

cm mini reviews

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

Austrian Audio Hi-X55 £249

Web soundtech.co.uk
Gear Closed back headphones

Headphones are becoming more popular as the alternative way of monitoring music. The obvious benefits are the space they take up (or *don't* take up) and their more neighbour-friendly volume. The fact that they have come on so much technology-wise over recent years has also helped. Austrian Audio are newcomers to the field, a company who have only been around for three years but who have already made a great impact with a couple of microphones.

At 305g, the 'phones are pretty light in weight but boast specs that are anything but. With a frequency response of 5Hz to 28kHz that's more than enough for all humans (why not get your dog to join in), and the impedance of 25 Ohms means they will work well with portable devices such as mobile phones. Their closed back design means that they are great for mixing on the move as you'll get less interference from the outside world - nor will you interfere so much with said world - although we have to say that, generally speaking, we're big fans of open back

headphones that just give you a wider and more immersive experience.

With just one 3m cable and a soft carrying case, there's not much in the way of extras. However, the headphones are comfortable and sit well for longer listening sessions. The 44mm driver design is, according to AA, the optimal size for headphones, as it "ensures professional performance in the Hi-X, moves a lot of air and eliminates 'wobbling' of the diaphragm".

In use, the feared lack of space that closed-back headphones sometimes deliver compared to open doesn't materialise - these are lovely, the mix swirling widely around your head and the sonic insulation helps make the listening experience more intimate than you'd expect. Initially the response sounds a little mid forward and bass is lacking but the 'phones seem to settle, revealing your mix secrets gradually as you get used to them. There are perhaps more accurate mix headphones but they can often take your head off. These offer a more balanced and comfortable approach - and a mix experience we've grown to love.

9/10



Presonus Eris E7XT £170 each

Web presonus.com
Gear near-field monitors

We reviewed the larger E8XT in **cm280** - the XT series being the latest incarnation of Presonus' popular series of monitors launched back in 2013. It was a thumbs up for a great value monitor on which we said "they really are an excellent buy for the budget producer, even though said producer might need a bigger room than their bank balance!" The smaller 7XTs, then, might well be the XTs we're looking for, packing in the power and design, but their smaller size perhaps offering serious monitoring for smaller music setups.

As with the larger 8, the number in the title refers to the size of the bass driver/speaker, so is seven inches in diameter, the high frequency tweeter being the same 1.25-inch silk-dome design found in the rest of the range. Together, they deliver a impressive frequency response of 42Hz to 20kHz. (The 8s went down to 35Hz, pretty much what you'd expect given the larger woofer size). Power-wise 75W from the LF driver and 65W from the HF. That's more than enough power for the smaller studio space that these

monitors are designed for.

Their dimensions (240 x 242 x 365mm) and weight (8.6kg a piece) also back this up - the depth in particular means that these will be more comfortable in a smaller space. That said, these are still not the kinds of desktop models that the likes of IK, JBL and Genelec have become famous for. You'll still need a fair amount of room and ideally stands to put them on.

Other features include the new EBM (Elliptical Boundary Modeled) waveguide - that widens the sweet spot of the speakers - plus Low-cut, Mid, and High controls to tune the speakers to your room plus useful acoustic position controls for placing the speakers against a wall, away or in corners.

Performance-wise, that wide sweet spot shines through again, as it did with the 8s, meaning you get much greater listening position flexibility or can have a couple of people monitoring together. The bass response evidently doesn't give you as much oomph as the 8s, but at close monitoring doesn't sound



lacking; still controlled and non flabby. In fact, given their lower price and less physical impact, we'd easily recommend these over the 8XTs for smaller spaces, and if you are new to 'proper' studio monitoring, these are a great entry point to that pro world which will ultimately lead you to better results for your mixes.

9/10

Soundware round-up



Sample Market Originals Chris Stussy £40

Sample Market's growing Originals series is the company's artist-produced collection, this one being from 'Dutch wunderkind' and house producer Chris Stussy. He wears his early house influences with pride as he ably mangles distinctive and wide-ranging beats from early drum machines, and presents enough variations (sans kick, just percussion/hats/kick and so on) for you to create some great custom loops and variations. There are plenty of interesting, modulating synth loops and some of the bass loops are superbly understated, completing a fine entry in a market worth perusing.

samplemarket.co.uk

8/10

Sample Tools by Cr2

Heavy Techno 2 £16

Cr2's latest techno collection delivers 40 drum loops, 30 each of kicks, snares, hats and clap, plus varying numbers of effects, top loops, basses and melodies – all the, ahem, sampled tools you need to create your desired weight of techno. Recordings are deep and lush with vintage analogue processing very evident, and there is enough depth and dynamics, particularly in the 303-basslines and wandering leads, for them to stand alone for more minimal impact. The odd loop might need an edit fade but this is deep, driving and mesmerising stuff overall.

sampletoolsbycr2.com

8/10



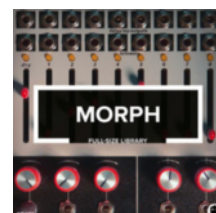
Audiotent

Morph £37

This "full size modular techno library" has 2GB of samples from Buchla-inspired modulators. With 37 basses, chords, pads, percussion and many other loops – plus 222 drum loops – that's a lot of hard work wrestling with hardware, and it pays off. Melodic loops are dynamic, with enough to play with and edit, and there's plenty of variation. We love the basses, and the chords and pads would be great for many non techno electronica genres. Don't expect too many fully-formed drum loops – that's up to you – but all the ingredients are here. Disturbingly brilliant.

audiotent.com

9/10



Loopmasters

Solar Reggaeton £25

Blazing with summer vibes, this 530MB library of beats, basslines, music loops and female vocals at 86-100bpm might not yield a huge amount for the money, but what's here is wicked. 25 drum loops (and stemmed tops) and 20 sub-heavy basslines set firm foundations, while a tasty Latin flavour is evident in many of the 27 music loops. The vocals include both heavily processed lines and regular lyrical deliveries, almost all nine of the latter being over 20 seconds long and thus ripe for chopping; and a healthy serving of one-shots just about satisfies the price-tag.

loopmasters.com

8/10



Noiiz

Sunday Kit \$10 or subscription

One of the first seven packs in Noiiz's new Drum Kits series, Sunday Kit – like its stablemates – centres on 16 one-shot drum, cymbal and percussion samples, which have been mapped into kits for Ableton Drum Rack, Battery, EXS24, Kontakt, Maschine and NNXT, and worked into a SoundFont. You also get ten audio loops made using said kit, and their ten triggering MIDI files. Even at this low price, in today's competitive soundware market, it is represents much greater value if you're a Noiiz subscriber, but the sounds – crusty, lo-fi hip-hop flavours – are ace.

noiiz.com

7/10

