

# cm mini reviews

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

Softube

## Tube-Tech ME 1B \$199

Format PC/Mac, AU/VST/RTAS  
Web [www.softube.se](http://www.softube.se)  
Contact via website

Here we have another Softube emulation of Tube-Tech hardware. The Pultec-inspired ME 1B mid-range equaliser is the perfect partner to the bass- 'n' treble-focused PE 1C. It offers three bands: peak boost for the low and high bands, and cut for the mid-range. The sweepable gain (or cut) is roughly 10dB in each case. Frequency settings are notched, and although there's no crossover between low (200Hz-1kHz) and high (1.5-5kHz) bands, the broad mid-range (200Hz-7kHz) interacts with both. Bandwidth is broader for the mid-range dip than the two boost circuits, and frequency selection does influence peak shape slightly.

In addition to modelling each part of the original, Softube have added an output trim (+/- 10dB), and you can also select to view knob values in the bottom left-hand corner.

The real joy with all Pultec-inspired EQs is that they combine smooth musicality with quite



interesting band interactions, and Softube's ME 1B is no exception. It's particularly good at shaping electric guitars and adding body to snare drums or acoustic guitars, and careful use of the dip frequencies helps to emphasise the boosted regions. You'll also find it useful for shaping drum kit overheads without generating undesirable harmonics.

Even so, you'll probably hanker after more options. Combining the ME 1B with the PE 1C is an obvious move, resulting in something much like UA's Pultec Pro. So, it's rather convenient that

Softube have done this and more with their new Tube-Tech Classic Channel (\$699). This couples the ME 1B with both the PE 1C (**cm156**, 8/10) and the CL 1B (**cm150**, 9/10) opto compressor for a full-on tube-tastic channel strip, but also gives you the three individual plug-ins on their own. What's more, owners of existing Softube Tube-Tech plug ins can benefit from upgrade offers.

To sum up, while the ME 1B is a solid offering on its own, it's especially usable in the context of the Classic Channel.

**8/10**

Toontrack

## The Classic EZX £55

Format EZX for EZdrummer/SD2.0  
Contact via website  
Web [www.timespace.com](http://www.timespace.com)

There are now a dozen EZX expansion packs, so to impress us, a new one has to offer something we haven't seen before, be it in terms of quality, quantity or style. This pack arguably does just that, on all three fronts. It's essentially two EZXs in one. The first is a multi-mic'd affair, with mixer channels for each drum mic, overheads, ambience, etc, as EZdrummer fans will be used to. The other option is an old-school four-mic setup, with channels for kick, snare, kit left/right, and ambience. The drum sounds were all recorded through a Helios console.

Each EZX has its own drum kit graphic, but you get the same drum and cymbal options for each. The kits are a Noble & Cooley Horizon and a Yamaha Recording Custom, with extras like plastic or felt beater for the N&C kick, different tom heads for the N&C toms, and a Craviotto kick. For snares, you get one from N&C, three Ludwigs (including a low-tuned Supraphonic), and a Craviotto. Regular snare hits and rimshots are on separate MIDI notes, so not only are there



soft rim shots, but there's no annoying 'jump' from one hit type to another, as with some EZXs.

Cymbals include three hi-hats, two rides and nine crashes/splashes. Most EZXs are Sabian-centric EZXs, but Zildjian and Paiste presides here. We're not sure if it's down to the cymbals themselves or the mic'ing technique, but they do sound rather characterful.

Sonically, it's perhaps the best EZX we've heard. Velocity transitions are smooth and while the tone is not as in-your-face as some packs, there's no lack of presence. We dropped The



Classic EZX into some mixes we'd already done using Superior Drummer 2.0 kits, and it fitted amazingly well - in some cases, we liked it better than our original carefully mixed drums. The inclusion of two mic'ing setups is a real boon. The pack sounds fresh and is well suited to rock, pop, funk, etc. Even the included MIDI is spot-on and actually useful for song-building.

For the asking price, it's not to be missed - even SD2.0 owners should consider it, such is its flexibility, quality and immediacy.

**9/10**

## Blip Interactive NanoStudio 1.2 £8.99

**Format** iPhone/iPod touch (iOS 3.1.2)  
**Web** [www.blipinteractive.co.uk](http://www.blipinteractive.co.uk)  
**Contact** [contact@blipinteractive.co.uk](mailto:contact@blipinteractive.co.uk)

NanoStudio has long been championed as one of the best iOS music-making apps, but recent updates could leave the competition in the dust. Anything we found lacking in *cmi56's* review of v1.0 has been addressed. For example, v1.2 brings compression and EQ, both of which sound decent and make it much more possible to create finished mixes on your iDevice. These processors are found in the new per-channel FX chain, allowing you to use up to four of any effect, including the preexisting reverb, chorus/delay and waveshaper. A high-quality output mode alleviates certain sonic anomalies.

