

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated



Samson Expedition 308i PA | £400

samsontech.com

This portable system packs a fair amount of power and flexibility into its small and smart design. Two passive speakers are powered by a nifty 300W mixer amp, which cleverly slots into the back of one of the speakers, while the other holds the cables and kettle lead in its rear.

Two grooves allow the speakers to slot together face to face, and make carrying the entire system easy. The

quality is nice and punchy, but obviously limited by size when it comes to real low-end frequencies. Still it will happily power a small gig or make a great monitor setup for DJs, bands or Electronic acts.

The mixer sports four mic pres (switchable to mono line inputs), two stereo inputs, phono record out and a 1/4-inch jack monitor out and master speaker out. There's only two band hi-low EQ, but you'll rarely find

yourself touching it as the speakers can't take too much low end.

Lack of panning means that you have to use the stereo inputs and can't pan left and right on the mono though the inclusion of an iPod dock is a great bonus.

After DJing with this at a houseparty I can whole-heartedly recommend it. *Chris Barker*

9/10

IK Multimedia

iKlip | €30

ikmultimedia.com

The iPad's a great music tool, with apps for synths, sequencers, DJing, lyrics, and of course, guitars. The problem comes at the gig, though – you need to put it somewhere safe but accessible. IK Multimedia's solution is the iKlip, a burly-looking mic stand adaptor, made of impact-resistant thermoplastic, and coming in at an actually-not-burly 240g (IK make the Amplitube guitar amp apps, by the way).

Simply undo the oversized plastic knobs, separate the clamp, then attach it to a mic stand, whether it's upright, boom, or table-top style – I tried all of these, and it worked fine. The iPad slides into the 'X' shaped holder, and sits tight, with all ports accessible, whichever way you insert it – it's well-engineered, but I'd like some rubber bumpers between the holder and the iPad. You should get a working angle that suits you – loosen the frontmost knob and move the pad to a new angle, then lock it down. Less conveniently, if you want to rotate the iPad from landscape to portrait, you have to remove the iPad, then use a screwdriver. Hmm.

That said, the iKlip's a very good idea. Recommended for singers, musicians, presenters and DAW users. *Martin Delaney*

8/10



Pickmaster | £20

gizoo.co.uk

Never run out of guitar picks again with this hole-punching gizmo! Line up any piece of thick card, or ideally credit card-style plastic and you can punch out a guitar pick shape instantly.

It's not cheap but once you've made around a hundred picks, you can relax knowing that your pickmaster has paid for

itself. Unfortunately extracting your new pick from the machine requires some strong and lengthy fingernails but that shouldn't be a problem for its guitarist target market. Easily the best use for a Nectar card ever. *Chris Barker*

7/10



108 Future Mus

Tech House and Minimal | £39
loopmasters.com



When a new Wave Alchemy sample collection arrives in the FM inbox we expect big things.

This 125-130bpm collection is one of the company's most versatile yet, with a slick, professional sound that's restrained enough to fit into a variety of House and Techno production styles. The 930MB of content includes a total of 1340 samples, from bass loops and drums to tempo-synced FX and multi-sampled analogue synth patches. The collection is available in all the major 24-bit formats, along with sampler patches for Battery, Kontakt, NNXT, Halion, EXS24 and SFZ. With the release of Tech House and Minimal, the Wave Alchemy boys have delivered the goods yet again. Outstanding.

Greg Scarth

9/10

Alien Skies: Cinematic Ambiences 2 | £92

timespace.com



Following on from the success of Dark Skies, Zero-G return with the second release in the Cinematic Ambiences series. The focus here is on ethereal pads, dramatic soundscapes and portentous FX. The 4.1GB of samples are provided in Acidized WAV and AIFF format, with EXS-24, NNXT and Kontakt patches also supplied. There's no doubt that most of the content is more suitable for soundtrack composers than musicians, but the quality of the sounds is second to none. Not for everyone, but if you're looking for a good all-round ambient sample pack Alien Skies should definitely be on your list.

