

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated

Samson Meteor USB Mic | £89

samson.com

Next time you're travelling, imagine how great it would be to have a small, high-quality, simple USB mic that you can plug into your computer, ready to go any time inspiration strikes.

Meet the Samson Meteor Mic, a small, highly-portable USB mic that's ideal for quick vocal ideas, making your own percussion samples and generally getting the real world into your computer without you having to worry about pop shields, stands and placement. In the weeks we've been using it, it's really become part of the studio furniture. Its built-in stand folds up to protect it during transport

and the quality of both the capsule and converter are up there with USB mics costing twice as much.

Where we can see the Meteor really excelling is in its use with iPad and iOS apps. It's small enough to always be accompanying the iPad in your bag for quick demo recordings with apps like GarageBand. If you do a lot of travelling or if you just want a professional audio sketchpad for magical music moments, it's a cheap enough solution to provide a lot of quality without a lot of hassle. iPad music-makers continue to be spoiled.

Daniel Griffiths

8/10



Marshall Major | £99

marshallheadphones.com

This is one seriously good-looking set of headphones. But, would you expect anything less from

this legendary music brand? Compact, foldable and beautifully crafted on the outside, it's only when you pop these on do things get a little disappointing. It's always going to be a trade off at this price, especially with such attention to detail in the design. The sound is a tad lacklustre and although it's clean, flat and well imaged the lack of low-end thump lets these headphones down. It's only

really a problem for club music, acoustic tracks sound fantastic, with the mid-range being much, much better than a lot of the competition.

EQ'd to your listening taste they can handle a few dBs of extra bass and some of the sizzle can be taken out of the mid. I really enjoyed listening to more subtle, gentler genres, but everything else left my ears wincing on every snare. The build is superb but the sound isn't for everyone. *Chris Barker*

6/10

iLuv iBA200 back-up battery | £40

i-luv-uk.co.uk

With today's gadgets doing more, shining bigger and brighter than ever, the batteries in most devices are starting to slouch. Here's where these pocket sized heroes come in. Small in size, simple in design, these power packs charge over micro USB and will pump out USB power to your portable devices. For the cash, the iBA200 is a great option, but will probably only give you a 50-75% top up on most smartphones with its 1250mAh battery.

It does have some larger relatives though with the iBA300 packing a tidy 2200mAh for a longer charge. A must have for anyone who travels often.

Chris Barker

9/10



Sample Station

Generation Electro | £17

soundstosample.com



Brilliantly-dirty and varied, this cheap little £17 download pack really caught our eye as hitting all the right notes and delivering a surprising amount of dancefloor bang for its buck. There's some dangerous Skrillex-style basslines and a set of rhythm loops that alternate from the face-slappingly straight up to the downright funky and wigglesome. Teaming pairs of mis-matched rhythm loops and bass never sounded so quick and easy and the results always sparked off an idea. Perhaps not as vast and genre-defining as some other compilations it certainly straddles plenty of sound styles, with massive Clubby clap sounds waiting to be teamed with dangerous Dubstep-style bass. Not too keen on the processed vocal FX (but then, when are we?) but the rest of this pack is bang on target and a great way to get an injection of freshness to your troublesome tracks for just £17. **Chris Barker**

8/10

Waveform Recordings New School Tech | £22

soundstosample.com



Now this is just a bit special. Unique-sounding, massive, lovingly crafted loops and hits that just have that extra bit of House magic about them. This classy compilation has got the works. There's not a huge amount of samples at play here 312 loops and 61 one shots but the sheer usability is second to none. This is all killer and no filler from it's surging hypnotic loops to bubbling, swelling Deep House bass. Every sound has a width and warmth that you don't often get from a sample pack meaning that – if you let it – these loops will totally dominate your track. These aren't for adding a little excitement here and there – these are full beds for you to add your own sparkle to. In fact, after a few days with this pack, it's in danger of making all that tiresome mixing and tweaking a thing of the past! Use with caution. Aw, what the hell, use like crazy!

