

cm mini reviews

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

UDG

Creator Laptop Stand £130

Web www.udggear.com

Format N/A

Made of aircraft-grade anodised aluminium, the Creator Laptop Stand has been designed with laptop DJs and performance musicians in mind. The feet and main tray fold totally flat (for storage in the included soft neoprene sleeve), and the whole thing takes seconds to erect: fold out and lock off the feet with the levered screw, then set the height of the main tray via the bushed socket, and angle, rotate (if required) and lock it. The unattached sub tray slots tightly into an angled groove in the stem.

We tried the Creator Laptop Stand in three setups. The first was with a 13" MacBook Air on the main tray and Novation's AudioHub 2x4 audio interface on the sub tray. The ability to angle and elevate the MacBook enabled us to get it exactly where we wanted it, but the stem of the stand restricted access to the interface's main outputs. We can't blame UDG for Novation's rear panel layout, though, and rotating it 90 degrees solved the problem.

Our second scenario saw the Stand's feet slotted under NI's Maschine Studio and the MacBook Air in the main tray at maximum height. Visibility of Maschine's screens was fine, although access to the back row of buttons was restricted – pulling it forward a bit fixed that. Obviously, the only way to use the secondary tray in this context is to swing it round 180 degrees to jut out backwards, keeping it relevant as a holder for anything you don't actually need to get your hands on easily: an external hard drive or audio interface, for example.

Our final test placed Ableton Push on the main tray and the audio interface on the secondary tray. While this generally worked well, the stand wobbled a bit with spirited playing of Push's pads, although it was just a wobble – there was clearly no danger of anything actually collapsing.



With its excellent build quality, high level of adjustability, handy sub tray, easy setup and compact size when folded down, the Creator Laptop Stand is the best DJ-orientated laptop stand we've used. At this price, we'd expect it to be!

9/10

Korg

Module £28

Web www.korg.com

Format iPad (iOS 8.1)

Korg's latest iPad app is a virtual sound module aimed first and foremost at keyboard players. Weighing in at 1.3GB, it features five sample-powered engines, covering all traditional 'keyboard' bases: Acoustic Piano, Electric Piano, Organ, Clav and Multi. The first four are self-explanatory, while Multi delivers (sampled) synth sounds, including strings and brass. 100 presets are included, and two IAPs are available: Synthogy's Ivory Mobile Grand piano, improving on the quality of the standard equivalent, and the Wurley Electric Piano, which adds 118MB of Wurliitzer samples to the EP engine.

Each engine hosts a set of core tonal variations (eg, Tine Soft, Tine Hard, Digital EP, etc, for Electric Piano) and its own array of editable parameters. These include the likes of Rotation and Overdrive for Organ, Low/Mid/High tone controls and Release Time for Acoustic Piano, and a variety of sound style-appropriate controls for Multi (Filter Cutoff/Resonance, Mod Rate/Depth, etc).

Two multi-effects processors are onboard, too. The misleadingly named Modulation

includes distortions, EQs, filters and compression, as well as phaser, chorus, tremolo, etc, and Ambience takes care of delay and reverb. Each effect has two contextual controls, and they all sound good – it's just a pity you can only use two of them at once.

Other features include a music player with access to your iPad's Music library; the Set List, enabling you to build a list of presets and associated music tracks for organised gigging; a PDF/image viewer for displaying scores; an audio recorder with SoundCloud, Dropbox and Mail sharing; a MIDI file player; and AudioBus and IAA compatibility. Module's five modules also appear in Korg's Gadget, if it's installed, although their sample library has to be copied over to it, requiring another 1GB of space.

