

cm mini reviews

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

Toontrack Metal Machine EZX £55

Web www.toontrack.com
Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200
Format EZX for EZdrummer/Superior Drummer

No one could accuse Toontrack of neglecting metal-mad users of their virtual drum kit software. Since making their name with the then-groundbreaking Drumkit From Hell, they've released Metal Foundry SDX, Metalheads EZX and loads of mixer presets and MIDI grooves. Heavy metal thrives on excess, though, so why stop there? Indeed, they've only gone and got Andy Sneap to produce their latest metallic masterpiece, Metal Machine EZX.

Mr Sneap is perhaps the genre's most in-demand engineer, with metal royalty like Megadeth, Trivium and Dimmu Borgir among his credits. Here he teams up with ace drummer John Tempesta to record three kits at LA's Henson Recording Studios.

Gear-wise, you get two Tama Starclassic Bubinga kits (different sizes, one with Quilted Sapele wood) and a Ludwig Stainless Steel. There are seven snares, including a good old

Black Beauty, a Tama Bell Brass and a Dunnett Titanium. Cymbals are Zildjian - there are 11, and ten have an alternate cymbal choice, making 21 in total. There are two sets of hats, too.

Even just playing a few single hits, you can't help but be impressed by the classy sound that emanates forth - it sounds just like something from one of Sneap's commercial productions. Many of Toontrack's other metal drum kit expansions have a hyped, mid-scooped tone, but there's none of that with Metal Machine EZX; it has a full, rich mid-range with plenty of 'wood' and gutsy punch. It's heavy, man. The kits sound terrific and thundering in isolation, but they slot into the mix as easily as you'd hope, with just the right amount of top-end crack. The tone is very consistent, which is crucial for metal.



The room sound is spot on, and you get an epic-sounding reverb to blend in the mixer, too. There's good variety between the main kits as well, with the tighter Tamas more suited to high-velocity modern metal, while the looser Ludwig is killer for rock and more groove-based metal.

We like Toontrack's other metal kits, but this one is really outstanding - not surprising, really, when you consider who produced it. Our only concern is that Mr Sneap may do himself out of a job, since you can now nab his drum sound for just £55!

10/10

Moog Music Animoog £20.99

Web www.moogmusic.com
Contact via website
Format iPad, iOS 3.2

Hype can be an amazing thing to behold. Since Animoog's release, we've seen the company make some pretty bold statements, while died-in-the-wool hardware-heads fall all over themselves to praise the thing. Marketing spiel aside, Moog have delivered a great product. Surprisingly, it takes the form of a wavetable synthesiser, albeit one stuffed with samples from the company's modern and legacy synths. Essentially, there are up to eight timbres that are splayed across an 8x16 X/Y grid. The sound can be made to move dynamically through those timbres each time a note is played.

The raw samples that make up the timbres are as rich and characterful as you'd expect, coming as they did from the company's classic synths and effects. Timbres are easily replaced via a browser that accesses the factory set (there's no user sampling). The path of travel through the grid is determined by a Path module that offers control over the rate and direction of travel. Clicking Edit allows you

to reshape the path, while yet more control is provided by the Orbit module, which allows you to set how closely the path is followed.

In addition to the Path and Orbit modules, you get a multimode filter with envelope control and drive, along with a resonance circuit that can be pushed into serious squelch. A Thick module provides bitcrushing, overdrive, detune and unison, and there's a delay, too.

Conventional synthesis functions include three ADSR generators, one each dedicated to amp, filter and modulation. There is also an LFO in tow. It's not a lot, but it's more than enough to redefine the sounds to your own liking.

Animoog can be played (and synced) via MIDI (not virtual MIDI) or from the Buchla-esque touch-strip keyboard, which allows you to swipe your fingers vertically as a modulation tool. Your



performances can be recorded and overdubbed, while copy and paste is supported as well.

Animoog is a winner. Unfortunately, the crazy 69p introductory price has ended and it now costs a whopping £20.99. We think it's too much, especially compared to the competition, but it is good fun - plus you can honestly tell your friends that you own a Moog synth! Good stuff.

