

Mini Reviews

Our pint-sized mini-reviewer had his work cut out for him this month as he wrestled with a brace of comparatively king-size releases...

BITWORD

Wavefront

CONTACT: info@bitword.com
FORMAT: PC/Mac

WWW.bitword.com
PRICE: \$129

Intimidating is probably the first word you'd use to describe Bitword's new Reason ReFill – this isn't a product you can digest in one sitting. It contains 4.68GB of uncompressed content (though this has been compressed to 3.2GB) and features 2222 patches. You'd need to take a week off work to get to know all of it.

As its name might lead you to suspect, Wavefront doesn't set out to emulate real instruments. Instead, it offers pads, leads, basses, blips, keys, ambient sounds, experimental noises and hits, many of which are decidedly left-field.

If you want to be instantly gratified, you can use the Combinator patches.

There are hundreds of these, and when we tell you that they have names such as 'Awake After Abduction' and 'Celestial Mechanism', you'll know to expect the unexpected. For some, these alone will be enough to make Wavefront a worthy purchase, but if you want to experiment and design your own sounds, you can use the supplied NN-19 patches as a starting point. It's also worth noting that 191 Redrum kits are supplied.

Wavefront is a ReFill of real depth, and one that will reward those who are prepared to spend time with it. Once it's sucked you in, you may struggle to pull yourself out.



ULTIMATESOUNDBANK

Retro Organs

CONTACT: Time+Space, 01837 55200
FORMAT: PC/Mac

WWW.ultimatesoundbank.com
PRICE: £66

Another UVI Soundcard, and like Synths Anthology (cm108, 8/10), Retro Organs is based on a preexisting UltimateSoundBank product. This time, the inspiration is Charlie, their popular organ instrument.

Retro Organs ships with a 3GB sound library and it's reasonable to suggest that this covers every famous drawbar organ tone you might care to think of. The classic rotary speaker sound is present on some of the patches, while



vibrato and percussion are also in evidence. Some sounds have been warmed up with a guitar amp, and others run straight through a DI box.

Because it's powered by the ridiculously simple UVI Player, Retro Organs is extremely easy to use. The only problem this presents is that there are no real editing options to speak of –

if you want the facility to tweak your organ's drawbars, check out NI's B4 II or LinPlug's new Organ 3. At £66, though, this is good value for money.



SYNTHOLOGY

Ivory Italian Grand

CONTACT: Time+Space, 01837 55200
FORMAT: PC/Mac

WWW.ultimatesoundbank.com
PRICE: £79

You might think that Ivory is the last product that needs expanding. Offering three separate grand pianos, it was big in the first place (30GB), and the v1.5 update made it even bigger (40GB). However, Synthology have now seen fit to launch this optional add-on piano, and it's another whopper.

The Italian Grand ships on five DVDs and you'll need 19GB of free hard disk space if you want to install it. Doing so automatically updates Ivory to v1.6, which adds a useful new



preset browser.

Predictably, the new piano – a 10-foot Italian concert grand – sounds stunning. It's slightly different in tone to the original Ivory pianos, but like them, it's rich, expressive and rewarding to play. That said, we do wonder how many Ivory owners will feel that they actually need another piano, as we suspect

many of them will be more than

satisfied with what they've already got. If you do fancy another grand, though, rest assured that this is a good



Samples round-up

When you're out of inspiration or short of wicked sounds, reach for the samples...

SampleLab **Analog Archive 2**



CONTACT: Time+Space, 01837 55200
WWW: timespace.com
FORMAT: Audio, WAV, EXS24, HALion, Reason ReFill
PRICE: £60

A second delve into the Analog Archive yields another selection of patches for use in your favourite sampler. Obsessive synth fans might find this concept a little vulgar, but if you want classic sounds on tap (they're derived from legendary Moog, E-MU, Roland, ARP and Waldorf hardware), a collection like

this is surely appealing. Rather than delivering 'standard' presets from the synths it samples, Analog Archive 2 offers sounds that make you think a little more. It's not for everyone – some would prefer a new soft synth – but its quality ensures that it's not a redundant release, either.

RATING
8

SampleLab **Luscious Grooves 2: The Dark Side**



CONTACT: Time+Space, 01837 55200
WWW: timespace.com
FORMAT: Audio, WAV, EXS24, HALion, Reason ReFill
PRICE: £60

Billed as "subterranean beats and sub-sonic grooves", this second Luscious Grooves volume isn't a run-of-the-mill selection of beats. Influences drop in and out from all over the place – one minute you're on an electro tip, and the next you've stumbled upon an ethnic percussion loop.

You might think that throwing such varying styles together would be unwise, but Luscious Grooves 2 hangs together very well. Both dry and heavily processed loops are included, and the production quality is excellent. Never obvious and always interesting, this is a darkly seductive, impressive release.

RATING
9

Big Fish Audio **Hip Hop City**



CONTACT: Time+Space, 01837 55200
WWW: timespace.com
FORMAT: WAV, REX, Apple Loops
PRICE: £40

The producers at Big Fish Audio certainly like their hip-hop, and they're also fans of the construction kit format. 50 kits are supplied here, and they range in tempo from 70 to 140bpm.

Rather than attempting to cover one particular sub-section of hip-hop, this is a collection that's said to be inspired

by all manner of nu and old school artists. This might please some, but our feeling is that Hip Hop City suffers slightly from a lack of identity. The production's OK and there's a fair bit of instrumental variety, but this is a disappointingly anonymous title that sparks occasionally but never really catches fire.

RATING
6

Best Service **Complete Urban Flava**



CONTACT: Time+Space, 01837 55200
WWW: timespace.com
FORMAT: REX, WAV
PRICE: £60

We're not really big fans of the 'urban' genre tag, but given that this collection contains hip-hop, crunk, reggaeton, dancehall, RnB, nu soul and grime samples, it's hard to think of a better description. 64 WAV construction kits are featured, and you'll also find REX loops and patches for Reason's

Subtractor and Malström devices. Complete Urban Flava certainly feels contemporary (many of the kits are reminiscent of recent chart hits) and it contains some potentially useful hooks, licks and beats. As such, it's worth having on the shelf if you're of a determinedly commercial mind.

RATING
8

Equipped Music **Smokers Relight Deux**



CONTACT: Time+Space, 01837 55200
WWW: timespace.com
FORMAT: WAV, RMX, Reason ReFill
PRICE: £90

The original Smokers Delight is a big favourite at cm, so it's fair to say that this sequel has been eagerly anticipated around these parts. Essentially, it offers more of the same, but that's precisely what we wanted.

As its slightly bizarre title suggests, Smokers Relight Deux is full of jazzy,

chilled beats and instrumental loops of a 'late night' nature. Everything about this collection screams quality; it may be costly, but it really is a cut above most of the releases we encounter. In fact, it's so good that we can almost forgive the absence of an apostrophe in the title. Almost.

RATING
9

Loopmasters **Davide Carbone's Drum & Bass Masterclass**



CONTACT: Time+Space, 01837 55200
WWW: timespace.com
FORMAT: Audio, WAV, REX, EXS24, HALion, Kontakt, Acid, SFz
PRICE: £40

As its name suggests, this is very much an all-in-one drum 'n' bass solution for the aspiring producer. Created by Davide Carbone in his own studio, it offers drums, bass, pads, keyboards, FX and more in an impressively wide range of formats.

Some of the 'artist' sample CDs

we've tried in the past have felt a little light, but not this one. There's loads of quality content (even a selection of brass samples is included) and users will feel inspired to use it from the moment they copy it to their hard drives. DnB fans should consider this a masterclass that's well worth taking.

RATING
8