

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated



ART Auto-Tune Pre | £199

<http://artproaudio.com>

When I realised what this unit is, I had the same feelings of disappointment and inevitability as at the announcement of a new reality TV show called 'Fat Ballet'. Still, I shook off my blinkers, recalibrated my technology/morality meter and opened the box with excitement; secretly, I could use this.

It's a proper, fully spec'd valve mic amp with built in Auto-Tune. Not

someone else's attempt, but actual Antares licensed Auto-Tune – the real deal! The Auto-Tune part works with cut-down controls. There are three settings from T-Pain to subtle intonation correction, and the usual key select and note bypass options via a little LED push-button keyboard on the front panel. Five presets and a bypass are available, and a preset can be bypassed on load. It sounds exactly as you would expect.

Given the amount of controls ART have fitted onto a small unit, the front and rear panels are surprisingly ergonomic. Gain and Output knobs are at the front, everything else round the back. Inputs are XLR or 1/4-inch jack (unbalanced, Hi-Z) on a combi, output on XLR and 1/4-inch Jack (unbalanced). There's also an insert (post amp, pre Auto-Tune) allowing for interception, interruption and line – level injection and footswitch control. Phantom 48v is available and sensibly there's a low-cut filter. These things, and the presence of a proper valve amplifier make this a grown-up mic-amp which sounds excellent with dynamics and condensers. Would you belie-eee-eeee-ve it? **Steve Evans**

8/10

Radial USB Pro | £225

www.radialeng.com

Radial have earned themselves a rock-solid reputation for great sounding gear. The USB Pro is perfect for when you need to send a quality signal from your laptop, mixer or PA system. The 3x5-inch box offers two XLR balanced analogue outputs with a ground-lift for live ground-loop problems. There's an output level control with a mono summing button and a 1/8-inch jack headphone output. The USB Pro is plug and play and converts D to A up to 96kHz. Logic X recognised the device and switched over seamlessly. The conversion sounds really solid and clear considering clocking is external, and the audio output is excellent. This unit is a must for the roving soundsmith. It's small, simple and works beautifully. **Steve Evans**

9/10



Tascam DA3000 | £999

<http://tascam.com>

A long time ago I purchased a Tascam DA30 DAT recorder as my 2-Track mastering machine. To me this represented the ultimate in audio quality. Now the DA3000 is here to record and play back your audio in pristine quality, all the way up from 44.1kHz (CD) to a mind-boggling 5.6MHz (DSD). The DA3000 accepts analogue on XLRs

and phono, and digital AES on XLRs, BNCs and SPDIF on phono.

The AD/DA conversion is high spec'd, and the internal clocking scores well on jitter etc. The machine sounds good enough to satisfy the most demanding ears and Tascam have made the quality onboard AD/DA conversion available as a direct function, so while you're not recording you can use it as your main stereo

converter/ monitor from your DAW, summing mixer or console, ready to print a mix or a mad-sounding loop at a moment's notice, or even keep recording to see what might happen like the old 'running DAT'...

The DA3000 could be used for printing your 96kHz mix from your DAW via analogue summing, and then playing back through analogue into your DAW at 16-bit 44.1. Instant

mastering studio! Media is recorded onto SD or Compact Flash cards which load at the front. It might have been an idea to go the extra mile and have a 2.5-inch SATA slot for an SSD with a meaningful amount of space on it – especially for multi-channel, high sample-rate recordings (up to four units can be cascaded and locked for 7.1 mixes).

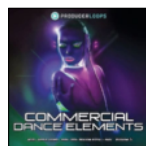
As a standalone recorder, player and D/A converter the DA3000 is a high-quality, very portable workhorse.

Steve Evans

9/10

Producer Loops Commercial Dance Elements Vol 5 | £20

www.producerloops.com



Commercial, in Dance music, used to be a term you'd sling at something cheesy or sell out. But these days producers are biting the latest styles without fear of retribution. Should there be a call for more originality? That's a debate for another day.

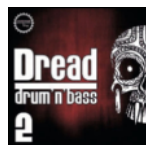
With Commercial Dance Elements Vol 5 you get 190 files, most of them broken into drum hit folders, with collections of FX and Extra Sounds making up the rest. Helpfully titled loops like Swedish Bass and Afrojacker join other key-labelled sounds at the 128bpm mark, and are as original sounding as they are named.

