

# Mini Reviews

Cast your eyes over our pint-sized critiques, which this month include an ambitious synth ROMpler, a sheet music organiser and a rather nifty virtual piano...

## BEST SERVICE

### Galaxy II

**CONTACT:** Time+Space, 01837 55200 **WWW:** timespace.com  
**FORMAT:** PC and Mac, AU, VST, RTAS and standalone **PRICE:** £169

**W**e've seen our fair share of piano ROMplers here at cm, so it takes something special for us to really sit up and take notice. Galaxy II is just such a beast, offering a substantially superior experience to other virtual pianos, and a degree of control over the sound rarely seen in a ROMpler.

The quality of the recorded samples is superb – the included Steinway D, Bösendorfer and Blüthner are all captured at pristine quality. But perhaps the most impressive aspect is the way that Native Instruments' Kontakt Player 2 has been used to give the user control over all of the

important aspects of the sound, including dynamics parameters for punching up or softening the patch, and noise controls for adjusting the level of hammer, damper, pedal and string noise.

As well as the array of traditional piano patches, some more esoteric global presets are supplied, including lush pads and warped tones. While the former simply layers the pianos up with some fairly generic samples, the effect works really well, and the wide variety of timbres available right off the bat is a great touch. Overall, Galaxy II is the best piano ROMpler we've ever had the pleasure of playing.



### VIR2 syntAX

**CONTACT:** Time+Space, 01837 55200 **WWW:** timespace.com  
**FORMAT:** PC and Mac, AU, DXi, VST, RTAS and standalone **PRICE:** £110

**B**illed as "part synth, part interactive sonic revolution", Vir2 and Bunker 8's Kontakt Player 2-powered synth ROMpler can hardly be accused of underselling itself.

A collection of 2000 patches covering such standard fare as leads, basses, pads and FX, syntAX unfortunately can't live up to its own hype. Although some of the sounds are indeed fairly pleasant, albeit unspectacular, many of the patches are weak, dull-sounding or just pointless. Little effort has been made to put the



Kontakt Player 2's engine to good use (the so-called "expert" view gives you an ADSR to tweak and little else), and the sheer volume of the available patches makes locating the wheat amongst the chaff a testing task.

If you simply can't get enough presets and have plenty of cash to spare, syntAX is a reasonable buy, but those on a limited budget would be far better off investing in something like reFX Nexus or Arturia Analog Factory.



## CAMBRON SOFTWARE

### Power Music

**CONTACT:** Cambron Software **WWW:** cambron.co.uk  
**FORMAT:** PC (600MHz, 256MB RAM, Windows XP SP2 or later) **PRICE:** £50

**A**n organisational utility for managing digital sheet music, chord charts, music software, lyrics and notes, software doesn't get much less glamorous than Power Music.

But with ever-increasing amounts of information to be stored, it's not hard to imagine that there are computer musicians out there who would benefit from just such a utility.

The majority of Power Music's main screen area is taken up by a window for displaying sheet music or lyrics and chords, with smaller panels

for creating playlists and searching through your music library.

The program enables the creation of charts with lyrics, and includes useful chord generation and transposition tools. Songs can have category types and audio clips attached to them, although there's no sheet music editor, and you can only import scores as image files.

If you're in desperate need of a way to organise your sheet music, then Power Music is a decent enough solution, but it certainly feels a little light on features for the money.



# Samples round-up

Find out what's new in the world of samples right here!

## Sample Magic Minimal & Tech-House

**CONTACT:** Time+Space, 01837 55200  
**WWW:** timespace.com

**FORMAT:** Audio, Acid WAV, AIFF, Apple Loops, REX, NN-Xt, Kontakt, EXS24, HALion **PRICE:** £59.95

**Y**et another minimal house sample library, Minimal & Tech-House thankfully manages to avoid obsolescence by being rather good. The contributing producers are obviously familiar with the conventions of the genres, and the samples are all of a high standard.

The music and synth loops –

usually the least useful aspects of these libraries – are tastefully done and quite inspirational, as are the drum loops and the always-important individual drum hits. Minimal & Tech-House would make a great investment for anyone making deeper dance music.

