Review of ASL (Analogue Sequencer Loops) from Sound On Sound magazine, UK.

"...There is some excellent stuff amongst this lot... consistently high audio quality... genuine analogue character... full of movement and warmth... I could imagine these loops working in a number of contexts ranging from synth-led Depeche Mode or Soft Cell through club styles (ambient trance anyone?) to a Mike Oldfield/Tubular Bells sound... For fans of a genuine analogue sound, ASL ought to have considerable appeal and, given the UK price, the library offers respectable value for money.."

Here's the full text of the review:

This is another in Zero G's series of libraries based on the Intakt software instrument — for details of how this works, check out the Intakt instruments review back in SOS February 2005. The musical contents of ASL (or Analogue Sequencer Loops to give it its full name) have been created by Ian Boddy and have been designed to complement Ian's Kompakt-based Morphology library, reviewed by Paul White back in SOS August 2004. The emphasis in ASL is on rhythmic, melodic, and bass loops — although the sound sources are, again, all derived from classic analogue synths and sequencers recorded at 24-bit resolution.

In all, around 1000 loops, mostly running to four bars, are provided within the 1.5GB library. The loops themselves are divided into seven groups: Analogue Drums, Bass Sequences, Electronic Percussion, FX Loops, Hi-hats & Noise Loops, Melodic Sequences, and Sine & Pure Sequences. Within each group, a further split into seven tempo subgroups (90-150bpm) is provided, although this is for convenience only, as the player software provides excellent tempo-matching facilities. All the loops use Intakt's Beat Machine mode, which offers Recycle-style beat slicing. Usefully, each loop can be loaded in three forms. Firstly a 'sliced' version is provided with the full loop mapped to C1 and individual slices mapped from F1 upwards; secondly, each loop is provided in a 'pitched' format, with the original loop mapped to C3 and pitch-shifted versions provided on keys an octave either side of this; and finally, for the contents of each single-tempo subgroup, all the loops are provided in a single patch with each loop mapped to a different key — this makes it easier to mix and match loops on the fly.

The contents of many of the loop groups are pretty much

as expected given their titles. For example, the Analogue Drums and Electronic Percussion groups are based firmly around rhythmic loops, while the Bass Sequences provide — well, some sequences played via bass sounds! Perhaps slightly more surprising is that the Melodic Sequences and Sine & Pure Sequences groups are also fairly rhythmic in nature. In the main, these are not really straight melodic parts in a traditional sense, but are melodic in that many are based on chord arpeggios. There is some excellent stuff amongst this lot and, with a suitable pad or texture sat underneath (for example from Morphology), a pretty full mix could be created from just two or three ASL loops. What is noticeable about all the loop groups is a consistently high audio quality and the genuine analogue character of the sounds. Many of the loops have been processed, whether through careful use of various filters, panning, or a combination of both, and the end results are full of movement and warmth. Interestingly, the vast majority of this processing has been done at source — Intakt's own Modulation and Effects options are not extensively used.

In terms of musical styles, I could imagine these loops working in a number of contexts ranging from synth-led Depeche Mode or Soft Cell through club styles (ambient trance anyone?) to a Mike Oldfield/Tubular Bells sound. Blended with something like Morphology's darker soundscapes, it would also be possible to create some very unsettling moods ideal for scoring under horror scenes. For fans of a genuine analogue sound, ASL ought to have considerable appeal and, given the UK price, the library offers respectable value for money, even if it doesn't quite shout 'bargain!' However, as with the other Intakt/Kompakt libraries that SOS has looked at over recent months, you are locked into the Native Instruments front end. Good though Intakt is, this may deter some purchasers who would like the content, but perhaps prefer to use it via an alternative looping or beat-slicing tool.

- John Walden