

Soniccouture

Wassolou Balafon

User Guide

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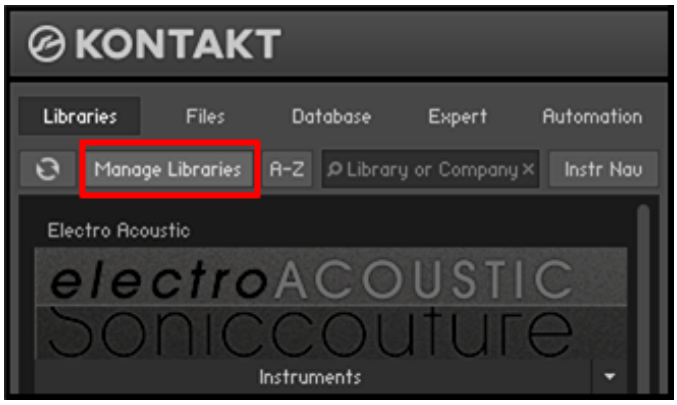
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INSTALLING YOUR SONICCOUTURE PRODUCT

If you do not own Kontakt, you can install the free Kontakt Player



If you have an earlier (pre 5.6.8) version of Kontakt, click here

1. Open NI Kontakt in **standalone mode**.
2. In the *Libraries* tab, click ***Manage Libraries***
3. Click ***Launch Native Access*** : Login or create an account if you don't have one.
4. Click ***Add A Serial*** (find it in your SC account with the product download).
5. Copy and paste the number in the box and click ***Add Serial***
6. Navigate to the downloaded product folder and select it
7. Click **INSTALL** to complete the process.

NOTE: The login for **NI Native Access** is not the same as your login for the Soniccouture site. You must create an account with Native Instruments if you don't already have one.

INTRODUCTION

Early in 2015 French musician Jean-Philippe Rykiel got in touch with us about possibly sampling a unique type of African balafon he'd encountered, a balafon in which each key had "snares" that vibrated when played, giving it a interesting buzzing quality. We were curious of course, and after hearing some recordings of the instrument decided to give him a hand with the sampling process.

This kind of instrument is sometimes called a "gyil"(JEE-le) and is usually found in parts of northern Ghana, Burkina Faso, and south-eastern Mali. Hardwood keys are suspended over calabash gourds. Silk or paper covers small holes in the gourds which resonates to produce the characteristic buzzing sound.

Rykiel has long been involved with West African musicians, having notably collaborated with both the wonderful Salif Keita and Youssou N'Dour. For the balafon however, he knew of a virtuoso player from Burkina Faso named Mamadou Diabate who now lived in Austria. He enlisted Mamadou to play the instrument for a recording session that he would conduct himself.

The recordings then made their way to Soniccouture, who chopped them up and arranged them into the instrument you find here. We hope you'll find this instrument both curious and inspirational!



THE KONTAKT INSTRUMENT

The Wassolou Balafon was recorded with two stereo pairs, one above and one below the instrument. There "snare" sound is much more prevalent in the lower pair. You can blend these two signals with the two main faders at the top right.



Below the two main faders you can also swap the stereo orientation and the phase of the signals.

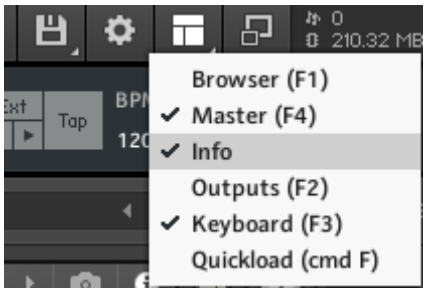
On the left you'll find the familiar knobs for control of the Filter and two envelopes. You can swap the envelope you're editing using the small black squares to the right of the word ENVELOPE. The AMPLITUDE ENVELOPE has Velocity and Key follow adjustments, while the FILTER ENVELOPE only has Attack, Decay, and Release.

Below the ENVELOPE controls there is a switch that turns on the ROLL articulation. You can automate this switch with a MIDI CC if you like, simply right-click it to assign a controller. The Roll articulation has an independent RELEASE setting.

MUTE ARTICULATION

There is also a mute articulation that is enabled when you press the sustain pedal (CC 64). This is something Mamadou does by holding the mallet against the note after striking it so that it doesn't ring as long... it's a subtle difference, but can be used to enhance phrasing or accents.