**RATING**  
**9**



## Zero-G Ecstatic Grooves

**CONTACT:** Time+Space, 01837 55200  
**WWW:** timespace.com

**FORMAT:** Acid WAV, AIFF Apple Loops, REX2, ReFill, Stylus RMX, Kontakt 2, EXS24 **PRICE:** £59.95

**E**cstatic Grooves is a collection of drum loops and single hits for mid-tempo 4x4 dance music. Although to us the word 'groove' conjures up thoughts of funky bass licks and keyboard parts, you won't find any melodic samples here – it's all drum beats.

Thankfully the quality level is generally high, and the 1650 loops

certainly have plenty of punch to them. The emphasis is on strident euro-style beats, but if you're after something a little more subtle, the inclusion of 550 single-hit drum samples is a definite bonus. This package is worth investigating if you're into the harder mid-tempo styles of dance.

**RATING**  
**8**



## Digital Redux Properly Chilled

**CONTACT:** Time+Space, 01837 55200  
**WWW:** timespace.com

**FORMAT:** Acid WAV, AIFF, Apple Loops, REX2, ReFill, Stylus RMX **PRICE:** £20

**P**roperly Chilled is a mixed bag of musical odds and ends, ranging from not-at-all chilled experimental down-tempo beats to 80s movie soundtrack fodder. All the material here appears to have been programmed on keyboards rather than played live, so you're getting what you pay for. But on the plus

side, some of the musical ideas are rather fetching and you get a good amount of audio (about 1GB of unique content).

If you need inspiration on a budget, Properly Chilled is a worthwhile buy. Those who are after 'real' instruments, however, should look elsewhere.

**RATING**  
**7**



## Vengeance Effects Vol. 2

**CONTACT:** Time+Space, 01837 55200  
**WWW:** timespace.com

**FORMAT:** WAV **PRICE:** £59.95

**S**o far Vengeance's sample library output has been nothing short of outstanding. Can they maintain their superb track record with this latest collection of sound effects?

Boringly enough, yes; although 750 might not sound like a huge number of sounds, the standard is incredible, and each sample is

useful in its own way. The different categories include processed percussion loops, sweeps and impact sounds, with no filler material to speak of.

This is recommended to anyone who needs big and impressive sound effects – electronica producers will absolutely love it.

**RATING**  
**9**



## Cakewalk E-MU Proteus Pack Xtreme Lead 1

**CONTACT:** Edirol Europe, 0870 350 1515  
**WWW:** cakewalk.com

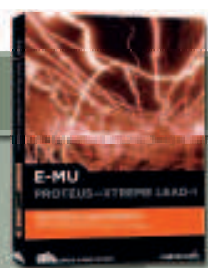
**FORMAT:** Dimension Pro/Dimension LE **PRICE:** £49

**C**akewalk's new range repackages the patches from the E-MU sound modules of the 90s in a convenient software format compatible with their Dimension Pro synth. And for the time being, purchasing any of the range will entitle you to a free Dimension LE download.

Despite that offer it's actually

Dimension Pro users who will get the most from Xtreme Lead 1 as many of the patches cry out for tweaking, especially the bass tones. There are hundreds of other presets beyond those, though, including synths, pads, one-shot kits and effects. It's a great buy, especially if you're a Dimension Pro owner.

**RATING**  
**8**



## World Loop Spice Rack

**CONTACT:** bil@powerfx.com  
**WWW:** powerfx.com

**FORMAT:** Acid WAV **PRICE:** \$79

**D**espite ditching some much more, shall we say, visceral cover art for their latest ethnic sample library (we'll leave the lurid details to your imagination), PowerFX have come up with a winner. Another aural travelogue in much the same vein as last month's Global Groove Groundworks, this compilation

includes loads of African, Indian, Arabic, Oriental and South American beats and instrument loops.

If the thought of Egyptian lutes and Middle Eastern violins gets you hot under the tie-die collar then this hefty 890MB library will keep you busy until the Hibernian solstice. It's great value, too.

**RATING**  
**8**

