

# Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated



## Gear4 StreetParty3 | £30

[gear4.com](http://gear4.com)

**N**ot long ago we got our mitts on the StreetParty Size 0, and despite its hefty £50 price tag it was a well-thought-out package, if lacking a little in the sound department. Jump forward in time and Gear4 are back with an updated, slicker and cheaper StreetParty3. Round back you'll find a line-in, battery compartment and an AC connection which will charge your Pod while you listen. All useful stuff.

Sadly it doesn't come with a case to protect it from the contents rolling around the bottom of your bag. Despite being bulkier the 'three' is still incredibly portable and just because its price is two album downloads less than the 'zero' they haven't skimped on the build or compromised the sound.

*Phil Cheesbrough*

7/10

## Nord Stage EX V4 Update | £Free

[nord.com](http://nord.com)

**S**ince our gushing review of the Nord Stage EX a couple of month's back, the folks at Clavia have produced the V4 OS update. Time for a revisit as this adds some lovely new features to an already top-class keyboard.

The Stage Manager software has been updated to deal with the newly developed piano format (Nord piano library .nsp) to make the new Stage piano samples compatible with the new Electro 3 and hopefully will aid future compatibility across all lines.

Piano polyphony has also been improved by an extra four notes along with extra velocity layers too. There's also improved synth voice allocation and the superb Rhodes Suitcase sample from the Electro 2 is now on board.

Other improvements include a faster boot-up a great tape-like Delay with pitchable repeats and high-pass filtering.

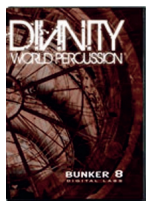
It's a great package and best of all it's free! *Dan Goldman*

9/10



## Divinity World Percussion | £65

[timespace.com](http://timespace.com)



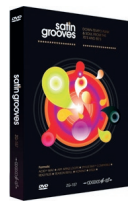
Big Fish Audio's DWP gives you 6,700 loops and hits, with kits for Ableton, Apple Loops, Kontakt 2, Reason and Logic's EXS24 not to mention the single hits for the old school crowd.

If you have a good percussion collection I can't see you rushing out to buy this, however if you are new to the game then this could set you up nicely with its conga, tambourine, egg shaker standards as well as more 'exotic' doumbek and cajon samples. *Roger Watson*

7/10

## Zero-G Satin Grooves | £78

[loopmasters.com](http://loopmasters.com)



Think '80s Motown, think Rick James, think mid-tempo Funk-Soul and Disco. 34 construction kits plus a load of drum loops, guitar, bass, pianos and synths should offer

something for most producers of Hip Hop, R&B or Disco-influenced Dance. Like all Zero G sample packs, you get everything in all the major formats. It's expensive for a single DVD, but it still gets full marks because slap bass and whiny synths make me happy and that's really all I can ask of a sample pack. *Greg Scarth*

10/10

## Coldcut Sound Science | from £30

[loopmasters.com](http://loopmasters.com)



"What would Coldcut do?" It's a question asked by many an aspiring producer of Breakbeat-led Dance music. The answer probably isn't "buy an off-the-shelf

collection of samples" but if you're stuck for inspiration, this is the easiest way of going about it. Disappointingly, though, there's nothing particularly exciting here. That's not to say there's anything wrong with it – it just somehow doesn't seem to fit with the eclectic cut-and-paste madness that we love Coldcut for. *Greg Scarth*

7/10

## Drum and Bass Studio Technique | £40

[timespace.com](http://timespace.com)



The actress Shannyn Sossamon has a son named Audio Science. Audio Science is probably the best name I've ever heard. Bassline Smith is the second.

Bassline presumably endured years of torment by cruel schoolchildren while he was growing up, but as the co-producer of this decent Drum 'n' Bass sample pack, he's really having the last laugh. His production partner goes by the name Drumsound, which – sadly – is just a stage name. Nice sample disc tho'. *Greg Scarth*

7/10

# Apple iMac 24-inch 3.02GHz | £1,359

apple.com

**W**hat we have here is the ultimate iMac. It's 24" screen is imposing and massive while its 3.06GHz Intel Core 2 Duo can handle anything today's plug-in designers can dump on it. Heavyweights such as NI's Massive or Arturia's JP8V are no match for its power and running twenty instances in Logic (of course) failed to break the machine's mettle. And when less stretched, Logic was truly flying with 60 audio, MIDI and plug-in tracks – the two flickering CPU bars maxing occasionally only when we threw in a video alongside playback or wantonly did some online shopping in Firefox.

And using Logic on a 24" screen is a revelation. Entire tracks and their mixers can sit side by side as you actually turn your head to look around your work. We're, quite simply, never going back.

You'll know if you're the type of producer who's going to need the drive space, memory (iMacs max out at 8GB) and two FireWire 800 ports of a speedier Mac Pro but the extra expense is hard to justify once you've seen this machine eat plug-ins for breakfast and look fabulous while doing it. *Daniel Griffiths*

9/10



# Line 6 Backtrack+Mic | £113

line6.com

**T**he creative process can be something of a mystery at times but one sure thing is that inspiration can be spontaneous and come out of the blue. Anyone playing an instrument or just humming a tune can come across some new melody or phrase that could form the basis of a new song, possibly even a million-selling one. The problem is capturing the music that emerged in that spontaneous moment. By the time you get your computer or hardware gear set up to record it may just have

disappeared from your consciousness to be lost forever...

No worries, though, as long as you are plugged into Line 6's Backtrack+Mic (or within range of the in-built microphone), everything will get recorded to flash memory. There's no need to hit a record button – this machine notices when you start and stop playing and automatically records all the individual events.

Each time you think that you have come up with something special you simply hit a button to 'Mark' that particular audio event. There are

transport buttons for playback through the headphone socket or output jack and you can save all the events over USB to a computer. 'Marked' or 'Unmarked' events are saved in separate folders.

If you don't need the mic, there's the simpler Backtrack at £74. Guitarists can clip one of these on their strap or belt, connect it between guitar and amp and never lose the world's next greatest riff ever again. Quite simply brilliant. *Trevor Curwen*

9/10

# Etymotic HF2 iPhone Headphones | £99

etymotic.com

If you've never tried Etymotics then you're in for two surprises. The first is that you don't so much 'put them on' as carry out an invasive medical procedure – firmly pushing them into your ears further than you've ever pushed anything there before. This has to be done in order to achieve the second surprise – rounded bass that seems impossible from such tiny nubbins.

They won't be to everyone's taste. Getting them to 'work' involves careful

placement that never feels particularly easy. And their incredible noise cancelling is either a godsend (if you're on a noisy train) or a worry as you're rendered totally unaware of anything going on around you.

The build is top class with a sturdy mic and switch on a beautifully lengthy cable. Get in-ear performance to rival over-the-ear bulkiness. *Daniel Griffiths*

9/10



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