

# cm mini reviews

A rapid-fire round-up of sample libraries, ROMplers and more

## IK Multimedia iRig Mix/DJ Rig £71

**Web** [www.ikmultimedia.com](http://www.ikmultimedia.com)  
**Contact** IK Multimedia UK, 0800 0934066  
**Format** iOS 4.3 (iPhone 3GS, iPad, iPod touch third generation)

iRig Mix is a mains adapter-powered analogue DJ mixer intended primarily for use with IK's DJ Rig app. It has no dock connector; instead, audio is fed to a pair of stereo mini jacks (ie, to be hooked up to one or two iOS devices). There's a 1/4-inch headphone-out and a 1/4-inch line-in for mic or instrument. A free version of the DJ Rig software is included (ie, free to download on the App Store), and so that's the version we're focusing on here. However, the full paid version is only £2.99 (with further IAPs).

In common with most iOS DJ apps, DJ Rig features BPM syncing, two decks, effects, EQ, iTunes library import, vinyl-style control, looping, cue points and mix recording. However, it also contains some innovations. There are sound FX (only one bank in the free version), rotating the device toggles single-deck display, and there's a nifty automatic filter-mixing mode that mixes

out bass or treble during crossfading for authentic one-finger mixing.

But it's the hardware that shines. You can use one device to mix with two hardware channels, complete with high and low EQ and powerful gain. There's headphone cueing and all the signals go loud. You can use two iOS devices, with one deck displaying on each.

There's also auto-syncing based on the incoming audio signal, so you could auto-sync using any audio source. It can take about ten seconds to sync, and works best with loud, clear transients, but it is a pretty awesome feature. Finally, there is a mic- or instrument-in, which lets you use the device as an input interface for IK Multimedia's other iOS apps like Amplitude and Vocalive.

A couple of complaints: there's no iPad proper version, so resolution suffers; and we'd like to record as WAV or AIFF, not just space-saving M4A.



In an increasingly crowded market, iRig Mix offers a fresh take with some great new features. It's portable, powerful and versatile, and ideal for those seeking iOS DJing with dedicated hardware.

**8/10**

## Sample Logic Synergy X \$399

**Web** [www.samplelogic.com](http://www.samplelogic.com)  
**Contact** Via website  
**Format** PC/Mac

Sample Logic's highly regarded sample-based instrument Synergy has received an upgrade in the form of Synergy X. This 20GB Kontakt Player instrument contains over 1600 instruments and multis, and now boasts a vastly improved custom interface.

Sounds are arranged across seven categories: Ambience, Bass, Drums, Impacts, Melody, Pads and Rhythms. Further instrument sub-categories are descriptive (Electronic, Fantasy, Metallic, World and so on), but with so many sounds on offer, finding what you want is still a voyage of discovery. Overall, the sonic slant is 'soundtrack' rather than 'street', so although there are some perfectly serviceable urban drums, for example (Pop Hop Kit), there's far more world percussion (28 instruments). Beat loops are also included in the Rhythm folder, boasting an array of eclectic styles (Action Packed, Hat Like, World, etc). And still on a percussive tip, the Impacts folder includes typical metallic and explosive sounds, plus subtler and often pitched one-shot FX.

Synergy X's main textural categories (Ambience, Melody and Pads) are definitely its strongest point. The sounds are incredibly polished, delivering rich, evolving pads (Cassiopeia 2), dark textures (Stanley Steamer) and loads of melodic sounds, including some truly great arpeggiations (Enchanting Princess).

Synergy X is of course a 'closed' library, which limits your ability to modify the base sounds themselves. However, there are 12 effects slots (including Chorus, Filter, LoFi and Arpeggiator/Articulator), and many slot parameters can be modified in real-time using the step-sequencer. Most significantly, sequencer patterns can be programmed, copied and randomised individually for each parameter. Finally, for non-looped patches, there's an additional



step-sequencer that switches the various effects slots in and out.

Synergy X delivers an impressive set of production-ready sounds that work beautifully straight out of the box but can also be completely transformed by the powerful effects and step-sequencer included in the software. Anyone working on soundtrack-style compositions will find plenty to get their hands dirty with here, and in fact, just about anyone would find it inspirational. Impressive stuff.

**9/10**

## Toontrack Pop! EZX £55

Web [www.toontrack.com](http://www.toontrack.com)  
 Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200  
 Format EZX for EZdrummer/Superior Drummer 2

Toontrack's EZX range of expansion packs for EZdrummer and Superior Drummer 2 gives e-drummers and rhythm programmers alike a broad range of highly playable, thoroughly convincing, mix-ready acoustic and electronic kits at a perfectly pitched price point. We love 'em, and the latest, Pop!, does nothing to compromise our adoration.

