Mountain Dulcimer

The mountain dulcimer is a four stringed instrument usually played on the lap, by strumming or picking with the right hand and fretting with the left. It is normally diatonic, with the frets creating a major (or it's relative minor) scale. The tuning is most often D-A-D, with the two highest strings close together and in unison. When the instrument is strummed, the high strings can be used to play melody, while the low strings drone. Or, chords can be formed and strummed guitar style.
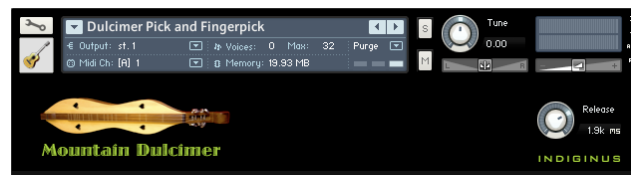

As far as anyone can tell, this type of dulcimer originated with the settlers of the Appalachian Mountains in the eastern United States as far back as the 18th century. It's cheerful sound and characteristic heart-shaped sound holes must have been a comfort in what was, for the most part, a hard life. The instrument has enjoyed a revival in recent decades, and can have a Celtic, Middle Eastern, or Oriental sound.

Our sampled Mountain Dulcimer is presented chromatically, and you will see the "in between" notes on the fretboard of the Strummer instruments.

Installation:
Just drag the Mountain Dulcimer folder to your sample drive (or wherever the rest of your sample library resides), then load as usual using Kontakt's browser window.

There are six Kontakt 3/4 instruments included:

Dulcimer Picked

With slides at high velocities

Dulcimer Fingerpicked

With slides at high velocities

Dulcimer Picked and Fingerpicked
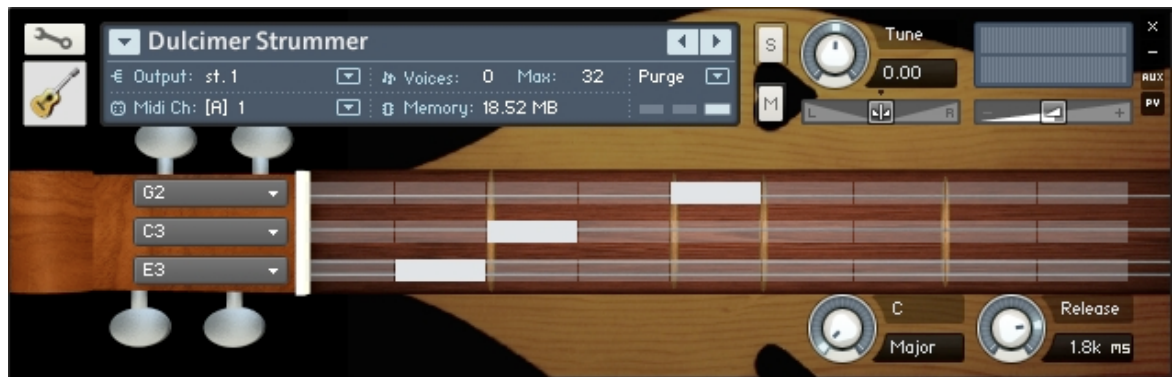
With slides at high velocities

Dulcimer Notes and Drones

Sampled strums with "embedded" melody notes to approximate a common playing style. Downstrokes are from D1 to G2, in a D major scale (with C added). Upstrokes are 2 octaves above, from D3 to G4. Rock back and forth between upstrokes and downstrokes and play up and down the D major scale to create a melody with drones.

Have a little 'possum stew first for best results.

< Downstrokes >   <   Upstrokes   >

Dulcimer Strummer

The Strummer generates chords as you play single notes on the keyboard.
Downstrokes are from C1 to B1, and upstrokes are one octave higher, from C2 to B2.
Rock back and forth between them to simulate strumming action.

Downstrokes   *UpStrokes*

C1   C2   C3   C4
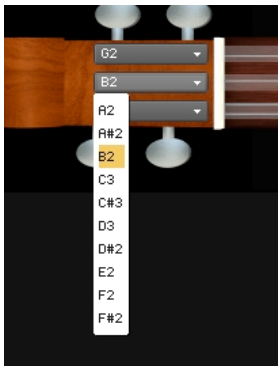
Continued....

Here's how this works:

To access a particular chord, just press the corresponding key.
Don't worry, you can now play ANY chord (not limited to the key of D!)

For instance, pressing C1 will cause "C" to be displayed, and the Chord knob will indicate the chord variation. If you turn the knob to "Dim", the next time you press C1 you will hear a C diminished chord. This makes it easy to set the Strummer for playing in different keys.