Greg Scarth

8/10

Commercial RnB: Trance & Dance Vol 1 & 2 | £25 each

producerloops.com



With the huge House and Trance influence on modern chart R'n'B it's unsurprising that Producer Loops have begun to develop collections aimed specifically at this growing market. The *Commercial R'n'B* sample packs each comprise five construction kits focusing on up to the minute Urban styles – think Dance-influenced uptempo tracks in the vein of recent hits by the likes of N-Dubz, Taio Cruz and the Black Eyed Peas. As usual for Producer Loops, absolutely every major format is available and individual construction kits can also be purchased separately. With not many alternatives available in this particular style this could be just what you're after. **Greg Scarth**

8/10

Progressive Electro House – Seamus Haji & Paul Emanuel | £35

loopmasters.com



The latest instalment in Loopmasters' 'Artist Series' comes fresh from sought after remixer/producers Haji and Emanuel. As you would imagine this pack is pointed squarely at the House crowd so you get swelling pads, four to the floor beats and bass lines that that really swing and bounce.

700MB-plus gives you plenty of raw material (the drum sample library includes 60 claps!) and there's no less than 46 ready to play patches for those of the soft synth disposition. A healthy dose of bass tones, 'Sidechained Progressive FX', and chord stabs ensures that if your House track is missing some special magic it's highly-likely that you'll find it here.

Roger Watson

8/10

Tech House | £39

soundstosample.com



A startlingly effective batch of track-ready loops and hits. As ever Sounds To Sample have nailed a genre perfectly and the loops on offer here range from great, full-frequency jumping-off points to entire rhythm sections in their own right. The accent is on massive bottom ends, bizarre noise and vocal snippets and crazy swinging top end. There's some great retro, glitchy vocal chunks, super-deep bass and full-on arms in the air, portamento crazy Dutch party-style breaks. With drum loops, bass loops, melodic synth loops and hits vocals and FX it's impossible to not come away from this pack inspired and ready to get it going on. Excellent. **Daniel Griffiths**

10/10

Drums and Bass Vol. 5 – Total Science | £35

loopmasters.com



Total Science – otherwise known as Paul Smith and Jason Greenhalgh – have recorded on just about all of the big D'n'B labels, and get name checked by the likes of Fabio and Goldie. Clearly there is some pedigree here, and at 1.2GB it's not lightweight. Neither are the basslines! Up in the 171-176bpm realm you'll find one shots, loops and 92 (yes, 92) patches. This is a well-stocked drum and bass toolkit that screams to be used, whether powering your D'n'B, Dubstep or Breaks. You've always said you'd go there didn't you? Well no excuse now! **Roger Watson**

9/10

PRIME LOOPS

WE'RE IN THE MIX

Prime Loops provide award-winning sound libraries. Fresh in-tune with the evolving music scene. We are an extremely passionate team of engineers, sound designers & DJs, hailing from London, UK



BIG PHAT WOBBLE BASS

Oh my gosh! You already know that London-based sampling gods Prime Loops constantly deliver top notch material, but this dubstep sample pack is simply off the scale. Are you ready to destroy car stereos and flatten every club to the ground? Then this one's for you!

£17.95



SMOOTH KEYS

Whether you want to beef up your productions with some tasty soul flavours inspired by the likes of Herbie Hancock or Stevie Wonder or enhance your compositions with some contemporary pop coolness, we deliver you all the right ingredients to keep it real!

£17.95



DA SOUND OF BOUNCE

This brand new, mainroom-ready sample pack experience delivers over 300 sidechained, gated synth loops & patches, gritty electro basslines, pounding drum loops, hard hitting drum shots, powerful FX plus a large selection of full-fat vocal samples, including energetic call-and-chant group shouts!

£24.95



RAZOR FX

This cutting edge collection has been created specifically for elite music producers, sound designers and soundtrack composers. If you are looking for world class, razor sharp effects, this comprehensive library will deliver the tools you need to streamline your production workflow.

£16.95

FutureMusic

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www.primeloops.com