



PJ MORTON

Six Studio Secrets for R&B Keyboard Sounds

Having grown up with the music of New Orleans, Grammy-winner PJ Morton knows good sounds—and how to create signature patches in Apple Logic for such artists as India.Arie and Jermaine Dupri. His own album *Walk Alone* is available now. Michael Gallant

Miking Acoustic Piano We usually put two mics on a piano, but the music I'm working on right now is kind of retro, so we use one mic—a ribbon. It doesn't capture as "sophisticated" a sound, and it takes off some of the piano's prettiness, which is what I'm going for.

Urban Strings When I'm trying to make the string tones in Logic [soft synths] sound authentic, I roll off the high end. When I'm going for more of an urban, synthetic sound, I go *with* the high end.

Real and Virtual Rhodes When we record the real thing, we go direct out *and* put two mics on the [Suitcase] speaker so the tremolo sounds true-to-life. In EVP88, I mess with the tremolo, tweaking the speed so it sounds just right. I don't like the tines too bell-like, so I roll that off as well. I love playing a real Rhodes, so I adjust the sound close to what I'm used to.

Virtual B-3 For my demos, I use EVB3. I control it with a Yamaha Motif, set my mod wheel to affect Leslie speed, and set the sliders of the Motif to act like drawbars. The way I play organ, I'm changing drawbars all the time, so it's good to control that from the keyboard.

Synth Bass There's a new kind of bass sound on records by artists like Kanye West. The bottom has a feel like a Roland TR-808 drum machine, but it has pitches. I start with a factory synth bass in EXS24, then add a lot of low end to get the boom—an important thing about the 808 is how *long* it booms, so you want the release time a little longer. Set it to monophonic, since you don't want notes to overlap. It's a very muffled type of bass.

Snakey Lead In the late '60s, Stevie Wonder had this cool lead that was sine-y, warm, and high, with some glide. I program my version of that on Logic's EFM1. I pick a sine wave that's close—I'm going for warm, so I don't want a lot of high end. I take the release all the way off and set the attack a little late, for a sneaky kind of lead, not one that hits right when you trigger the note. I don't detune at all, and I put the octave up and set it to monophonic.

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