable to high-end VSTs

### Ohm Force Ohmicide: Melohman

cm115 >> 9/10 >> €79

Like all Melohman-equipped plug-in, you can assign patches to MIDI notes and morph between them with a keyboard

**On the DVD**

**AUDIO DEMOS**  
You'll find clips showing off Artillery 2's mangling capabilities on the disc, all recorded live

**A**lthough Sugar Bytes' previous products have been fairly conventional, including virtual synths, vocoders and channel strips, Artillery 2 is something altogether unique: an 'effects keyboard'.

Comprising a fairly extensive collection of processors, ranging from bog-standard filters and delays to advanced granular processing and even a vocoder, Artillery 2 sets itself apart from other effects plug-ins by enabling you to trigger its various effects via fully configurable zones on your MIDI controller. What's more, parameters can also be modified by tempo-synced modulators, including an envelope follower, LFO and ADSR.

Sugar Bytes score high points for Artillery 2's interface, the functions of which are almost patronisingly obvious. Effect zones are set up by drawing boxes across ranges of keys on the on-screen keyboard corresponding to those of your MIDI controller, and the effect occupying each zone is selected from a dual-function drop-down list or tabbed menu.

Once you've selected an effect, its parameters immediately appear in the centre-left of the interface, with the tempo-synced modulators on the right. Each effect parameter can have

its own modulation source, as well as being mapped to an external controller via the right-click MIDI learn function. An animated green ring around each parameter knob shows the strength of the modulation as it takes place, so you can, for example, see the ring pulsing in time to an assigned LFO.

Similarly visual is the keytracking option, which causes a parameter to be modulated according to the pitch of the played note. As this setting is tweaked, a series of bars indicating the relative modulation levels for the relevant keys are displayed.

While Artillery 2 provides for a vast range of modulation possibilities, a global matrix that enables multiple sources to be sent to destinations of your choosing, and thus giving a full overview of all modulations, would be a great addition for a future version.

## Hammer time

Once you've configured your effects, playing them is as easy as routing a MIDI track in your host of choice to Artillery 2 and hammering away on the ivories, or indeed, your choice of MIDI controller. You can also control the triggering behaviour for each effect with synth-like options such as legato and gate, as well as being able

to quantise the onset of the effect to tempo-synced beat and bar divisions. Additionally, an envelope controls the fade in/out of the effected signal and the mix between it and the dry signal.

Artillery 2's array of included effects is very broad, but the range of sounds available with each feels slightly limited. Even with extensive modulation taking place, and the various parameters of a single effect set to their most extreme, the results seem slightly predictable at best. Still, the ability to stack effects by depressing multiple keys can provide some surprising results.

While it's not likely to have you tossing out your go-to plug-ins anytime soon, if you're looking to bolster your live rig, Artillery 2 may just be the additional firepower that you need. **cm**

## VERDICT

### FOR

- + Fantastically simple and intuitive interface
- + Unique concept
- + Tempo-synced modulation per parameter

### AGAINST

- Results can seem 'samey'
- Difficult to push effects to extreme settings
- Only one mod source per parameter

Although there are better plug-ins available for straight-up effects processing, the novel concept of Artillery 2 makes it both fun and inspiring, and great for live work

## RATING



## Domo arigato, Mr Roboto

Its feature set may seem slim compared to others on the market, but the simplicity of Artillery 2's vocoder is also one of its strengths. Offering a choice of saw and square waves, it takes the amplitude envelope of the incoming signal and imposes it on the synthesized waveform to produce the classic 'talking robot' effect that's synonymous with electro and early hip-hop.

Although most often thought of as a vocal effect, using it on drum loops or to add some filth to your lead synth sounds can produce surprisingly inspiring results. For even further tomfoolery, trying setting the various effects parameters in motion via LFOs for bubbling, otherworldly textures.



▲ Artillery 2's vocoder - Daft Punk-style robot voices at your command