

# cm mini reviews

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

## Zoom H8 Handy Recorder £375

Web [zoomcorp.com](http://zoomcorp.com)  
Format PC/Mac, mobile recorder

We do love gadgets that can enhance your computer music-making experience, and this latest gizmo from Zoom looks, on the face of it, to do just that, with a side helping of just about everything else! The Zoom H8 is touted as a field recorder, multitrack recorder, podcast recorder and even an audio interface. As such it could well be a jack of all trades but does seem to have the specs to back up just about all of the claims.

First you can treat it as a 24-bit/96kHz USB audio interface that offers up to 12-tracks of simultaneous recording. To go with this you get four mic XLR inputs (with phantom power), a mic capsule and two XLR/TRS combo connectors. You can record everything to SD card or straight to your computer.

You get three different modes or apps to help the device carry out its various tasks. The Field app allows you to set record levels for all the inputs; in the Music app you get more of a standard mixer environment to adjust levels of

inputs which can include, keyboard, guitars and microphones (you could even record the individual parts of an entire band should you wish and mix it all down with volume and pan data); and then finally Podcast mode lets you record from up to four external mics (plus inputs from the supplied XYH-6 XY mic capsule), with four extra 'Sound Pads' for playing those essential jingles and music snippets (there are 13 to choose from to start with, and you can add your own files easily).

Other features include a metronome, punch in/out recording, effects and EQ in the Music app and effects in the Podcast app plus markers and auto recording in the Field app.

Mention must be made of the excellent colour touch screen which enables most actions to be made with the deft swipe of a finger and all very intuitively.

Honestly we're surprised at how impressed we are at the scope of the H8 which seems to turn its expertise to any recording task. You might well pay this asking price for a decent audio interface, but with the apps you get a



whole lot more besides. Then there's around 13 hours of battery life which adds a great level of portability to the concept, although the H8 is way bigger and bulkier than many field recorders and too big for most pockets. Otherwise it's weirdly brilliant.

9/10

## Arturia Microlab £64

Web [arturia.com](http://arturia.com)  
Format PC/Mac, mini keyboard

There are so many small controller keyboards at the moment that we feel slightly swamped by them, so much so that we're playing catch up with this release from Arturia, the Microlab.

At £64 it is obviously one of the cheaper keyboard controllers on the market, although not that much cheaper than Arturia's own Minilab Mk2 which might be worth shelling out another 15 quid for if you want the (many) extra controls. However, what Microlab has going for it is portability. At around 0.8kg and a tad over 40cm in length it will fit in most bags. It's also USB-powered with the cable wrapped around and part of the design, tucking as it does into the rubber protective case which, incidentally, is available in blue, orange or black.

Enclosed in said case, the keyboard feels durable and sturdy, able to take the odd knock on the road. The keyboard is better than some at this size, being the same as Minilab and surprisingly playable.

Controls are sparse and include up/down octave buttons plus a Hold button for latching. This doubles as a note sustain option (there's no



sustain pedal input) and sends chord notes for single key hits when the Shift button is held. Similarly the Shift button doubles up the pitchbend and modulation touch strips into controls to page through and select categories and presets via the Analog Lab software.

This software is one of a number of titles bundled with the keyboard - which also include Bitwig Studio 8-Track and UVI's Grand Piano Model D - and probably the best, featuring as it does 500 presets, including vintage synths (both analogue and digital), acoustic

instruments (pianos, organs etc) and string machines. This might be the Lite version - so you only get 500 of the 6,500 sounds from the fuller option - but that's still plenty to go with at this price level. Indeed it's really the software that could be the deciding factor at this end of the market as there are some great options from Akai, M-Audio iK and more that might feature extra pads and rotaries but fall down on the bundle. As it stands this is a great all-rounder if you need something compact and robust.

8/10

# Soundware round-up



## Soul Rush Records **Within The Warehouse** £20

A riotous assault of old-school techno, rave and acid house loops, shots and MIDI files, Within The Warehouse kicks off with 95 beats (many of them with a hat-, ride- or snare-free variant), and a truckload of discrete kick, hat, clap and percussion loops. There are separate folders of 50 'driving' (simple and sub-focused) and 30 'melodic' basses, a spectacular array of chord sampling workouts, hoovers, 303s and other day-glo synth-based ammunition, and loads of one-shots for sampler deployment. The production is on point, and it all adds up to a storming bargain.

**loopmasters.com**

**10/10**

WA Production

## **Future Dubstep Jade** \$20

WA Production offers 'everything you like about future bass... with more intensity'. Whether you agree or not, this pack thrives on variation in sounds – although sticks firmly to trusted beat styles. No matter, as it's the extras in WA's packs that also shine. With 50 melody loops, for example, you are already treated well but MIDI files and hits allow you to easily create variations and the five construction kits are also excellent. In short, there's enough here to create your own future... for silly money.

**waproduct.com**

**9/10**



Sample Tools by Cr2

## **Funky Tech House** £16

As regular readers will know, there are two kinds of Cr2 sample packs: those that give you ten samples per folder, and those that double that. With both often priced the same, the former can disappoint numerically, but happily, Funky Tech House falls into the second fold, boasting 20 full drum loops and basslines, 30 FX and 17 synth loops, plus plenty of one-shots and MIDI files, and five-track construction kits. First-class production and sound design, and great insight into the compositional workings of the funky house sound make this one a winner.

**sampletoolsbycr2.com**

**8/10**



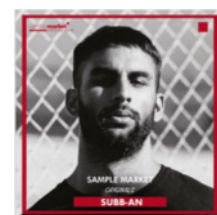
Sample Market

## **Originals: Subb-an** £40

The Originals series focuses on cutting-edge producers, and Subb-an is the co-founder of house and techno label One Records (John Dimas, Alex Arnout and Tristan da Cunha). It's in a minimal/tech house style with 125 drum loops with constituent parts, all well recorded and varied – some great to mix and match. The basslines feel a little restrained on occasion, an accusation that certainly can't be levelled at the synth and melody loops which are often in your face and full of grit. The collection is nicely rounded up with pads and textures that ladle on the atmosphere for maximum minimal vibe.

**samplemarket.co.uk**

**8/10**



ModeAudio

## **Visions** £18

Mode's new ambient techno library takes a typically leftfield approach to its subject matter, with 30 full drum loops (and their kick and perc lines) subverting preconceptions in their fluid styling and comparatively bright production, and 20 synth loops being more overtly melodic than is typical of the genre. 30 basslines similarly prioritise musicality alongside that all-important low-frequency energy, and 60 ambiances and textures provide a wealth of interesting sustained bedding. The MIDI files used to create the bass and synth loops are also included.

**modeaudio.com**

**8/10**