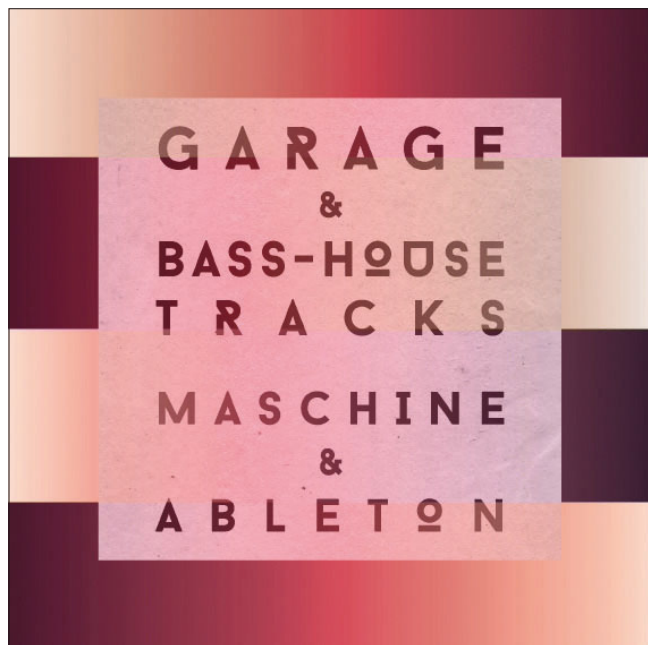
As a production tool, Module is very limited: Multi's 18-strong library of waveforms is decidedly cheesy (seriously, synth brass, in this day and age?) and there's no meaningful editing



to be had. However, it nails its primary role as a live performance instrument, delivering a wide range of authentic keyboard sounds, playing beautifully, and stumbling only in the surprising omission of MIDI controller support beyond standard keyboard input.

Hook Module up to a decent MIDI keyboard and you have a genuine performance instrument that any skilled player would have a ball with.

Soundware round-up



Sample Magic Garage & Bass-House Tracks £20

Ten bass-bouncing, club-ready projects in Ableton Live and Maschine formats (both are included), using the various sample playback systems and effects of each, as well as NI's Massive synth. The tracks themselves are credible and catchy, but the real value here is in the individual clips, instruments and patches, which are largely excellent. It is important to note, though, that you'll miss out on quite a few sounds (although you'll still get the notes, of course) if you don't have Massive installed.

www.samplemagic.com

9/10

Capsun

Textures – Dust, Dirt & Crackle, Vol. 1 £20

1.12GB of loops and one-shots with the common element of authentic analogue background noise. Beats, beds, 'inspiration kits', single-hit drums, retro synth washes, real-world ambiences (cafe, rain, etc), tape and vinyl hiss/crackle loops and more – it's hard to get a grip on the overall theme, but it's mostly useable material. You get a decent amount of it for your money, too, and overall this is a solid, if rather confused, package of intriguing, lovingly produced sounds.

www.loopmasters.com

8/10



Icebreaker Audio

BitRate II \$49

A step-sequencing drum machine for Reaktor 5 featuring four very crunchy synth- and sample-based sound engines, a mixer and effects (EQ, compressor and speaker emulation). The lengths of the five sequencer tracks can be set individually, and programming sequences couldn't be easier. BRII is an extremely edgy drum machine for noiseniks, but the inability to import samples (they have to be recorded) and the lack of any sort of animated playhead is disappointing. The bundled Monoboy synth helps to make up for it, though.

www.heavycity.com

8/10



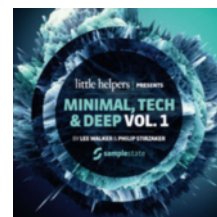
Samplestate

Little Helpers Presents - Minimal, Tech & Deep, Vol. 1 £25

This 712MB library of house loops and one-shots gets everything right by keeping it simple. The drum loops are phat and include a bizarre folder of fills and 'live loops' that turn out to be surprisingly effective in the mix. These are joined by 50 cone-poppingly subby bass loops and plenty of tasty melodics, adding up to a lean, earthy house toolkit by a production team who really know their genres.

www.loopmasters.com

9/10



Big Fish Audio

The Rock Collective £59

This ten-pack of 24-bit rock construction kits (including processed and unprocessed drum multitracks) is flawless in its production quality and instrumental performances... perhaps too exemplary, it could be said. Cleanliness takes precedence over attitude, and even though the subgenres represented fall a long way short of 'hard', the polish and sheen become positively dazzling in places. Still, if that radio-friendly American sound is what your next media production needs, this would certainly satisfy.