But what if you need both a D major AND a D minor?
No problem, because you can.....

Create your own chords!

1. Set the Chord knob to "User". Each scale note has a "User" variation, so you can create a total of 12 custom chords at a time!
2. Select which fret your virtual finger will be pressing on each string by using the pull-down menus on the left. Remember that the first selection will always be the open string, so you won't see any indicator in that case.
3. The Strummer will remember your custom chords, but remember to save the instrument if you are running in stand-alone mode. (K3 will do this automatically when you save your project file in plug-in mode).

So, let's say you need a D major, a D minor, a G major, and a G7 all available at one time!

1. Play a D note and set the variation to "Major".
2. Select another note, preferably one you don't need for this song. For instance, play a D# note and set the Chord knob to "User".
3. Enter the notes for a D minor. Now, when you need that D minor chord, you access it by playing the D# key.
4. Do the same for the G and G7 or any other chords you need. However, if there is a key change in the song you might want to open up another Dulcimer Strummer instrument on another midi channel and set it's chords to the new key.
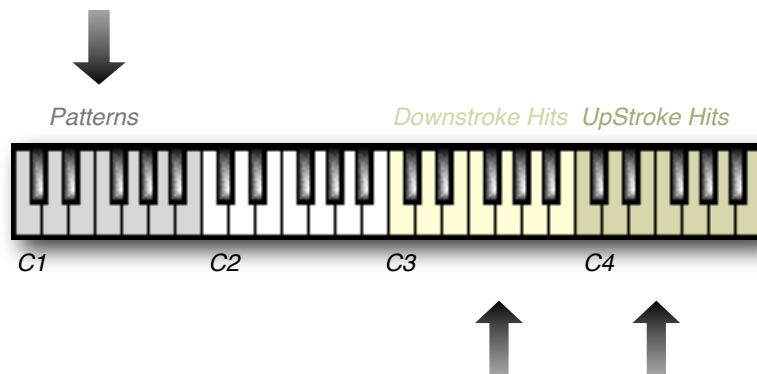
Dulcimer with StrumMaker

The StrumMaker instrument consists of 2 elements that are accessed by the tabs below.

Strum Sequencer

The Strum Sequencer is a simple sequencer for the creation of automated strumming patterns. There are several preset patterns, as well as 3 user memory locations in the "Strum Pattern" pull-down menu.
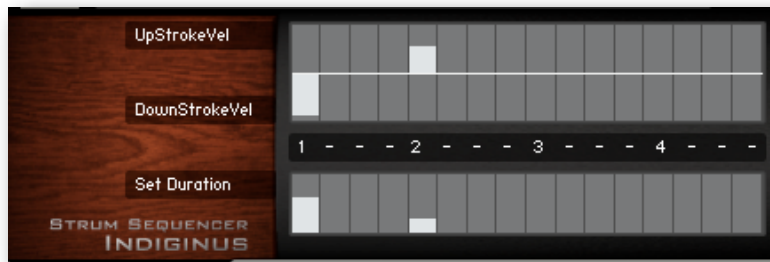
The patterns are triggered by playing single notes on the keyboard from C1 to B1.

Single chord strums are also available for stops.

Note: Chord variations (major, minor, 7th, etc.) are selected in the Fret Board screen.

Creating Your Own Patterns

The upper grid is bipolar and controls the velocity of each strum for each of the 16 available steps (you can vary the number of steps in the *TimeSignature* pull-down menu). The center line is zero velocity. Dragging downward creates a downstroke and dragging upward creates an upstroke, with velocity increasing as you get farther from the center. Lower velocity settings will trigger mutes. At left, you can see a full downstroke at full velocity on beat 1, with a muted upstroke on beat 2.

The Counter (between the grids) follows the beat when the pattern is playing, and indicates the number of steps.

The lower grid controls the duration of the strums at each step. The higher the bar, the longer the note.

Just a few more buttons:

Strum Pattern: Pull down menu for choosing patterns.

TimeSignature: Varies the length of the grid.

Reset Grid: Sets all steps to zero

Save Pattern: To one of 3 user locations.
NOTE: Be sure to save the entire instrument if you're running Kontakt in stand-alone mode.

Clicking on the "Fretboard" tab will summon the dulcimer Strummer fretboard, which we've already become familiar with. This time, though, it's under the control of the Strum Sequencer.

Akai S5000/6000 Programs (16-bit version only)

These Akai programs (.akp) are located in the *Dulcimer 16 bit samples* folder:

Dulcimer FngrPicked
Dulcimer Pick+Fngr
Dulcimer Picked

In the *Dulcimer Notes and Drones* folder:

Dulcimer Notes and Drones