

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated

Rycote InVision Studio Kit | £99

rycote.com

This all-in-one solution features a great little pop filter teamed with one of Rycote's remarkable

Universal Studio Mount suspension system. The pop filter frame fixes securely to the Universal Studio Mount and this in turn attaches securely to your mic stand and the four secure adjusters allow anything from large diaphragm condensers to pencil mics to sit happily.

Swapping mics out is just a few twists away and while the whole system is plastic it feels very industrial. The main event here is Rycote's use of wishbone-like suspension mounts that are much

more absorbent than the usual elastic cage. The pop shield worked great in our tests – stamping out any plosive – and the mount did indeed remove more low end thuds, making even a £10 stand as good as one ten times the price. Not cheap, but highly recommended. **Daniel Griffiths**

8/10



Allen & Heath Xone XD-20 | £59

allen-heath.com

Allen & Heath's Xone series is a staple in the DJ world, with their mixers, controllers and DJ

headphones popping up in booths around the world. The XD-20s are their first foray into the in-ear world and our hopes were high that they would live up to the reputation of the Xone brand. The 20s are a fairly unique design – despite looking a bit chunky, once their lodged in their new home, they're quite modest and don't protrude as much as you might first assume. Sound-wise, these

'phones are loud. The bass pushes itself forward, almost over-bearing the 8-10k range, especially at loud volumes. A little quieter and the balance is almost restored – though they could do with more air and crispness. Despite sounding a tad rounded-off, they suit Electronic music well, which is no surprise considering their branding. For an all-round listening experience though, they are slightly bass heavy for a lot of other genres. **Declan McGlynn**

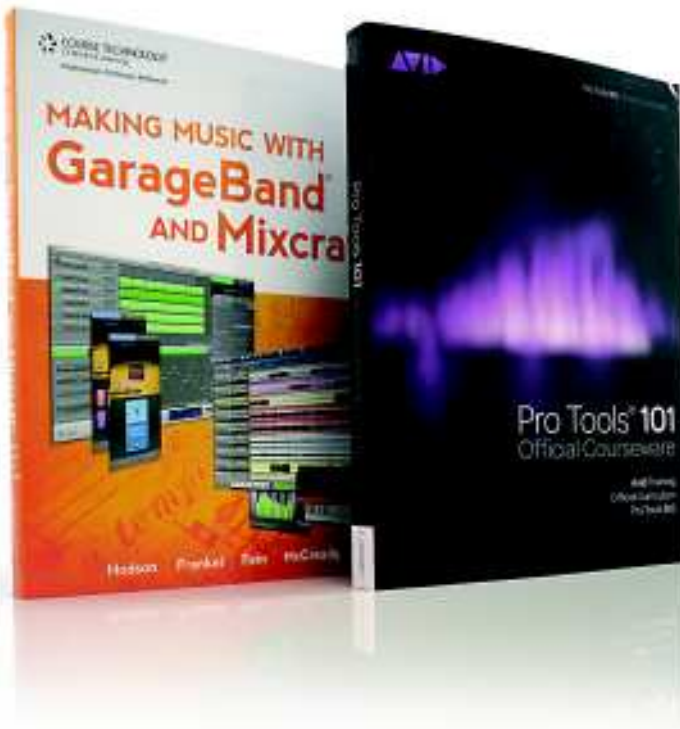
7/10

Making Music With GarageBand And Mixcraft | £30

courseptr.com

Aimed at both self-learners and those looking to teach, this comprehensive book covers both GarageBand and Mixcraft independently. For educators, this makes the book flexible on both Mac and PC platforms but for someone learning at home, it could potentially render half the book useless. With the book separated into 12 lessons, the included DVD adds bonus tutorial videos and audio exercises. It's simple to follow and takes users through their first steps to more complex tasks like working with video and MIDI, but it's difficult to recommend unless you're a working educator. **Chris Barker**

6/10



Pro Tools 101 Official Courseware | £30

courseptr.com

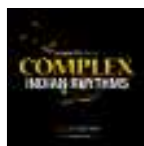
If you're looking to get a heads up on Pro Tools before you head to Uni in September, it might be worth taking a look at this Avid Training official curriculum.

