

MINI REVIEWS



Mackie CR3 | £99

<http://cr.mackie.com>

There are some things in this world that belie their diminutive stature: the Apple Watch, Creme Eggs, Dark Matter... although the jury's still out on that one. Now Mackie's new CR monitors can be added to the list. We took a look at the CR3s and were impressed from the start. The 50W powered monitors deliver large sound through the 3-inch polypropylene-coated woofer and .75-inch ferrofluid-

cooled silk-dome tweeter, with a frequency crossover of 3kHz. They are arranged in the standard active/passive arrangement for monitors of this size and price bracket, with the added bonus of powered side being switched to either the left or right.

The sound is detailed but the top-end can get a bit swallowed up by the bass extension courtesy of the rear-facing ports. There are no

attenuation controls to cope with EQing and room placement, but at this price it's a small grumble.

Also included are foam isolation pads complete with angled wedges for listening accuracy – not as dense as Auralex MoPads but still effective with such a small, lightweight enclosure. *Simon Arblaster*

9/10



Alesis Core 1 | £39

www.alesis.com

The Core 1 is one of the smallest audio interfaces we've seen. The rock-solid metal enclosure houses a 3.5mm headphone out with volume control on the back and a multi-function single input on the front. At the rear you'll find a line in, mic or guitar input via the 1/4-inch TRS or XLR combi port. It also features a Line and Guitar switch and Input gain. However, there is no Phantom power so you'll be limited to Dynamic mics only and even then the power is somewhat lacking. Connection to the computer is via a standard mini USB – lead supplied, with no install required on OSX Yosemite, likewise on iPad. All in all, a well thought out all-in-one for those with simple studio needs, especially if you're out and about. *Dan Griffiths*

8/10

M-Audio M50 and M40 Headphones | from £39

www.m-audio.com

Unlike their big brother – the HDH50, reviewed last month – M-Audio's M50 and M40 phones are solely focused on monitoring. Powered by 50mm and 40mm neodymium drivers respectively, both pairs deliver a good level of detail and accuracy.

The styling is quite understated and both come with a generous six foot cable of the flat variety that supposedly doesn't tangle up, but still seems to manage it. The cable connection can be swapped to the left or the right, depending on what suits you best. The M50s are supposed to be an over-ear design, which they manage but only just, and I haven't got the biggest ears either. I'm generally not a fan of the on-ear style of the M40s, but they felt more comfortable and louder than their larger sibling, although I'm not entirely sure how that's possible. *Simon Arblaster*

8/10



Rainer & Grimm: Toronto House | £15.95

www.primeloops.com



We've been treated to plenty of Melbourne and Berlin-based beats, so it's nice to see Canada's own Big Smoke get some light in this sample pack game. The Toronto House scene has been booming of late, so props to Toneworxx crew for letting Rainer & Grimm loose on a pack dedicated to the city's underground sounds.

The 233MB of loops, beats, vocals, SFX and one-shots are built to go boom, and each one is ready to drag and drop into your DAW of choice. The vibe is deep and techy, as favoured in the provincial capital of Ontario. Rainer & Grimm serve as excellent guides, and bring some of the same production pizzazz that they gave to their massive remix of Sam Smith's *Stay With Me*. Like that track, Toronto House is full of tough, muscly House grooves, with an old-school bass power that kills it in the clubs. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

Sample Magic – Deep & Bass House | £34.90

www.samplemagic.com



The Sample Magic crew tackle the newest schools of Deep & Bass House music. The beats bang, with each of the 198 drum loops set to maximum 'doof-doof'. The bass sounds pack a wallop, too: deep and deadly is the order of the day, with a healthy dose of dubby pressure thrown in to hold that bottom-end with both hands. These dark and moody loops fit with the filtered chords in the set a treat too, and sit pretty under the 194 musical loops that are also on offer – each one packaged with handy-as-hell MIDI files.

Rounding off the pack are straight-up drum hits, a bunch of useful FX files, and some interesting vocal loops. I would have liked more basslines for my buck, but the MIDI bundled with the 61 you get, again, opens up plenty of doors. Another classy Sample Magic collection. **Roy Spencer**

7/10

Loopmasters – House & Tech Drums | £11.95

www.loopmasters.com



The drum hits market is a busy one but House & Tech Drums stands out from the crowd – boy, do these drums punch! The 160 choice hits really perform well and have been expertly crafted to own any track you drop them into. The cymbals have a nasty (meaning good) hiss, the bass drums dominate your bottom-end and the snares jab like a prize-winning boxer.

Combined, they will certainly add some body to your beats.

Each of the ten ready-to-rock kits in the pack comes with pre-programmed MIDI drum loops and can easily be swapped about to give you added inspiration. Reason users will find a special template with drum patterns locked and loaded and Maschine 2+ owners have Jam Projects waiting for them as well. Pure drum magic. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

Raw Sounds – Turf Smoke | £19.95

www.loopmasters.com



For this pungent pack of smoked out Hip-Hop samples, The Raw Sounds squad have roped in producer Turf Smoke to lace you with his favourite low slung and lolling breaks, beats, and chords.

The pack has been grouped into ten projects, with 30 kits of 16 samples. The vibes are on the weird and wired tip, with SP-12-style drums and Golden Age production samples (Blue Note Jazz licks, two-bar wonder loops, ill melodies), just the way you like 'em. It's very reminiscent of Cypress Hill's first two albums, and the sound of the Soul Assassins click in general. Like all Raw Sounds releases, the samples have been run through their trademark old-school chain to give it that authentic mid-'90s underground Rap feel. This also comes with Maschine kits and Ableton Drum Racks. Word! **Roy Spencer**

8/10

Sounds To Sample – Deep House | £12.90

www.soundstosample.com



The title of this Sounds To Sample pack might be a tad uninspired, but the content is anything but. Slinky kicks and exciting snares and claps prop up the whopping bank of digital hits, and the 30 drum loops (clocking in at 122bpm) will immediately inject some driving force into your latest production. The key-marked synth melodies folder might leave you feeling a little short-changed though, as it only boasts ten loops. But, on the plus side, they are smoky as hell and float like a charm as they melt over your tracks.

This release really comes into its own, however, when you start exploring the ten exquisite construction kits on offer. Each one is chock-a-block with the right kind of song-starting ingredients that will have you returning to them again and again to pilfer shakers, tops lines, fills, and chords. The legendary sounds of Prophets and Arps bundled in this pack only sweeten the deal. Essential. **Roy Spencer**

9/10

bmc

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