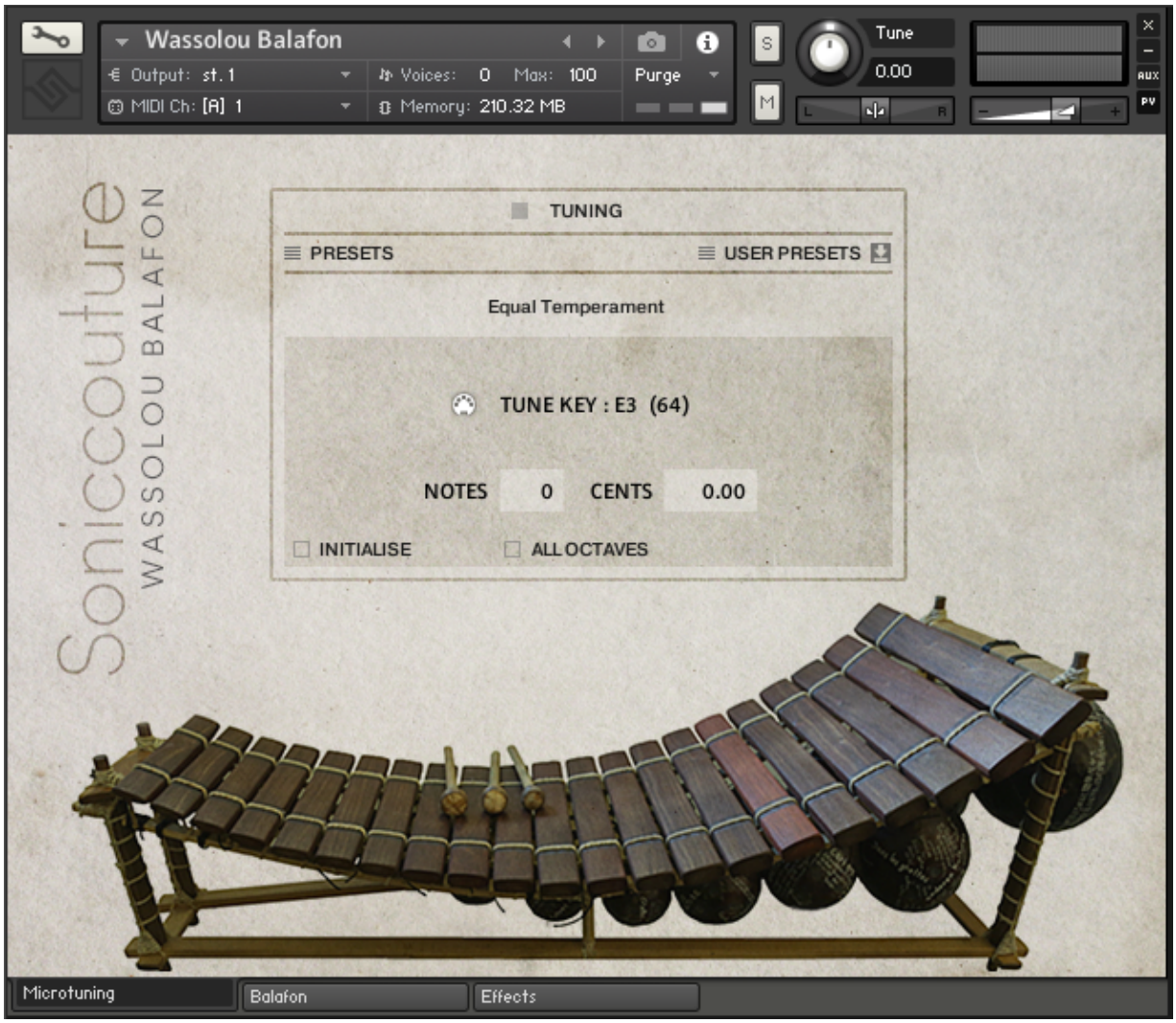
You can hover your mouse over any control in Balafon to get Info about its function if you have the Kontakt Info pane activated.





