

cm mini reviews

A rapid-fire round-up of sample libraries, ROMplers and more

Samson Go Mic £50

Format PC, Mac
Contact Korg UK, 01908 857100
Web www.samsontech.com

Samson's Go Mic is aimed at podcasters, musicians and field recorders, and designed to be used with laptops and netbooks – although any computer will do, of course. It's a tiny, plastic-shelled USB condenser microphone that folds out from a sturdy metal clip, via which it attaches to your laptop screen or anything else you like. The box shows it neatly clipped to the bezel of a pre-UniBody MacBook Pro screen – and looking impressively 'Apple' with it, it must be said. Owners of the more recent MBPs are going to be reluctant to recreate this setup, however: because of the thinner screen of the UniBody model, the angle of attack of the hinged half of the clip is too steep, so the sharp metal front edge of the clip clamps – with some force – directly to the glass. Er, no thanks...

Fortunately, the clamp, being quite weighty and fitted with four rubber feet, also doubles as a very stable stand, so you can just sit it flat on a table and angle the mic (attached via a ball-and-socket joint) as you see fit.

The mic itself can be switched between cardioid and omnidirectional pickup patterns, and features a 10dB pad (for cardioid mode) and a clipping indicator LED. There's even a

built-in audio interface, complete with minijack output for direct monitoring of the incoming signal, which is captured at 16-bit/48kHz quality.

The Go Mic not only looks great, it really does sound great, too. Recordings are detailed, spacious and accurate, and performance overall is certainly greater than you'd expect from a capsule of this size and price.

9/10



FaderPro \$99 The Art Of The Remix

Format DVD with DVD-ROM
Contact via website
Web www.faderpro.com

This beginners' guide to remixing is presented by one Vincent DePasquale, who explains a variety of general and remix-specific techniques using Nadia Ali's pop hit *Crash and Burn* to demonstrate. The resulting funky house remix, while not mind-blowing, does a great job of demonstrating the pertinent concepts.

The acapella and other materials are provided on the two DVDs that come with the product (there's a streaming version for \$89, too, including the same). Logic is the DAW used, but DePasquale does a fair job of keeping the techniques universal. The video runs to a substantial 420 minutes, so while it's not cheap, you get plenty of bang for your buck. The very basic nature of the first few chapters means they're of less interest to more advanced users, but there are still useful tips peppered throughout, and the video is divided into 41 chapters, which makes navigation a little easier. Overall, a good investment for those new to remixing and production in general, especially Logic users.

8/10



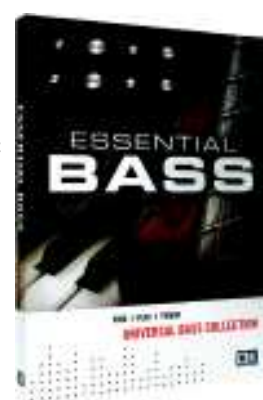
Native Instruments Essential Bass €69

Format Kore SoundPack
Contact info@native-instruments.de
Web www.native-instruments.de

Another month, another Kore SoundPack, and this one includes 200 acoustic, electric and synthetic bass sounds, ranging from plunking uprights to dirty DnB hoovers. The Kore Player's features work particularly well here, giving Essential Bass a real advantage over many traditional ROMplers. For example, in the case of the acoustic sounds, it's possible to set the level of the fret noises in the mix, and the synthetic sounds can be customised by adjusting filter, modulation and effect settings. Many patches also have a 'sub' control, making it easy to dial in the right amount of low end.

The sounds themselves are great: the sample-based patches are well recorded and sound realistic, and the synth sounds are punchy and warm. The dance-oriented ones in particular are impressive, being stylistically up-to-the-minute and of high sonic quality. Overall, a fantastic package that lives up to the high standards set by previous Kore SoundPacks. The price makes it decent value even if you're only interested in the acoustic and electronic basses.

10/10



White Noise Audio Software **bleep!Box** £5.99

Format iPhone/iPod Touch
Contact contact@bleepboxapp.com
Web www.bleepboxapp.com

Sticking to the tried and tested step-sequencing formula, bleep!Box is a simple app that can put out some serious grooves. It takes a little while to figure the control system out, but once you've got the hang of it, it's easy to put together loops and patterns, then tweak them in real time. As well as the main programming pages for composing patterns, you'll also find a couple of live performance options enabling you to loop/stutter, mute and preview parts. An updated version (which should now be available) will enable you to sequence patterns into songs.

Each pattern is composed using a maximum of ten parts, split into six drum instruments and four synths. The drum sounds are reasonably authentic 808- and 909-style hits (three kick parts, one snare and two hi-hats) all synthesised in real time. This might not sound like much, but the excellent synthesis engine makes it surprisingly effective. To offer more variety, all

the sounds can be triggered at any pitch from C0 to A8, meaning you can create all kinds of zaps, crashes and claps to throw into the mix.

The synthesis engine of bleep!Box is where the software shines, with eight waveforms, frequency/phase/ring modulation and dozens more variables to play with. The results are surprisingly usable and every parameter can be automated, too.

Although the app itself is stable during use, there are a couple of minor graphical glitches, that make it look slightly less slick than it otherwise would – hopefully these will be ironed out in the update. Overall, though, bleep!Box is a simple but surprisingly versatile step sequencer, that could also make a great performance tool. At this price, it's a bargain.

10/10



Xewton **Music Studio** £11.99

Format iPhone/iPod Touch
Contact support@xewton.com
Web www.xewton.com

The fact that an app like Music Studio can exist at all on a phone will astonish anyone who made music back in the good old Atari and Amiga days (or, indeed, anyone who ever thought they were 'it' with their hefty old-school brick phone). This is a fully fledged sequencer with a slick interface that makes good use of the iPhone's capabilities.

