

UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DOLBY ATMOS—TALKING WITH JONATHAN MORRISON

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## GoranGrooves Handy Drums

A quick and reliable way to get studio-quality drums in your song

Goran Rista and his company, GoranGrooves, provide professional, custom-created instrument tracks ranging from drums, bass, guitar, keys and horns, as well as pro audio mixing services. The latest GoranGrooves endeavor is a series of virtual drum plugins called Handy Drums. I was given access to the full-featured Producer Collection that includes every Handy Drums plugin plus an entire library of MIDI drum loops called Handy Grooves. There is a lot to cover here, so let's dive in.

### What is it?

Handy Drums, in essence, is a multi-sampled, professionally recorded virtual drum plugin available in darn near every genre and style, and I mean darn near every. It is a 64-bit plugin available for Mac or PC as a standalone app or as a VST or Audio Units plugin for your DAW.

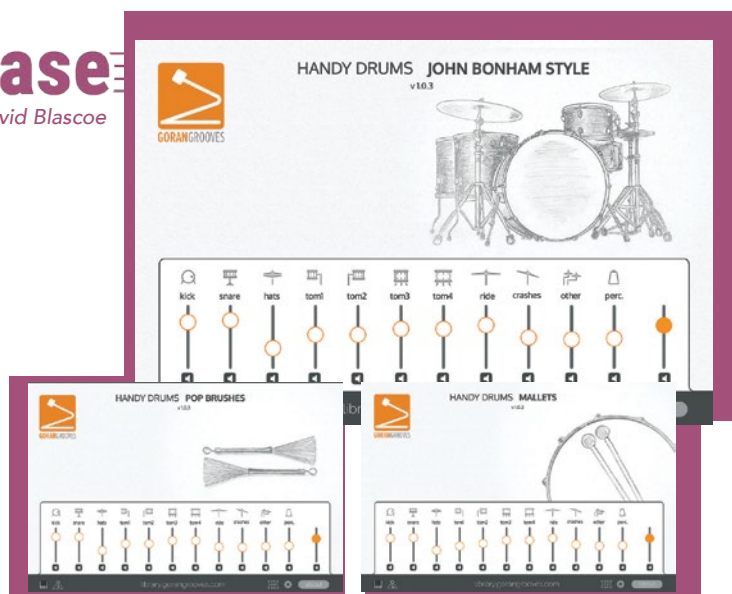
Handy Drums covers a lot of ground with style choices ranging from heavy metal to reggae to delicate brushwork to jazz and beyond. Upon first opening the plugin, you're met with a simple, elegant and non-threatening user interface. An easy-to-understand mixer is front and center, offering level control over each component of whichever kit you choose—Kick, Snare, Hi-Hat, Toms and more.

Each Handy Drums plugin has a pencil-like sketch of the kit or percussion element you are hearing that helps give context to the sounds in which you are dealing. You can play or program your own MIDI files or lean on the extensive collection of Handy Grooves MIDI loops for immediate results—more on that later.

Handy Drums reminds me a bit of the Drummer VST baked into Apple Logic Pro and GarageBand. Namely, there is a similar simplicity and immediacy to the results. Handy Drums gives you access to quick and great-sounding drum tracks in your DAW of choice.

### How Does it Sound?

In a word, fantastic! GoranGrooves has done the heavy lifting for you as all the drums and percussion are premixed, edited and ready to drop into your track. Every kit and percussion setup has a very balanced sound—not too hyped and not too dry. Each kit features a natural studio ambiance that can't be adjusted or blended to taste. This is not inherently a problem, but worth noting.



Handy Drums has up to 15 dynamic layers, so there is a lot of wiggle room in choosing what velocities you want for each hit. The samples respond accordingly with a very realistic sound and response. Depending on which kit you're using, there are also up to 12 round-robin groups, so a fast 16th note snare roll doesn't sound like one static sample being fired repeatedly. That often tends to be a significant downfall when programming realistic-sounding drums, so it's very nice that Goran thought this through and included this level of detail.

### Faves

Some of my personal favorites are the John Bonham style kit, Mallets, and the Pop Brushes plugins. The John Bonham kit sounds appropriately huge and authentic to the legendary Bonzo style with a 28" kick drum and even the tambourine/ching ring on the hi-hat. I couldn't resist the urge to program my best attempt at a «When the Levee Breaks» groove and this plugin delivered the iconic sound and brought a smile to my face.

Mallets is a thoughtful inclusion and not one that I ever thought I needed. All the cymbals and drums are played softly with mallets for a darker and more restrained sound—a great tool to have in your arsenal.

I especially liked Pop Brushes because faking a brush sound on programmed drums is not easy and typically sounds fake. That is not the case here. Apart from using samples of full brush loops, I personally have not encountered such realistic-sounding brushwork to date in a MIDI-based program. Impressive stuff.

### Stereo, Sub Groups and Power

Typically the output of each Handy Drums kit is in stereo, and any processing done will affect the entire setup. If you need to work with individual kit pieces with different processing and EQ (such as EQing just the kick drum or compressing and gating a snare). In that case, Handy Drums offers eight configurable stereo outputs to which you can assign individual kit pieces for further processing and mixing in your DAW.

Handy Drums is not particularly CPU intensive, so you can easily use multiple instances of the program at one time to expand your percussive pallet.





## Groovy

As I mentioned earlier, for immediate results, the collection of Handy Grooves MIDI drum loops is where the fun begins. Each MIDI pack offers an extensive collection of grooves and fills in different feels and approaches. Pairing the Rock Drums MIDI pack with the John Bonham kit sounds great and gets you right where you need to be in building a rock tune.

Of course, the Songwriter Brush pack is right at home with the Pop Brushes kit and so forth. There's a lot of room for experimenting as well by cross-pollinating different genres of MIDI grooves with different kit styles. Handy Grooves is a turnkey way to stay focused on your creativity and songwriting without worrying

about the details. Just bring up a groove you like and match it to the drum kit you want, and you're off.

## In Conclusion

Handy Drums and Handy Grooves is a perfect pairing for the singer-songwriter, musician or producer who wants to get a professional-sounding drum track up and grooving. They can then forget about it and move on to other aspects of the production with the confidence that the track has a solid foundation.

Individual Handy Drums packs typically run from \$60–\$69 (\$20–\$49 on sale),

while Handy Grooves are \$29 (\$20 on sale) each. The Producer Collection, which would be \$879 all combined, is currently priced at \$249. Plus, customers who purchase the Producer Collection get a 50% VIP discount on all MIDI loops as well as future plugins and MIDI loop packs. For the massive amount of content you're getting, I think that is a steal. ➡

*David Blascoe is a Nashville-based session drummer and engineer. He records and tours with a roster of artists, including his personal project, Black Fuse. @blackfusemusic @davidblascoe*

**Price:** Producer Collection \$249—see website for individual prices  
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