Other new goodies include support for CoreMIDI, Retina Display and Sonoma AudioCopy/Paste; Eden sample pre-loading, increased polyphony, tempo/meter on the main menu... There's way more than we can list here.

You can now use up to four sequencer tracks per instrument, and quantise goes down to 1/64.



You can quantise the lengths as well as the start points of events, and view the grid without snapping. These kind of features make the sequencing much more mature and usable.

Possibly the most significant update is an in-app purchasable option to up the track count from six to 16. Costing just £2.99, this is a compulsory purchase if you want to make full productions on your iDevice. The new tracks do mean more scrolling, particularly in the mixer, but that's a small price to pay. More tracks and

effects means greater CPU consumption, and those with newer devices will be able to get considerably more mileage out of the app.

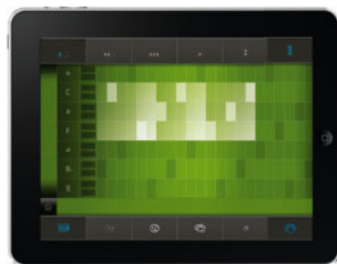
NanoStudio doesn't offer competition to a full-blown desktop DAW. However, as a truly mobile software studio it provides an inspirational set of tools that offer far more than the asking price would suggest. If you're an electronic musician and you own an iOS device, there's no excuse for not buying NanoStudio.

**10/10**

## Audanika SoundPrism Pro £9.49

**Format** iOS 4.2  
**Web** [www.soundprism.com](http://www.soundprism.com)  
**Contact** [info@audanika.com](mailto:info@audanika.com)

The standard (and free) version of SoundPrism caused excitement among iOS musicians. It's easy to while away hours jamming across its unusual yet instinctively laid out grid. However, it's limited to a mere handful of onboard sounds. Enter SoundPrism Pro, which brings



CoreMIDI to the table, enabling you to use SoundPrism's inspirational performance tools to control hardware or software instruments.

SoundPrism spaces notes across a grid and allows you to play chords according to the selected major or minor key. A septet of bass notes are arranged vertically along the left edge. Sounds, chord polyphony, hold, and MIDI enable/disable are selected via a handful of big, cheery buttons around the border. You can even assign MIDI CCs to the accelerometer.

We had a great time using SoundPrism Pro to control Madrona Labs' equally unusual Aalto synthesizer via Wi-Fi. It is somewhat costly as apps go, but if you want an easy, enjoyable interface for your MIDI kit, it's worth the outlay.

**8/10**

## Best Service Epic World €299

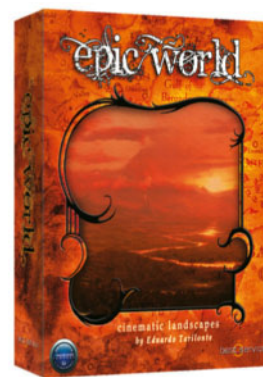
**Format** Best Service Engine 2  
**Web** [www.bestservicede.com](http://www.bestservicede.com)  
**Contact** [mail@bestservice.de](mailto:mail@bestservice.de)

We're not big fans of the Engine 2 frontend used here: it looks dated and has a convoluted registration process. However, once up and running, the ethnic drones and pads from Epic World really impress with their brilliantly evocative names and generously long samples, some of which are tempo-synced. Most patches have multiple layers that are adjustable via either the interface or MIDI control. We found some of the default drones to be a little bass-heavy, but this was easily remedied using the EQ within Engine 2.

The vocal phrases and tribal instruments are particularly useful, with some unusual choices including Elven voices and African flutes. Game and soundtrack composers will also appreciate the fantasy SFX folder, which features sounds of nature and Foley noises such as ogres grunting. These add extra value to an already stuffed package.

Epic World is just that: epic. It offers a myriad of alternative sound design possibilities, and if you don't mind the eccentric Engine 2 interface, it's a one-stop solution for atmospheric cinematic work or ambient tracks needing an ethnic edge.

**8/10**



# Soundware round-up

Zero-G

## House Fabrik: Deep Minimal Tech £61

Another day, another house sample pack. This one delivers 1300 samples, with folders full of drum loops, basslines, one shots, effects and more. It's not bad, but the sounds are a bit underwhelming considering the price - think metallic, spatial and deep, but lacking in real oomph and character.

