

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated



AQ Amigo Laptop Speaker | £25

aqamigolaptopspeaker.com.com

This slimline speaker easily perches on top of your laptop screen and connects via a single USB connection. The first test was a little

disappointing when listening to music – even though it was much better than the speakers on most laptops, it had a very awkward and present sound. This is probably due

to the 'exciter' technology in the NXT system. But for movies or anything spoken word, the speaker sounded really full and the NXT technology really spread the sound around the room. If you're looking for something as an entertainment speaker then this is an absolute bargain, but listening to or making music on the road with this isn't so pleasant. *Chris Barker*

7/10



Sonuus B2M Bass-to-MIDI Converter | £82

sonuus.com

The B2M from Sonuus promises to convert a standard bass guitar input into a MIDI signal that can be used to plug into your DAW or any MIDI hardware. It follows on from their G2M guitar version,

which we found had issues tracking anything other than the most straightforward guitar parts.

The B2M is a compact plastic box with LEDs on the top showing tuning

(basses up to seven strings), battery status, clipping and MIDI input. One end has a classic 1/4" bass input, a switch for chromatic mode (filters out any pitch bend info), and a 'useful' wrist-strap attachment.

At the other end is a five-pin MIDI connector, and a 1/4" bass through, for blending synth sounds with regular bass amp tones. The B2M needs a 9V battery (not included), and claims a battery life of 60 hours. Latency and tracking were passable, though a well set-up bass and clean technique make a big difference. Use this for synth sounds, or real-time notation of bass parts, or even triggering scenes and loops in Ableton Live.

I'd prefer USB-out, to simplify computer use, but either way, the B2M is an affordable and totally fun way to use your bass with your MIDI software.

Martin Delaney

8/10

Etymotic HF2 Custom | £180

etymotic.com

After enjoying the regular HF2's but finding them a little tough to get in the ear, a set of custom fitted versions really brought out the full quality of these headphones. Not only does the outside world get blocked out much more, but the bottom end is tightened up significantly with the mids also seeming much clearer and less muddled by the lows. The other obvious benefit is that they bring the earpiece much nearer your eardrum much more comfortably, making lower listening levels possible. You buy the phones for £100, then use the card inside to organise your fitting for a further £80. Your custom moulds are then sent to you two weeks later. Easy! Ish...

It's bringing custom moulds to the masses and without a doubt this fairly simple system and partnership with ACS mouldings makes a great pair of headphones even better. *Chris Barker*

8/10



Alex Blanco and Jon Carter – Block Party Essentials | £25

loopmasters.com



28 This 650+MB download collection comes from a couple of high pedigree Dance stalwarts. Between them they have racked up an impressive CV of DJing, remixing and production (U2, the Stone Roses, The Prodigy and the Beach Boys, to name but a few). What you get is over 200 loops and 268 single hits across a range of tempos from 105 to 130BPM as well as sample patches for all the usual suspects (HALion, Kontakt et al).

If you want old school breaks, heavy basslines and 'tweaked Electro Sound bytes' then you can't go wrong with this weighty package. **Greg Scarth**

7/10

Elektrik5 – Samplestar 1 | £29

soundstosample.com



700+ 24-bit samples from ex-Sample Magic Producer Colin Flynn covers a wide spectrum of genres – Progressive, Electro and Indie-Dance as well as a few odd spaces in between. One of the major selling points for this lot is the use of an analogue studio 'packed with vintage rarities', although, unfortunately it doesn't tell you what these are.

Instead, feast on a wealth of material, all at 127BPM. Beats come kickless and kicked, basslines come with plenty of 'I wanna hear it on a big rig' and even some tasty hiss in places. Throw in 20 construction kits, a smattering of bitcrushed vocal loops, some hands in the air lead lines and a tub full of one shots and frankly I'm sold. Impressive stuff.

Daniel Griffiths

8/10

Ray Keith - Original Jungle Drum & Bass Vol. 1 | £25

loopmasters.com



29 What can you say about Ray Keith? Drum and Bass frontier pusher, DJ, ubiquitous remixer and the man behind such classics as *The Chopper*, a true D'n'B heavyweight. This is his first foray into sample packs and I very much doubt if it will be his last. 375+MB of dark menace in the form of basslines, beats and 'inspirational music loops' will have you winding up the tempo to 175 and putting some tech into your step.

This has classic D'n'B stamped all over it and even comes with 21 Ray Keith'd examples of the 'must have' breaks that are the building blocks of the genre, each prepped and ready to drop on the dancefloor, to great effect. Nice.

Roger Watson

8/10

Kick Free Revolution 2 – Sounds Of Revolution | £35

soundstosample.com



Reviewers favourite Olli Schmitt and his Sounds Of Revolution label return with volume two of *Kick Free Revolution*, 600+ loops of tight tops all at 127BPM.

For your buck you get '140 definitive big-room bangers' as well as some really sweet click and glitch loops which although geared towards the House world, can be thrown anywhere with a bit of tweakage. Add some hats, percussion, tonal offerings and 24-bit WAV formats and it looks like Mr. Schmitt has produced another gem.

Oh and in case you lack the bottom end to make full use of this top heavy package, Mr. Schmitt gives you 70 kick drums covering all the bases. Bonus!

Roger Watson

9/10

Mad Professor – Reel to Reel Reggae | £25

loopmasters.com



27 Trawling the Ariwa studios Reggae vaults, one the leading lights of Reggae production has let 665MB of loops, hits and sample patches grace your download bar for an enticingly reasonable price. This really hits the nail on the speaker wobbling head, your neighbours may not like it but your tunes will. Ripping horns, tweaked out drumloops and dubtastic basslines are the name of the game here. Just dipping into them made the recent cold weather disappear. It's the Mad Professor and that's all you need to know. Awesome.

Will Seelig

9/10

Twisted Vocals Of Odissi – Sounds To Sample | £19

soundstosample.com



Vocal samples: They're a bit like good brass samples and blue moons. Only occasionally do you find one that's any good.

Sticking her neck out into the 'credible Dance vocals' arena and deserving some kudos comes Lot 49 vocalist Odissi with 13 fresh BPM labelled kits, all sitting between 127 and 130BPM.

Leaning heavily towards the sordid/dirtier end of the lyrical spectrum ('Make the headboard bang like a kick drum'), these loops are mostly dry for easy of use and feature complete lines/verses as opposed to the endless wailing and vocal histrionics that you normally get. You even get a bit of spoken word. 304MB and 24-bit is the technical stuff. File under Electro Punk and be as pleasantly surprised as I was.

Chris Barker

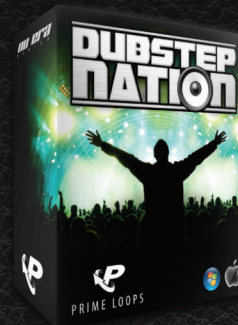
8/10

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