

AKG K181 DJ UE headphones | £99

www.akg.com

With their latest set of DJ cans, AKG are clearly looking to ape the lightweight malleability that has made Sennheiser's HD25s so ubiquitous behind the decks over the years. They're a set of headphones aimed squarely at the type of DJ who likes to keep their 'phones around their neck and occasionally lift a cup to their ear to check the mix. Frankly, the K181s are plain uncomfortable to keep on your head for long periods of time, but their light and flexible build makes it super easy to prop them up on your shoulder, and the 'mono' switch is definitely handy for beat-matching.

The frequency range is impressive for a set of DJ headphones, and the general sound quality is very good. There's a bass boost option too, although personally I find this just muddies things when you're trying to mix. On the downside, their lightweight build makes them feel less sturdy than some of their bulkier rivals. In all though, while they won't be to everyone's taste, these are an admirable set of DJ headphones at a good price. **Si Truss**

8/10



iZotope Spire for iPhone | Free

www.madewithspire.com

Multitrack recorders are nothing new on iOS devices, but there aren't too many free ones that offer great sound quality. Spire from iZotope is one such app. Drawing on technology developed by iZotope over the years, Spire automatically adds audio processing to your recording.

The app features a built-in limiter, de-esser, dynamic EQ and compressor, which are all applied to each track instantly. There's also a metronome, with tap-tempo function and voice control which is only able to start recordings.

Once your audio is captured, you can mix the tracks using an XY pad

for volume and panning, which is simple but highly effective. As soon as you're happy with the results, you can share your mix via AirDrop, text, email and even to the MadeWithSpire SoundCloud should you wish.

If you're looking for an easy 'scratchpad' for getting your ideas down, then Spire is an upgrade on Voice Recorder. One thing we would like to see in an update would be a trim function. You have to be quite precise with your recording start and end points if you're looking to create a loop. **Simon Arblaster**

8/10

Etymotic ER-4 | £180

www.etymotic.com

Etymotic's famous 'Christmas tree' earplugs slide snugly into the ear canal and, once pushed into place, deliver some of the best bass you can buy in-ear.



The process isn't exactly instant, or particularly comfortable for some, but the moment they're 'right' and the bass appears from nowhere it's a revelation. And their ability to isolate and cut out the outside world is second to none.

Most popular are their hf3 'iPhone' option which feature an in-line mic and buttons. This new ER-4 is altogether more serious with a very long, very sturdy, twisted cable and a new flatter reference grade response that makes mixing in-ears a reality. Highs are super bright and crisp with mid and low far less scooped than the bass-friendly hf3. This means a less 'exciting' but far more trustworthy soundstage for those that require reference grade in a tiny, sleek and serious package.

Daniel Griffiths

8/10

IK Multimedia iRig UA

www.ikmultimedia.com

Android devices and music making don't really go hand in hand, mostly due to a latency issue. Enter iRig UA: a zero latency, universal audio interface for Android 4.2 upwards.

The unit itself is at least twice the size of the HD-A and made entirely of

plastic. While portable, once cables are plugged in, there isn't enough weight to stop the interface from wandering about. The iRig UA comes coupled with Amplitude UA for free, which only features a few effects and amps, with more available as paid content. This version also looks to have been ported from an older iOS edition of Amplitude and doesn't sound as good as its current Apple-based counterpart, which is a shame.

If you absolutely have to have zero latency guitar modelling on Android right now then iRig UA is for you, as there isn't another universal solution available. What we hope is that more products are developed on the Android platform, offering more choice for users. It's still early days though. *Simon Arblaster*

7/10



Samplestate – Sax House Riffs | £19.95

www.loopmasters.com



Like Roger Sanchez and 'Little' Louie Vega before them, the Samplestate crew have called on the exquisite live musicianship of

teacher and player, Steve Bone, to provide saxophone riffs and solos for use in Dance music production. The four main sax variants (Alto, Soprano, Tenor and Baritone) have all been addressed thoroughly, played, and recorded, for your chopping, looping and sampling pleasure. And they come in at both 123 and 125bpm, and register in the classic keys of Dm or Am. There are hundreds of riffs on offer and, although tailored for House, they'll also fit on Funk and Breaks.

Roy Spencer

7/10

F9 Audio – Minneapolis Funk | £29.95

www.loopmasters.com



Much like Monster Sounds' Daft Funk sample set, this collection of cash-in loops has been

designed for producers eager to sound like their favourite artists. But rather than helmeted French filter enthusiasts, F9 Audio have lovingly spun a tribute to the sound of Minneapolis' pint-size Pop pioneer, Prince. The type of post-Disco sleaze him and bands like The Time peddled in the '80s took over the charts and the clubs. And thanks to Mark Ronson rebooting them for *Uptown Funk*, more and more of you out there want to grab a slice of the action.

In place of Paisley Park's finest, F9 Audio have enlisted the help of famed bassist, Guy Pratt. The studio becomes a time capsule of the era as synths with epic names (Jupiter, Super Jupiters, Prophet, Oberheim etc) run riot through big bucks Neve gear, and vintage beatboxes like the Linn and 808 keep time. The results feel like you've stumbled on some forgotten master tape from a Funk-fuelled, peak time Prince jam. *Roy Spencer*

9/10

Vince Watson – A Journey Into House | £19.90

www.samplemagic.com



Taking time off from remixing, running labels, knocking out dozens of artist albums, and generally bringing a beautiful musicality to Dance music, Vince Watson has pulled out all the stops to bring you a corker of a sample pack. He must have had a hoot feverishly dreaming up loops in his extensively stocked studio, as the noted instrumentalist has whipped up a

hefty collection of tech-tinted grooves for you to play with. Top of the class are the deep, old-school, analogue basses, which demand to be noticed, as do the catchy synth loops and contents of the rich piano and Rhodes folders. Elsewhere, tribal drum loops and some very emotive strings and pads keep the bar of quality set high. Cheers, Vince. *Roy Spencer*

8/10

Rhythm Lab – MPC Beats: Drum & Bass | £7.95

www.primeloops.com



The early Junglists took a lot of cues from the producers in Hip-Hop's golden era. They put their own spin on the sonics,

sure, but picked through the types of breakbeats their American counterparts dug, as well as the kit they used to program their drum finds. At the centre of this stood the Akai MPC, a drum machine that provided the backbone to many a Rap classic, and then Drum 'n' Bass anthem. Favoured for its sturdy trigger pad playability, and the unique crunch it added to beats, the MPC had a gift for adding a certain magic to any drum hit you loaded in.

The bods at Rhythm Lab have taken their cues from the forefathers, and compiled a collection of 65 tough and punchy Drum 'n' Bass breaks, wrung through one of these vintage machines. Tempos range from 165-175bpm and the variety is high. If you're sick of MIDI and digital drums and want that old-school punch, this pack is well worth a look

Roy Spencer

8/10

SPF Samplers – Monster Drum Hits | £7.43

www.soundtosample.com



Crafting your own individual drum hits from scratch is generally a pain in the arse, so most of us like to farm out the job to someone else. Step in SPF Samplers with Monster Drum Hits. Although it's compiled from existing packs (Underground Techno and Deep House 3), it's still a worthy purchase for those of you wanting a reliable stock of workmanlike elements to hold your productions together.

You get just over 500 hits for a bargain sale price, and they are solid to a man. They don't try and be too out there, or profess to be made by a hermit whacking a ladle against a tree for some new wonky timbre. They're just good, solid drums, which gel well together, and are guaranteed to make your next Techno or Minimal concoction punch above its weight in the drum stakes. *Roy Spencer*

7/10