Comprising ten drum kits built on multisamples pulled together from years of Toontrack recording sessions in various top-flight studios around the world, Pop! is actually a slightly misleading title for this eclectic library. Rock, funk, electro, house, tribal and more are covered, with kicks (of which there are ten), snares (ten), hats (five), toms (five sets) and cymbals (five sets) ranging from big and burly to tight and funky, with some intriguing and wonderfully unusual options in between.

The kick drums are particularly noteworthy - they're among the best we've heard in an EZX. There's a fair bit of percussion included in the box, too - tambourines, shakers, cabasa, bells, etc - although we felt let down by the single handclap and fingersnap options.

As ever, kit elements can be freely combined, a decent library of MIDI performances is included (complete with Humanize option), and the built-in mixer makes balancing the sound of your kit - along with room ambience and gated reverb - quick and easy, feeding up to eight VST/AU outputs. There's little control beyond level and pan in EZdrummer - you can't even repitch the

drums, let alone tweak the reverb settings - but then that's what EZdrummer's all about: simplicity and focus. If you want deeper editing of your EZXs, you should think about getting Superior Drummer 2, which allows you to combine pieces from different kits, tune drums, apply effects and more.

Pop! sounds ace and plays beautifully via drum pads or keys. In short, it's yet another EZdrummer essential.

9/10



## TriTone Digital ClassicTone-560 €129

Web [www.tritonedigital.com](http://www.tritonedigital.com)  
 Contact Via website  
 Format Mac

A VST/AU/RTAS plug-in emulation of the famous API 560 console EQ, ClassicTone-560 is powered by impulse responses from an actual 560. As visually unassuming as the original hardware, this ten-band graphic EQ offers preset load and save buttons, A/B comparison and output gain. Of the band sliders, they're set an octave apart from each other and can be cut or boosted by up to 12dB. The proportional Q design progressively narrows each band as the boost/cut is increased, up to the sharpest slope of 12dB/octave.

ClassicTone-560 sounds gorgeous, exhibiting the smoothness, tonal colouring and fabulous mid-range 'betterising' associated with the real thing. It's not meant for high-precision surgical frequency-tweaking, but rather for broad-spectrum adjustment of full mixes, drum busses, guitars, basses and other electric/acoustic instruments - all of which it handles with effortless musicality and cohesion.

9/10



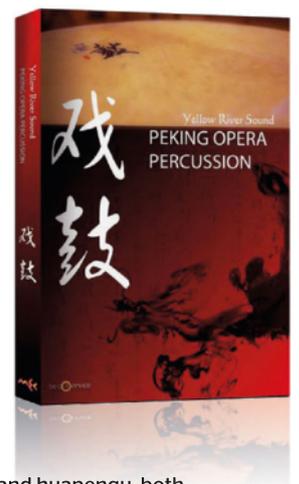
## Best Service Peking Opera Percussion £109

Web [www.bestservicede.com](http://www.bestservicede.com)  
 Contact [mail@bestservice.de](mailto:mail@bestservice.de)  
 Format PC/Mac

This is 3GB of multisampled Chinese drum and percussion one-shots and articulations, divided into four categories. The Jingda low and high hand percussion sets are made up of small gongs, blocks and cymbals. The Drum category features three types of drum: the big jiangu, the smaller huapengu and the pitched 12-piece paigu set. For the jiangu and huapengu, both solo and five-player ensemble patches are included. Two types of Bell are represented: the qing and the bianzhong. Cymbals and Gongs includes the melodic yunluo set, with keyswitching of two stick types. Overall, it's a riotous and satisfyingly varied collection of velocity-layered metals and drums, well laid out for performance or triggering with the included MIDI loops.

The custom Engine player interface offers only basic editing, though more is available via Engine's Advanced page. Still, what POP lacks in bespoke editing, it more than makes up for sonically. It sounds simply phenomenal, capturing the full flavour of these uniquely characterful instruments.

9/10



# Soundware round-up

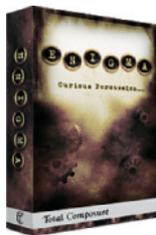
## Total Composure

### Enigma £55

This Kontakt library (15 instruments, seven multis, 2000+ samples) draws on a variety of percussive 'found' sources, including an Absinthe bottle, bubble wrap, matches/matchbox, a plastic box and spoons. Various articulations have been captured, and there's step-sequencing, EQ and reverb. It's a fine collection, and the sounds are fun and surprisingly musical, but it does feel overpriced.