www.timespace.com

8/10



Sample Tools by Cr2 **Classic House £16**

Loops, hits, mini construction kits, Massive and Sylenth1 patches, and MIDI files in a retro house style. The drum loops have been doubled up with 'dry' and lightly processed 'wet' versions – a number-boosting ruse that we don't approve of. We were also puzzled by the Hats folder containing mostly crashes and rides. The Piano/Synth Loops folder is noteworthy, although, again, we can apply our own reverb and delay, thanks. Ultimately, there's nothing here you haven't heard a thousand times before, but as ever with Cr2, the production quality and value for money are high. sounds.beatport.com

7/10



Samplephonics **Hip Hop Crate Diggers, Volume 2 £35**

The second in producer Riggiblebeats' vinyl-flavoured series of sample libraries has all the requisite crust and swagger, even if the drums sound too programmed to warrant their organic allusions. The basslines and Rhodes-heavy music loops are superb, though – it's a real pity there are only a paltry ten of the former – and the one-shot drums and melodic sounds are the high points. At only 113 loops and 173 one-shots, however, you're paying a premium price. www.samplephonics.com

8/10



Mode Audio **Float – Chillwave Guitars & Loops £17**

Ten chillwave loop construction kits with an emphasis on guitar. Chords, leads, riffs, strums and more are presented dry and with effects, and all sound great. We like the provision of the decay tails as separate samples, too, making it easy to lay out loops and conclude them smoothly on the final cycle. Also in the pack are MIDI files for the drums, bass and synth parts, if you want the composition but not the sounds. Float's guitars are quite lovely, but there's not that much to it beyond that. www.modeaudio.com

9/10



Rhythmic Robot **Hurdy Gurdy £20**

The crazy tones of the hurdy gurdy captured in a 455MB scripted Kontakt 4/5 library. Cranked drones (single- or dual-string) occupy the bottom octave, with the rest of the 'board used to play the main keyed notes (single-, dual- or triple-string). Key On and Off noise levels are independently adjustable; the Attack phase has been scripted to 'slur' correctly, depending on the notes played; and all the tuning wonkiness of the recorded instrument has been left in. A mad, evocative must-have for the esoterically-minded muso. www.rhythmicrobot.com

9/10



Sample Magic **Future R&B £35**

Fusing hip-hop, chilled electronica and trap, Future R&B strives to be original in its production style and mood – and it generally succeeds. The stemmed drums (408 loops in total) are 808/606-based and stylistically adventurous, the 85 mini bass/melodic/pad 'music loop' construction kits are quirky and clever, and the bass, synth and vocal loops – while not particularly numerous – are a lot of fun. The One Shots folder hosts a grab bag of very usable drum, bass and synth elements, complete with sampler patches. Futuristic! www.samplemagic.com

8/10



Samplephonics **Sylenth: Neo 80s Synths £20**

The shared characteristic that puts these 120 presets for LennarDigital's classic soft synth in their stated 80s setting is elemental simplicity. From rounded, beefy basses and clear, cutting leads, through rich pads and bright keys, to modulated FX and driving arps, great use has been made of Sylenth1's architecture and effects in the construction of a well-designed if straightforward soundbank. And while it's never easy to price synth preset packs, this one strikes us as a fair deal. www.samplephonics.com

8/10



Niche Audio **Neuro DNB £25**

This raucous, hard-edged 174bpm drum 'n' bass library comes in Live, Maschine and various sampler formats, all drawing on a set of 1365 one-shots. The Live and Maschine versions include full projects (17 for Live, five for Maschine) and all the Kits, Drum Racks, Simpler presets and effects setups used to make them. Sound-wise, it's jackhammer drums, frantic percussion, sinuous basslines, bleepy FX and abrasive leads all the way, and we have no hesitation in recommending this to any producer operating on the darker side of DnB. www.loopmasters.com

9/10



Big Fish Audio **Guitar Sessions: Pop Songwriting Guitars £90**

25 two-minute-long (on average) guitars-only construction kits in the style of Ed Sheeran, The Script, One Republic, Coldplay and their yearnsome ilk. It's the tried and tested Big Fish formula – spotless production, professional performances and bags of instrumental variation (acoustic, electric, banjo, mandolin, picked, strummed, etc) – and it yields an exemplary resource for media producers, and a worthwhile source of guitar samples for musicians. www.timespace.com

8/10