8/10

Notion Music Progression for iPad £2.99

Web www.notionmusic.com
Contact info@notionmusic.co.uk
Format iPad/iPad2

Notion Music have released an iPad version of their Progression notation software for guitarists. First impressions are favourable, with the GUI so uncluttered and intuitive that the comprehensive help pages are almost redundant. Browsing the example scores gives an immediate idea of what's possible. A new score may be started by selecting up to four acoustic or electric guitars with tablature, notation or combined stave options. Electric bass guitar is also available free through registering, and additional stringed instruments may be purchased within the app for £0.69 each. Each instrument can be edited to cater for any altered tuning (or capo position), which is a great touch.

The iPad may not be ideally suited to the fine control of music notation, but its functionality is used very intelligently. Landscape or portrait view may be flipped as needed, and entry via the onscreen fretboard (with melody/chord

toggle) and note-value selector is fast and extremely intuitive. A series of palettes also allow access to the majority of musical and guitar-specific needs, including tempo marking, time and key signatures, grace notes, slides, hammer-ons, picking direction and the like. Playback emulation is perfectly usable, and although this is not an audio production tool, the sample quality combined with the on-board mixer is all you need in the composing process.

Crucially, Progression's productivity and integration has been well considered: any tabs from a huge online library of Guitar Pro and Ultimate Guitar files may be downloaded; it can import Notion and MusicXML files; and projects can be exported as PDF or Notion files. There are some limitations: intelligent chord symbols, fretboard diagrams and adjusting note-spacing, are not available, for example. Nonetheless, Progression has been designed as a handy tool for guitar education and composition rather than a comprehensive notation package, and in this role performs impressively.

8/10



Best Service Chris Hein Horns Compact £159

Web www.bestservice.de
Contact info@bestservice.de
Format Kontakt 4, Kontakt Player 4

Chris Hein's four-volume brass and woodwind library is one of the best available, so it's great news that it has downscaled to a "compact" and more affordable format for those on a budget.

The 5GB library includes 53 solo instruments (brass, clarinets and saxes) and six synth brass instruments. There are also four multitimbral patches (full section, saxes, clarinets, trumpets and trombones) with an integrated eight-part structure and mixer page for quick layering.

CHH Compact doesn't include the textural variation of its big brother, but you can still adjust plenty of parameters, and it produces some excellent sounds when combined with its effects. It also includes a new real-time hotkey system for easy access to five of eight available articulations.

Overall, we did miss some articulations (crescendos and stabs in particular), and it's a shame it lacks ensemble patches. However, the new interface is much slicker than the original.

8/10



Slate Digital VCC RC-Tube \$74

Web www.slatedigital.com
Contact Via website
Format VST, AU, RTAS

When we reviewed Slate Digital's Virtual Console Collection (cm169, 9/10), they mentioned that there was a vintage tube desk in the pipeline. And here it is! Available as a plug-in in its own right (which we're reviewing here), and also as an additional desk option within the full VCC package (a freebie in v1.5), RC-Tube models a classic all-tube RCA broadcast desk from the 50s.

As in the main VCC, you get two plug-ins - 'channel' and 'mixbuss' - with drive level on each (+/-6dB) and input level on the channel (+/-6dB). The graphics are identical to VCC (the other desks appear as greyed-out options). However, grouping between channels and busses is limited to one group, and you get no further calibration or setup options.

Sonically, RC-Tube is subtle. There's some high-mid enhancement, and as you drive it, transients are gently saturated. It works best used as intended: on multiple channels, with the buss processor for final glue. RC-Tube is simpler than VCC, and its competitive price may well draw more users closer to the full VCC.