The thing about Commercial is that it's the watered down sound of last year, so by the time you use this stuff it has the single distinction of being horribly dated. Give it a miss, and go out and make your own sounds instead. **Roy Spencer**

4/10

Dread Drum 'n' Bass Vol. 2 | £17

www.loopmasters.com



The badboy production team known as Dread are back on the aptly named Industrial Strength label with another uncompromising volume of frankly scary D'n'B beats and loops.

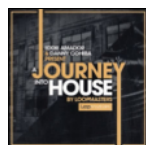
Besides a healthy folder of their trademark killer drum hits and loops, you get ominous pads, spooky strings, haunting FX, and squelching Reece bass terror. It all makes for a bank of synthetic sounds that could have been freshly plucked from a mad scientist's lab. The diabolical Dread have left tons of headroom on each of the 24-bit, 44.1kHz WAV files, so you can mutate them into even more terrifying forms as you see fit.

If you want to stitch your own monster Dubstep, Glitch-Hop, D'n'B or Skullstep (!) track together then dig into the depths of this collection. **Roy Spencer**

7/10

Loopmasters Eddie Amador & Dany Cohiba – A Journey Into House | £25

www.loopmasters.com



Can we trust this pair as our tour guides on a journey into House? On paper: Yes. Spaniard Dany Cohiba has pumped out around 150 releases, while his Latin American partner, Eddie Amador, has remixed Madonna. More credentials than any 18-30s rep, then. Also, a combined 35 years of DJ, production and remixing duties means they've pretty much taken the full House journey themselves, which

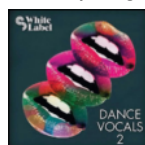
is why this diverse pack takes inspiration from classic Detroit and Chicago scenes, as well as the current crop of more modern, deeper House flavours.

The technological developments that spawned and supplemented House's history feature well in this collection, too. Cult vintage gear like the Juno-106, Korg DSS1, Access Virus and Akai sampler all got dusted off when they were making it, and mixed with modern high-end plug-ins to produce the timeless sounds available in this rich 343MB pack. A worthwhile journey, then. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

SM White Label Dance Vocals 2 | £19

www.samplemagic.com



Sample Magic builds on the good work laid down by volume one in this series with a strong follow-up. The 390MB collection of 160 song-starting vocals should fund a little inspiration when your productions are lacking hooks and phrases. Each key-labelled file clocks in at 120 or 128bpm, and ranges from useful adlibs, which are great for peppering a track with, to semi-choruses, which can either be chopped and screwed or used as a main topline. You also get alternate takes and double-tracking of some lines.

The astronomically pricey Neumann U87 was on hand to take all the classy and sassy vox in, so the end recording quality is unquestionably high. Also, the results are presented 100% dry so you can really make the singing, er, sing with your favourite musical and mangling plug-ins.

Roy Spencer

7/10

SM101 Massive & Sylenth Garage House Patches | £15

www.samplemagic.com



101 bass, chords, keys, leads and pads patches for Massive and Sylenth? That'll do nicely. The SM101 team have taken

inspiration from the cream of the cutting edgers in the Garage House scene – think Trikk, Dusky, XXXY and Eliphino – and worked closely with the unique engines at the heart of Massive and Sylenth for some seriously sculpted results.

It says Garage House on the cover, but any modern genre that needs a Massive (or Sylenth) kick up the bass bins will benefit from a dose of the silky subs and lethal leads you can get your fingertips on here. Before you make your next UK Bass masterpiece, load up this deadly collection and while away an hour or two tweaking the stunning selection of next-level sounds on offer. Recommended. **Roy Spencer**

8/10



EVOLVE.

From beginner to big time

Total Guitar is the only magazine dedicated to developing beginner and intermediate guitarists.



EVERY ISSUE:

- ★ More song transcriptions than any other guitar magazine - learn to play your favourite tunes!
- ★ A CD full of song tutorials and backing tracks to play along with
- ★ A whole section dedicated to beginners
- ★ Unbeatable access to the world's best guitarists - interviews and video lessons!

www.totalguitar.co.uk