

# cm mini reviews

A rapid-fire round-up of ROMplers, music gear and more...

## Presonus Atom Producer Lab

£175

Web [presonus.com](http://presonus.com)  
Gear Hardware/software bundle

This bundle from Presonus looks, on the face of it, to be aimed primarily at beat makers, but actually contains just about everything you need for music production, and is especially geared towards those new to this most glorious of pastimes.

Starting with Atom, this compact and sturdy, 16-pad grid controller has been around for a while, and has deep integration with Presonus's own Studio One DAW; you get a cut down version of that (Artist) bundled with it. (Artist is one of the most filled 'lite' versions of a DAW that we have come across, giving you a very good flavour of the full Studio One, a DAW that really does deserve more praise and profile than it gets). We should also mention the other software thrown in at this point - Ableton Live Lite and a library of samples - but really Atom's deeper integration understandably lies with Presonus's own DAW. And while you can control



other software with Atom - it will easily trigger Live's clips, scenes and Drum Rack, for example - its pairing with One is so deep that you can even use it for playing melodies (it has a Push-style keyboard option) as well as the more obvious beat-making options.

Next up we have the AudioBox USB 96 bus-powered audio interface, which again impresses with build quality, and will easily handle your basic audio (and MIDI) connectivity with a couple of combo mic/instrument inputs.

And talking of mics, the last bundled piece is an M7 large-diaphragm condenser microphone,

which is a good all-rounder and will do a decent job of capturing your vocals. OK, it's no Neumann, but when you add it to the other hardware, it gives the Producer Pack another level of flexibility, making it a great bundle for using both in the studio and on the road. But that's not the best bit. The bundled price for all three is just £175, which is impressive given that Atom alone sells for well into three figures on its own. If you're starting out, then, this will do everything you need, and some, for very little outlay. Just add monitors or headphones.

8/10

## JBL 104-BT £169

Web [soundtech.co.uk](http://soundtech.co.uk)  
Gear Wireless monitors

The original JBL 104 monitors are, to our ears, one of the best compact - and cheap - studio monitoring solutions you can buy; hidden gems that you can pick up for a song and an ideal set of secondary monitors for any recording setup. The 104 BTs then, should be even better, as they are simply the original sans wires. Yes the BTs are - you guessed it - Bluetooth versions of the original 104s, so you get the same lovely compact, oval design and largely the same impressive sound. This is pretty accurate and vibey given the size, and we've had the luxury of lining them up against many a more expensive pair of studio monitors, only for them to surprise us not just with that big sound, but one that is pretty deep and accurate too.



There are negatives with the Bluetooth format, in that you'll get some latency between hitting a note while recording and then hearing it back through your speaker system. So for real-time recording, you'll want the wired versions - and these still come very highly recommended. If you simply need wireless though, these are some of the best-sounding of that format.

8/10

## AKG Lyra £139

Web [soundtech.co.uk](http://soundtech.co.uk)  
Gear USB microphone

With everyone and their dogs - literally in some cases - thinking they have something of value to podcast these days, we're catching up on some of the best mic solutions out there. And this AKG certainly boasts the specs and the famous AKG name, which should bring quality to your 'casts and, we suspect, your music recordings too.

First up this is a multi-mode microphone so has four polar pattern options to catch Wide Stereo, Narrow Stereo, Front and Front/Back recordings. Tight Stereo is best for instrument recordings while Front will be best for vocal capture and Front/Back for the more intended podcast interview.

It's flexible then but, yes, that AKG name really does bring a great tone, especially and perhaps obviously for the voice. There are cheaper mic options out there, for sure, and not a lot more will get you the mic, interface and controller bundle above, but this mic is in another league and will stretch to many more musical duties, as well as giving your podcasts a professional sound. \*Patronising comment alert\*: just make sure you have something worth talking about, OK?



8/10