9/10



Soundware round-up

Ueberschall

Rock £135

This Elastik 2-powered selection of rock drums, bass and guitar lines plus a few keys and FX is well-played and decently produced. 1300 sounds take up 3.4GB of drive space, but the content seems on the scant side for the price. It's fun to quickly jam funky fusion basslines and build up drum arrangements, but the high price tag means that you should think long and hard before buying.

www.bestservicede.com

7/10



Freshtone

Vintage Drums – The Fills £40

Drums with a classic character and full-bodied sound. You don't just get fills-there are kits, breaks, and hat/ride loops with various processing. There's even some percussion. For 2.2GB of WAV and REX material, the £40 price tag is sensible. The performances are great and the results sound like they come from classic funk, soul, rock or reggae tracks, making them a top source for breaks-sampling fiends.

www.timespace.com

10/10



Big Fish Audio

Hi-Voltage £81

Danger, danger! Hi-Voltage is a straight-up collection of 15 hard-rockin' construction kits with tempos from 101 to 19bpm. You get guitar, bass, synth and drum buss parts, plus drum multitracks. The recording and production is excellent all round, and the 6.1GB of 24-bit WAV content is in alternative formats on another disc. If you need no-frills modern rock parts, Hi-Voltage is a great collection, and the price is fair.

www.timespace.com

9/10



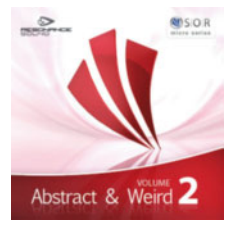
Sounds of Revolution

Abstract and Weird Vol. 2 £17

This weird and wonderful pack comprises 200 loops at 127bpm in various formats including WAV, REX files and sampler patches. There's plenty of phasing, flanging, filtering, extreme EQ and distortion going on, resulting in loops with unique timbres and feels. It's as slick as you'd expect from Sounds of Revolution. Take a listen to the demo before you invest, as it's an acquired taste.

www.sounds-of-revolution.com

7/10



Loopmasters

Friction & Icicle £25

This library from two of the biggest names in deep and dark DnB is a solid package. The single hits are the star of the show. The 644MB of one-shot drums, bass, FX, stabs and synths makes it one of the better DnB libraries around, while the extra multisamples and loops sweeten the deal. Many DnB libraries fail to provide much useful content, but this is great for veterans and newbies alike.

www.loopmasters.com

9/10



Producer Loops

Supalife Drum & Bass: High Energy Edition £27

Five construction kits with a mainroom DnB flavour, this is let down by sub-par production. The drums are inappropriately overcooked; the basses are better but still cheap-sounding. With a fair few quality DnB packs out there (see opposite...), we can't recommend this.

www.producerloops.com

4/10



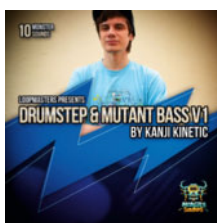
Loopmasters £20

Drumstep & Mutant Bass V1

Pure filth is the name of the game here, presented at 140 and 175bpm. Subtlety is not within producer Kanji Kinetic's remit - everything here is big and brash, with huge distorted bass noises and overdriven drums. Those after sounds not already mangled to death should look elsewhere, but for a quick and dirty way to make up-front, filthy bass music, this library hits home.

www.loopmasters.com

8/10



Puremagnetik

DeeEx \$12

This selection of Yamaha DX7 multisampled patches for Live, Kontakt and Logic includes the expected punchy basses, tinkly electric pianos and sweeping sci-fi synths. There aren't as many bells as you might expect, but that's made up for by some decent key and percussion sounds. The volume level settings are all over the shop, which is always a pain - but at this price, who cares?

www.puremagnetik.com

7/10



Sample Magic

Hed Kandi Disco House £35

This pack focuses on the organic, funky, deep/disco house flavour that made Hed Kandi's name, and it does a great job of emulating that sound. Groovy bass guitar licks, sexy processed disco-style loops and funky synth and key grooves sit perfectly alongside banging house beats and one-shot drums. If you're into the Hed Kandi sound or the funkier side of dance music in general, this is a really great buy.

www.samplemagic.com

9/10



Prime Loops

UK Bass Anthems £17

Including eight 140BPM construction kits plus one-shot drums, this pack's name is a red herring! We're really talking tear-out dubstep, though a little bit of Joker-esque G-funk influence creeps in at some points. Sound-wise, it's a bit weak and thin, though the grindy bro-step bass noises are all present and correct. The pack isn't that inspirational, and you don't get a huge amount of content. It's not a total disaster, but there are better alternatives.

www.primeloops.com

5/10