MICROTUNING

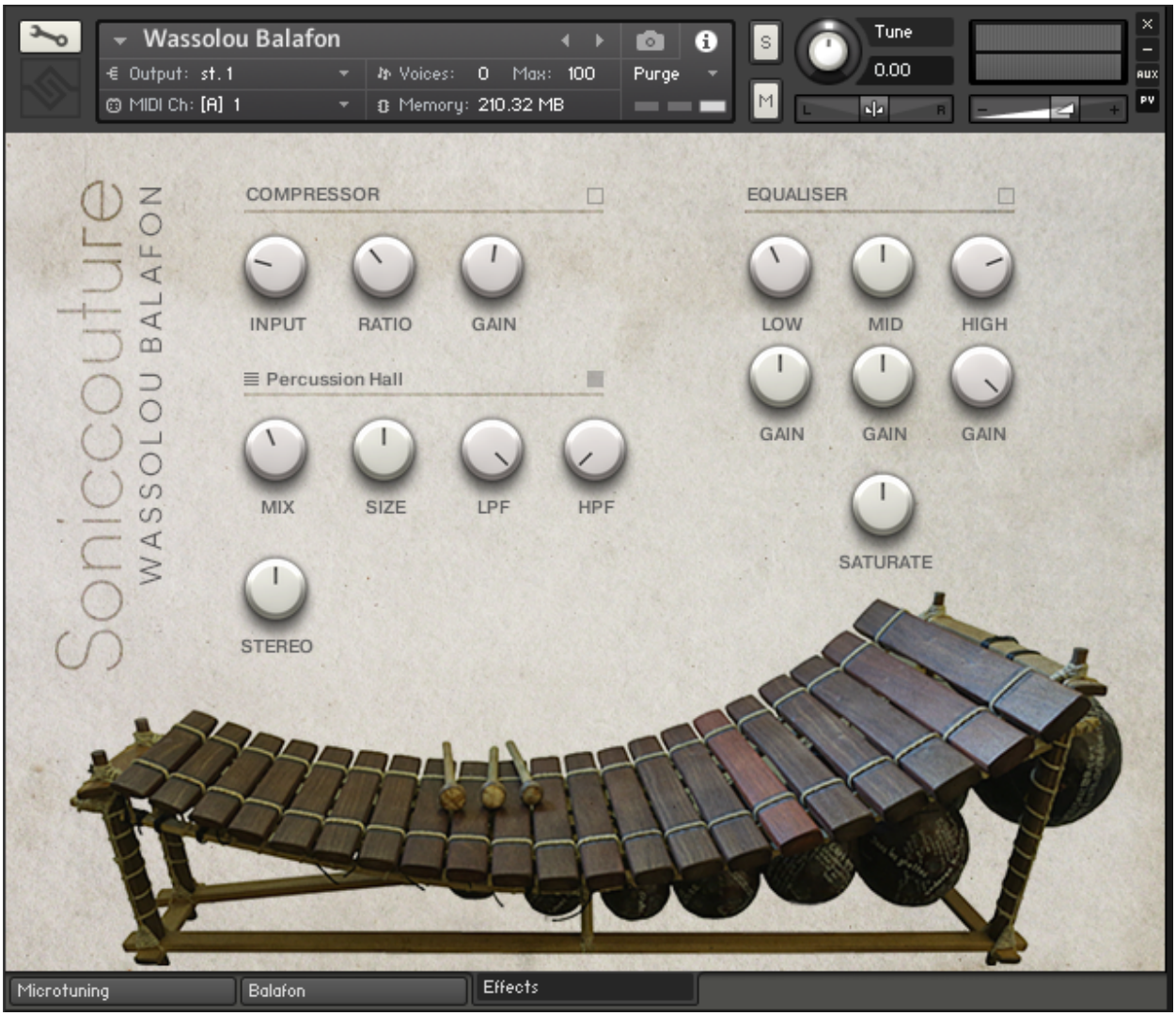
There is a page dedicated to microtuning. The Wassolou Balafon is originally a pentatonic instrument, and this particular instrument was made in concert pitch equal temperament. Using the Microtuning page you can tune it to any other scale you like.



The last key played is displayed in the middle, and you can edit the note and cents offset of that note. If "ALL OCTAVES" is selected, then you are editing all octave instances of that pitch at once. The menu on the top left has some factory preset tunings we've created, and the menu on the right lets you store your own, or import/export those tunings between other Soniccouture instruments.

EFFECTS

There is a page for editing some effects. Here you have some minimal controls for a Compressor, 3-band Equaliser, Convolution reverb, Saturation, and overall Stereo Width.



SUPPORT

If you have any problems or questions relating to the use of this product, please feel free to contact us. You can email us at :

http://www.soniccouture.com/en/support/

We will always endeavour to reply to any enquiry within 24 hours. We are based in the UK, so please bear in mind differences in time zones.

While you are waiting, you will find lots of answers to common questions in our FAQ.

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