Greg Scarth

9/10

Alex Niggemann 'I Call It House!' | £30

loopmasters.com



Yes! We call this House too. There's so much variety and quality in this pack that we'd say it's possible to put together a track in practically any modern Electronic style using the ammo on board. There's Ethnic loops, old skool Synth Pop

and some great classic Ravey Pianos and hits alongside all the hard, deep dancefloor staples that today's tracks require. Quality throughout is superb and every sound feels hand-picked to sit in the compilation despite its all-encompassing mindset. It's deep, it's mainroom, it's one of the most powerful and useful sample packs you can buy right now. Thoroughly recommended. **Greg Scarth**

10/10

Zenheiser Drum Rolls and Fills: Club | £15

soundstosample.com



Totally off the wall and just a bit weird, this kit of 200 'drum rolls' sounds like madness but is actually just a bit brilliant. Yes, anyone can take a bunch of cool drum sounds and program them up into velocity ramps and builds but why bother when Zenheiser have done all the hardwork for you. We had great fun dragging and dropping these amazing bursts of energy and excitement around Funky House and Electro works in progress and they never failed to inject fun and anticipation. There's military rolls, bizarre, effected Glitch loops and surging building eighth, 16th, 32nd, 64th House burst that go off like a machine gun. Just the thing to make your drop seem extra massive. Simple but amazingly effective. **Daniel Griffiths**

8/10

Bomb Squad: Tactical Beats & Sample Artillery | £35

loopmasters.com



Just stunning. No messing. No cheese. this is all about the beats – and not just individual hits and loops but huge, track-filling soundscapes of Glitchy-hits, crunchy Hip Hop stolen snatches and amazing, unrepeatable and unplaceable percussive synths and effect atmospheres. Sometimes African, sometimes Urban but all the while dangerously cutting edge and ripe for experimentation.

It's a huge, genre-crossing compilation and just because this was put together by the genius that is Hank Shocklee (of Bomb Squad and Public Enemy fame) should you assume this is purely Hip Hop. The sounds at play here could equally drive Dubstep or even give a glistening top loop to Minimal House.

Not too sure about the slightly daft folder naming protocol (samples being grouped in terms of 'Sniper Weapons' 'Anti-Tank Weapons' 'Traumatic Weapons' and more) but the net result is a veritable army of fresh 2012-ready beats. Can't wait to deploy this lot in our next manoeuvres. Ten-shun! **Will Seelig**

10/10

PRIME LOOPS

WE'RE IN THE MIX

Prime Loops provide award-winning sound libraries, fresh in-tune with the evolving music scene. We are an extremely passionate team of engineers, sound designers & DJs, hailing from London, UK



ELECTRO HOUSE SHOXX 2

Pumping out heavyweight basslines, thumping drums, endless variations of twisted synth loops and a powerful stack of processed accents and FX, this jam-packed follow-up gives you even more possibilities for dancefloor domination!

£14.95



DUBSTEP INVASION

Take absolutely no hostages, cause maximum mayhem and make the "Dubstep Invasion" your mission! Equipped with this armoury – packed to the brim with dutifully manufactured, 24-bit professionally mastered, royalty free, tried, tested and polished dubstep weapons - you are more than ready to take aim at the heart of the trembling dancefloor. Then: Strike!

£14.95



PHATMOSPHERES

It's time to raise hell! Or, if that might be a bit much, "Phatmospheres" gives you the tools to do some serious hair-raising: Over 40 thoroughly selected dark textures, eerie ambiances, mighty soundscapes and droning atmospheres provide new and unheard-of levels of deepness, drama and suspense for your productions.

£12.95



ARABIC VIBEZ

Dance like a Dervish, swing like a Sultan, or walk like an Egyptian! "Arabic VibeZ" will instantly enable you to explore the original musical landscapes and rich cultural traditions of the vast Eastern region – all at the humble price of a proper kebab feast and easier to handle than a waterpipe full of the tastiest sheesha flavours!

£16.95

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