# GARRITAN SOLO CELLO

## 129,50 € tax included

Reference: GAGSC

GARRITAN SOLO CELLO




Back in March of 2006 I had the pleasure of reviewing the Garritan Stradivari Solo Violin (GSSV). GSSV represented a real breakthrough in acoustic instrument emulation, raising the bar in the realism, expressiveness, and, especially, real-time playability that could be achieved with a sample-based software instrument. Just before the review was published, Gary Garritan provided information on some further developments based on the same technology, including a version 2.0 update to GSSV (see below) and some future products. The latter caused me to include the following teaser at the end of my review:

Garritan also indicated plans to release additional stringed instruments based on the same technology as used in GSSV. Next up will be a cello, which should be available in a month or two.

Well, it took quite a bit more than a month of two -- in fact, almost exactly a year -- but the Garritan Gofriller Solo Cello (GGSC) shipped in March of this year. Does the GGSC live up to the high standards set by GSSV? Was the wait worth it? Let's take a look.
Background

The Garritan Gofriller Solo Cello's entry in the Library pane of the NI KONTAKT 2 Player.
The Garritan Gofriller Solo Cello was developed by the same team that produced the Garritan Stradivari Solo Violin. That effort was a collaboration between an Italian team and Gary Garritan, who supplied the Gofriller samples. Besides Garritan, the founders of the team included Giorgio Tommasini, who developed the patent-pending phase alignment and other techniques underlying GSSV, and Stefano Lucato, a professional musician and sound engineer.

Like GSSV, GGSC relies on Native Instruments' KONTAKT 2 sampler technology for its underlying sampling engine. Unlike the original GSSV, GGSC bundles a KONTAKT 2 Player, so users will not be faced with separately needing to purchase the KONTAKT 2 sampler. (GSSV 2.0 also includes the KONTAKT 2 Player, which was not available at the time the original GSSV was released.)

GGSC runs on PCs with Windows XP and Macs with OS X. A standalone player is provided, in addition to most common plug-in formats (DXi, VST, and RTAS on Windows' Audio Units, VST, and RTAS on Mac), Garritan lists the following requirements for GGSC:

* CD or DVD drive
* 1 GB of available disk space
* 1 GB or more of RAM
* Windows XP, Pentium 4/Athlon, 2.6+ GHz or faster recommended
* Mac OS X 10.4 or higher, G4 1.5 GHz is minimum, but a G5 or Mac Intel is recommended
* Low latency sound card with ASIO drivers and compatible with KONTAKT 2
* MIDI interface (if using a MIDI keyboard that connects to the computer via MIDI rather than USB)

* MIDI keyboard with at least five, preferably six or more, octaves, and the following controllers:
o Pitch Wheel
o Mod Wheel
o Sustain Pedal
o Channel Aftertouch
o Expression Pedal

The Garritan Gofriller Solo Cello's main user interface within the NI KONTAKT 2 Player. - Click to enlarge.
The product package includes a CD with the KONTAKT 2 Player, including the new NI Service Center (see below), a single KONTAKT 2 format instrument, and PDF versions of the user manual and release notes. There is also a 59(!)-page paper manual. As with GSSV, the GGSC manual is extremely thorough. It includes the technical information needed to play the instrument, such as controller uses, as well as a wealth of information on cello playing terms and techniques, including how to achieve them with GGSC. There are also history lessons on Mateo Gofriller and his instruments, information on the philosophy behind GGSC, brief biographies on the key developers of the product, and much more.

A big part of the overall value of GGSC is Garritan's excellent support. GGSC shares support forums with GSSV, and there is regular participation from the developers of the products, as well as users of all levels of experience. It is generally worth taking a look at the forums prior to installing the software in case there are any common issues that you may be able to avoid with a little forewarning.

Installation of the product is straightforward. However, if you have multiple KONTAKT 2 Player-based instruments, beware that the different vintages of players installed with each instrument can cause issues with other instruments. I have four separate KONTAKT 2 Player-based instruments on my system: GSSV 2.0, GGSC, the latest update to GPO, and Chris Hein Guitars. Somewhere in the course of installing these products, all within relatively close proximity to each other, I ended up with error messages indicating the version of the KONTAKT 2 Player was too old to load some of the specific instruments. In particular, trying to load GGSC and the updated GPO got these messages. This stemmed from the installation of multiple KONTAKT 2 Players in different directories. For some reason, SONAR (V6.2.1) did not put all of them in its VST menus, and the ones it did put in there were older than the two products that encountered problems. While I'm still not clear on why SONAR didn't load all the instances in its menus, or what really should have happened in terms of updating of players, the fix was to identify the newest player, and install that centrally for use by all four of the software packages. Once I did this, it was able to load all four of the instruments just fine.

GGSC includes the NI Service Center application, which is NI's new method for dealing with software authorizations and updates. It streamlines the user interface for authorizing software in the first place. If you've already registered at least one product, registration of a second product is as painless as telling it to go ahead and register the new product. It already knows what product needs to be registered and can provide the needed data for the registration. Similarly, checking it every once in awhile can let you know if updates for any of your NI products are available, including KONTAKT 2 Players specific to any third party instruments such as GGSC. One minor wrinkle is the NI Service Center seems to insist on installing itself with each new instrument you install, even if it is an older version than the one you already have installed. Of course, the first thing it then wants to do after being installed is update itself to the newer version that had, in all likelihood, just been replaced.

GGSC lists for $199, and street prices seem to be identical. All testing for this review was carried out with V3.02 of the Gofriller Cello library under SONAR Producer Edition 6.2.1. The VST version of the KONTAKT 2 Player was used.
Technology Refresher

If you would like to know more detail about the technology underlying GGSC, I recommend reading my earlier review of GSSV. The underlying technology is largely identical, so I will only summarize the technology to avoid redundancy with the detailed explanations in the GSSV review.

The GGSC documentation states the goal of the development team as having been to provide the highest quality and most comprehensive solo cello library -- one that is extremely thorough, realistic, and playable. It further lists the eight main objectives in service of that goal as being:

1. Implementation on a conventional sampler
2. Real time playability
3. Real time, continuous transition (morphing) across several dynamics of the same note
4. Real time, continuous transition between vibrato levels
5. Real time control of the vibrato intensity & rate
6. Real time portamento & legato
7. Real time shaping of most articulations
8. Timbral characteristics indistinguishable from the original samples