[www.sampleism.com](http://www.sampleism.com)

7/10



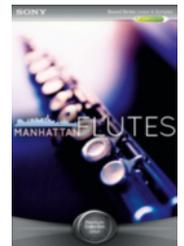
## Sony Creative Software

### Manhattan Flutes £48

We'll get straight down to business and tell you that this is as good a collection of jazz flute loops as we've ever heard. Flautist Mattan Klein's tone and articulation are superb, and the range of styles covered is impressive. Some of the loop points are weirdly placed, and there's a fair amount of reverb going on throughout, but neither of those issues are showstoppers for us.

[www.sonycreativesoftware.com](http://www.sonycreativesoftware.com)

8/10



## Sample Freak

### Swedish & Mainroom Anthems £17

A bijou collection of samples (just 130) at a bijou price, highlights of this pack include cleverly programmed drum loops, cool trance-y leads and chord sequences, and nifty cut-up vocals. Much of the material on offer is pretty generic, but it's well produced and there are enough stand-out moments to keep the interest up.

[www.soundstosample.com](http://www.soundstosample.com)

7/10



## Loopmasters

### Freemasons 100% Remix Tools £40

2.6GB of samples from the Grammy-nominated duo marks Loopmasters' 100th Artist Series release. All of the material comes from The Freemasons' personal collection. Confident drums, tight basslines, colourful and varied synths and melodic instrumentation, and a wealth of one-shots - it's a must-have for progressive and electro-house producers, at a great price.

[www.loopmasters.com](http://www.loopmasters.com)

9/10



## FXpansion

### Myagi: Bass Weaponry £22

128 presets for DCAM: Synth Squad (all using the semi-modular Fusor, which enables the three SS synths to be combined and stacked) designed by Canadian breaks don Myagi. The emphasis here is very much on aggressive, modulated sounds, and the quality throughout is exceptional, from the expressive, twisting 'static' sounds to the sequenced lines.

[www.fxansion.com](http://www.fxansion.com)

9/10



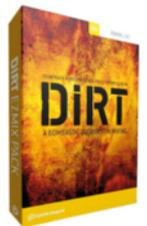
## Toontrack

### Dirt EZmix Pack £31

A library of effects setups for EZmix 2 by hard rock/metal producer Pelle Henricsson, Dirt gives you 51 distortion-heavy prefab processes for single instrument channels (bass, kick, snare, guitar and vocals) and drum busses, plus a rather lonely master output patch. As ever with EZmix, the results can be surprisingly effective, but you frequently wish for more control. Still, Dirt's gritty, powerful chains are very much fit for purpose.

[www.timespace.com](http://www.timespace.com)

8/10



## Puremagnetik

### alphaSynth \$12

21 instruments (in Live Rack, Kontakt KSP and EXS formats) built on samples from an Alpha Syntauri/Apple II system, capturing that venerable computer music system in all its lo-fi glory. This is the sort of thing Puremagnetik does best, we say! A well thought-out range of patches has been chosen, and the Live Rack Macro controls make them seriously programmable.

[www.puremagnetik.com](http://www.puremagnetik.com)

9/10



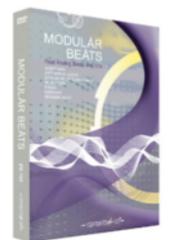
## Zero-G

### Modular Beats £61

A true labour of love, Roger Grønberg's extensive library of drum and percussion samples (including kit patches in various sampler formats) has been made using nothing but analogue synths. The single hits are useful, but the loops stand out as lively, electronic, gritty and rhythmically diverse. They say 4000 hours of work went into this, and it shows - it's a near-bottomless rhythmic resource.

[www.timespace.com](http://www.timespace.com)

9/10



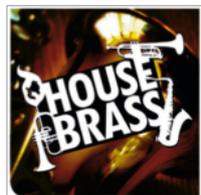
## Delectable Records

### House Brass £25

394 solo horn samples, including trumpet, alto sax, bass trombone and flugelhorn, intended for use in house tracks of all denominations. The 125bpm riffs and loops are inventive and full of energy, but many of the dry 'shots' are cut off without giving the room ambience time to decay. The recording quality's not the best we've ever heard, either, but there's plenty of vibe to be found here and some very usable brass lines.

[www.loopmasters.com](http://www.loopmasters.com)

7/10



## Prime Loops

### Minimal & Tech House Drums £13

This issue's second pack of analogue synth-generated drum sounds adds up to about 1000 kicks, claps, snares, hats, cymbals, toms, percussion hits and FX, from such classic machines as the Korg Prophecy, Access Virus and Juno-106. From chitinous, metallic hats and perc to beefy kicks and high-impact tones, noises and mod-FX, it's a real electronic feast. It's not quite as impressive as Modular Beats, but the price levels the score.

[www.primeloops.com](http://www.primeloops.com)

9/10