There's everything from the history of the software and the differences between the various incarnations of Pro Tools to illustrated guides to every element of the industry standard. For more experienced Pro Tools users, it probably won't teach you anything particularly new or advanced. But it's a handy reference to have around for troubleshooting, and for anyone looking to get officially Pro Tools certified, you should start here.

Chris Barker

9/10

Complex Indian Rhythms | £35 loopmasters.com



Let me say straight off the bat that I love 'other' time signatures, anything outside of the 4/4 and I'm interested.

I also have a soft spot for Indian percussion. So when Loopmasters teamed up with KV Bala Krishnan to record 16 construction kits covering tempos from 80 – 130bpm and in 5, 6 and 7 time signatures, clearly I was going to sniff it out.

Each kit comes with loops of various instruments such as Tabla, Urumi, Nagara, Bass Dholak (it's all percussion remember) and then mixed versions. In short it's a one-stop shop for interesting rhythms and grooves that will spice up any House or Electronica track with exotic percussion.

Roger Watson

9/10

Crate Diggers: Golden Age Of Wireless | £14 soundtosample.com



We're never quite sure who needs hundreds of crackly old bits of talking to drop on their tunes but if you can't bear to sit through

fifteen Charlie Chan movies in the hope that someone says "come on, let's go!" – then Crate Diggers have done all the hard work for you. There's countless female gasps, Sci-Fi amusements from yesteryear and stuffy radio presenters saying things that could be construed as vaguely funky.

If you were making a House tune in 1990 then this would be the freaking motherload and a 'number one chart topper' would result. In 2011, however it's more suited to scratch DJs looking for something a little fresher than 'frrrrreessshhh!'. **Daniel Griffiths**

7/10

Dubstep | £39 samplemagic.com



Of course, it just wouldn't be Dubstep without a massive slab of violently wobbly synths. And this pack has got them in spades. And not only does it deliver your wobbles but there's some of the harshest, most shredded synth leads we've heard, all arranged as separate notes and instruments for crafting into your own tune or – what the hell – sling the melodic loops together and get your slo-mo Dub on in a matter of seconds.

Once again Sample Magic have nailed a genre with frightening laser accuracy to deliver a killer pack. There's a little filler (not too sure about those field recorded ambient SFX) but doubts are instantly removed when you get into the massive drum hits and loops library teaming classic

treated 909s with bizarre and totally unique metallic thwacks and 'splangs'. State of the art. **Daniel Griffiths**

8/10

Swedish House | £34 loopmasters.com



"Swedish House draws influence from the chart topping sounds of the Swedish House Mafia." ie, this is not an official

product (despite that worryingly authentic packaging). So how does it fare? Well, there's an enormous 'vocal percussion' section that we're slightly confused by and some spoken dialogue that we're a little embarrassed by, but things rapidly pick up with the synth effects. There's masses of massive detuned stabs, hits and some brilliant track-ready swooshes and elevators. The kicks are huge, midly punches in the face and the complete loops are entire tracks in themselves. It's a bit silly. It's very niche but – by the Norse gods – this strikes the genre nail with Thor's mighty hammer! **Daniel Griffiths**

8/10

Fracture – Cosmic Drum and Bass | £29 loopmasters.com



A collection of massively original atmosphere's and hits that while aimed at the more experimental end of D'n'B would

equally be at home making Dubstep. There's some almost Kraftwerk-style synths, and countless ringing, ambient atmospheres just ripe for chopping and glitching up. Drum hits are a well-recorded bunch, the accent being on capturing real sounds well, rather than mangling for mangling's sake, but they're very much a token set next to the synth and effects work elsewhere. Original and arresting.

Will Seelig

7/10

Deep House | £39 samplemagic.com



There's a whole atmosphere and vibe about this collection that places it apart from the rest. This is Deep House – this is

no collection of 909 hits and sub-bases. There's an alive, 'airy' vibe to the loops that perfectly captures the crossover where live instruments meet drum machines via sampler. Textures are lush and genuine. Double bass and electric pianos have a lazy, funky vibe. Beats and bass are pleasingly fuzzy and crackly. This is bang on. Enough said. **Chris Barker**

9/10

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