[www.timespace.com](http://www.timespace.com)

6/10



Prime Loops

## Trap Starrz £20

Made up of ten construction kits and a folder of one-shot wonders, Trap Starrz is a cracking crunk collection. While the one-shots don't offer a lot - there are just four kicks and three snares - the construction kits are excellent, with deep lows and crisp mids/highs. Ranging in tempo from 75 to 80bpm, this is a sweet selection of swung, laidback and ready-to-grind-to grooves.

[www.primeloops.com](http://www.primeloops.com)

8/10



Big Citi Loops

## Hip Hop Strings Awards 2 £16

It might not sound like the London Philharmonic, but this pack is on the money for pop-style hip-hop riffs that sit well in the mix. You get ten construction kits, and while the string sounds are unrealistic and workstation-esque, this is exactly the sort of sound Kanye and co use, and it wouldn't be out of place in the Top 40. It's not for serious composers or underground hip-hop heads, however.

[www.producerloops.com](http://www.producerloops.com)

7/10



Sounds/To/Sample

## Trance Nights £13

Trance has come a long way since the euphoric arpeggios of the late 90s. While the 'synth loops' in this pack might still click to the epic chords approach, the basslines and drum loops are heavy and gritty. There are 200 loops in total, and as usual for the Sounds/to/Sample folk, the production is thumping. It's a solid pack, and a no-brainer for trance disciples.

[www.soundstosample.com](http://www.soundstosample.com)

8/10



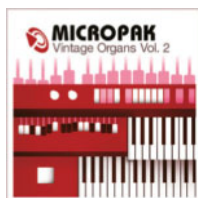
Puremagnetik

## Vintage Organs 2 £12

This pack for Live, Kontakt and Logic provides ten multisampled patches from five quite different-sounding organs. Each patch offers plenty of control, with some boasting key click noise, fan noise level, individually sampled/adjustable drawbars and - in the Live version - a rotating speaker effect. The Piano Organ is especially convincing, while the Yamaha YC-30 is very usable.

[www.puremagnetik.com](http://www.puremagnetik.com)

9/10



Sample Magic

## Deep House £40

House is the genre in which Sample Magic's skills shine the brightest, and this 650MB pack is no exception. The drum loops are produced to the highest standard, and are spacious, deep, crisp, thick and exciting. That goes for the basslines, chords, synths and percussion too. With FX, vocals, drum hits and more rounding out the pack, any house producer will find what they need here.

[www.samplemagic.com](http://www.samplemagic.com)

10/10



Loopmasters

## Sy & Unknown – Essential Hardcore £30

Hardcore veterans Sy & Unknown bring us this stomping 956MB pack of hits and loops. It's comprehensive, with everything from male and female vocals, scratches and strings to pads, classic breaks and full-on 'ardcore beats. The tempo is manic, the basslines heavy and the beats relentless. It's all done to the highest standard, offering a solid foundation for any hardcore track.

[www.loopmasters.com](http://www.loopmasters.com)

8/10



Hollow Sun

## Interference \$4

This Kontakt instrument aims to interfere with your pristine digital recordings, offering noise sampled from valve gear, vinyl, fans and so on. The GUI has sections for six noise types, each with Level, Tune and Filter knobs. You can create the drone of an aircraft interior, build up the crackle of old records, add subtle tape hiss and more. The execution is elegant, with great sonic potential.

[www.hollowsun.com](http://www.hollowsun.com)

8/10



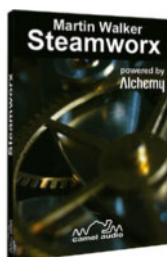
Camel Audio

## Steamworx £39

Sound designer Martin Walker's heritage in computer game soundtracks shines through on this latest Alchemy library. The quality is luxurious, and the set features dark drums, atmospheric soundscapes, spooky pads and haunting choirs, with plenty of atonal curiosities along the way. Dark and sombre in tone, there are natural and mechanical sounds in equal abundance. This is more of a useful resource than a musical or creative launchpad.

[www.camelaudio.com](http://www.camelaudio.com)

7/10



Sonokinetic

## Tutti €200

This Kontakt library of orchestral cues, passages and hits/FX features round-robin scripting for single hits and phrases (ie, multiple takes), and a traditional music score displayed for each patch. These dramatic samples were recorded using a full orchestra miked in instrument sections, so the overall balance can be adjusted. It's an outstanding package of thrilling textures and hits for embellishing your core orchestral collection.

[www.sonokinetic.net](http://www.sonokinetic.net)

10/10