The Keyboard page is where most of the action takes place. It enables you to play up to two instruments simultaneously by splitting the screen horizontally. The iPhone touchscreen excels in this area and you can play some surprisingly complex parts once you get the feel for it.

Music Studio uses sampled instruments rather than synthesised sounds, with a selection of 21 presets to choose from (including pianos, drum kits, organs, brass, guitar and so on), but very little in the way of editing capabilities. The drum sounds are good, although it's a shame they have to be triggered using the keyboard interface – pad-style input would've been

preferable, clearly. The Tracks page offers mixing and editing of up to 128 tracks, and Music Studio has excellent sequencing capabilities with reassuring attention to detail. Adjustable time signature? Quantise? Transpose? Note velocity? It's all right there.

Finally, the Effects page offers a basic but useable reverb, tempo-synced delay, three-band EQ and an amp simulator with adjustable overdrive. Each of the effects can be applied to the master out or used for FX sends. Once your track's finished, you can export as WAV, but we'd

like to see the ability to export tracks as MIDI in future versions, enabling you to take your ideas into your DAW and develop them further using production-quality sounds.

Although Music Studio lacks any synthesis and sampling capabilities, it's excellent at what it does and would make a great tool for jotting down ideas on the run or even for writing quick demos. This is already a very serious sequencer and we'll definitely be keeping an eye on it to see how it develops.

9/10



Soundware round-up

Mutekki Media Kolombo's Secret House €85

Contact via website
Web www.mutekki-media.de
Format WAV, Ableton Loops, Apple Loops, REX, EXS24, Kontakt 2/3



Olivier Grégoire, also known as Kolombo, bursts on to the Mutekki catalogue with this tech house, deep house and progressive sound library. He delivers over 630 unique samples in the form of loops, bass shots, FX, rhodes and synths. It didn't take us long to recognise the bright, clean and deep character of the sounds on this DVD. Everything sounds edgy and full of flair. Generally, the grooves are as funky as they come, the stereo image is wide, the bottom-end is solid, the high-end is sweet and there's a particular authenticity. All loops are at house tempos 125 and 128bpm.

10/10

Zero-G Brazil Chillout £60

Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200
Web www.timespace.com
Format Acid WAV, Apple Loops, Stylus RMX, REX2, EXS24, Kontakt, Reason NN-XT



Brazil Chillout brings 32 construction kits, packed with cool, soothing bossa nova and samba performances on a contemporary tip. You'll find a beautiful selection of live performances, teasing you with euphoric chord progressions on electric piano, guitar, acoustic bass and even some light synth work. All of the drum and percussive elements are also broken down, so there's huge creative potential. As well as those kits, Zero-G have provided additional drum elements and stereo guitar riffs. The sounds are exceptionally well-recorded, and are all in 24-bit format.

9/10

Loopmasters DOWNLOAD Minimal Synthetic by Felix Bernhardt £25

Contact info@loopmasters.com
Web www.loopmasters.com
Format ReFill, Apple Loops, Stylus RMX, Acid WAV, REX2



Felix Bernhardt is a minimal house and techno producer on his way up the industry ladder. Here you'll find everything you need to create an authentic minimal track with a heavy bias towards the kitsch and glitch style that has currently taken over the scene. Most of the sounds are the results of a lot of clever synth work. That retro videogame feel lingers throughout the entire library. There are one-shots, as well as loops at 127bpm. The drum loops and kits particularly impressed us. With over 1170 unique samples in total, it'd be hard to find better value at this price point.

10/10

Dark Side Of The Tune DOWNLOAD Lost Percussion \$9

Contact info@darksideofthetune.com
Web www.darksideofthetune.com
Format WAV, MPC



Lost Percussion is another trip back to the MPC format (although the WAV files are on there for non-MPC users). It comprises 64 single-hit samples that could be categorised as percussion. The sounds definitely have an authentic vintage character about them, almost as if they were rescued from a 1980s vault. There's also a distinct quirkiness to these hits that's sure to find use alongside more typical drum sounds within a huge variety of genres. However, if you're into a slightly low-fidelity and eccentric sound, you'll likely find that this set is inspiring as a standalone collection.

8/10

Loopmasters DOWNLOAD Jim Rivers £20

Contact info@loopmasters.com
Web www.loopmasters.com
Format WAV, Acid WAV, REX2, ReFill, Live Pack, Apple Loops, HALion, Kontakt, EXS24, SFZ, Stylus RMX, Live Presets, NN-XT



This is the second release in the Global Underground sample series. Jim Rivers has produced a slower tempo, deep house and tech house style pack this time. Although there are only just over 150 unique samples, they're all very well done. The drum loops alone make it a worthwhile investment. Jim demonstrates a very advanced ability with percussive loops. The grooves vary tremendously, but he's able to pull off the loosest shuffles that will no doubt translate to some seriously heavy dancefloor action. There isn't a great deal of synth work, but you'll find stacks of inspiration among these very diverse and well-produced samples.

8/10

Push Button Bang DOWNLOAD Dark House £25

Contact info@loopmasters.com
Web www.loopmasters.com
Format WAV, Acid WAV, REX2, ReFill, Live Pack, Apple Loops



Dark House is a sample collection from Push Button Bang that exhibits outstanding sonic quality. It boasts over 1135 unique samples, 675 of which are one-shots (the rest are loops), all split into appropriate categories and sub-categories to make your job as quick and easy as possible. Even though it's been designed with harder, darker house flavours in mind, there's definitely scope for use within a wide range of different styles - even outside of house. You'll find all manner of obscure FX noises, super-rich synth sounds, drums and percussion, and every sample is labelled with a root key and tempo to help you along.

10/10