

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated



Music Angel Friendz | £30

www.musicangel.net

Manufactured from sturdy aluminium and boasting up to 120 hours of USB rechargeable playback

time, the Friendz is a cool way to enhance the sound of your mobile/iPod/MP3 player when you're out and about. What's more if you have buddies with the same taste in gadgets you can get together and daisy-chain any number of Friendz together for increased volume – each one has an isolating rubber foot so

they feel well planted even when stacked. Admittedly the sound isn't heavy on the bass, a limitation with most speakers this compact, but what you do get is pleasantly defined throughout the volume range. Sound quality is right up there for their size and the USB charging is a real plus. The biggest problem? Deciding which of the nine currently available colours in the range. *Philip Cheesbrough*

8/10

IK Multimedia iRig BlueBoard | €80

www.ikmultimedia.com

The only problem with playing guitar on your mobile device is that there are too many wires. So when IK

Multimedia decided to make a foot pedal controller for its Mac and iOS products, they made the right choice by dispensing with cables altogether in favour of Bluetooth. The iRig BlueBoard is a rugged and well-built, albeit plastic, pedal board that features four backlit rubber buttons. Powered by four AAA batteries, the BlueBoard also features two extra

MIDI inputs to connect expression pedals. Complete with its own app, the BlueBoard converts the control signals to MIDI, allowing you to pair the device to AmpliTube, or other Core MIDI software.

The BlueBoard feels like it can take a knock or two despite the plastic chassis. The unit itself is quite solid and features rubber feet to prevent it moving about on most surfaces. Having gone from the use of the traditional latching button on the iRig Stomp, the blue backlit rubber

buttons feel a bit too lightweight under foot. However, the board itself is a good size and the buttons are a good width apart, so the burliest size 13 shouldn't be hitting two buttons at the same time.

Programming presets to the board's four buttons is easy, you can either go for a simple on-off approach with the effects pedals, or have whole amp, mic and effects set-ups with each preset. The BlueBoard will seamlessly integrate itself with most apps from IK Multimedia, the most obvious being AmpliTube. The unit will also lend its preset hopping skills to SampleTank, VocaLive and iGrand Piano to name but a few.

On the whole this is quite a flexible bit of kit and essential if you already use their apps. *Simon Arblaster*

9/10



IK Multimedia iRig PRO | €120

www.ikmultimedia.com

IK Multimedia have released the latest addition to their iRig interface line-up, the iRig PRO. Not just another way to plug in a guitar, but a proper audio/MIDI interface and it's pretty portable too. It seems like the Italian firm have taken their iRig Pre and HD interfaces and married them into one, far more useful box.

Encased in the familiar black polycarbonate, the iRig Pro features a Neutrik 1/4-inch/XLR combo jack input for mics and instruments and MIDI input via a 3.5mm to DIN cable. As expected, the unit also features a preamp with phantom power all fed by a 9V battery. The controls are very simple: switches for power and phantom power and the large gain knob on the front. While it looks like they have tried to keep the size to a minimum with a low-profile dial, users will undoubtedly get frustrated with the lack of grip and not entirely smooth action.

It seems to be a few key features short of what a device of this type should have. Most notable is the lack of outputs. I'd take a larger unit if it meant the inclusion of headphone monitoring and a stereo line output. As it is, you have to make do with the headphone output on your host device. The inclusion of a MIDI input is a welcome one, but a MIDI output would have been even more useful.

IK claim the PRO will fit in your pocket, though I'm not so sure, especially if you like to wear skinny jeans. Even though iRig PRO is a few features shy of a complete IO solution for your iOS device, the price isn't too bad at 119.99 euros. *Simon Arblaster*

8/10

Inspiration Sounds – Acid House Basslines | £15

www.producerloops.com



With its beaming smiley face cover, and Haç colour scheme, you know what you're getting yourself into with this sample pack.

The 240 squelching, bouncing, grooving and looping basslines on offer capture that Second Summer of Love for those of you who missed it (or can't remember it) the first time around.

The late '80s and early '90s club sound was dominated by Acid House, and all its trademark bassline elements are handily laid out for you to plunder here. As a certain Fatboy once pointed out – everyone needs a 303. Thankfully Roland's bass synthesizer is represented particularly well. Like everything else it's locked at 128bpm and handily key-labelled.

The majority of loops are lively and nostalgic, and sound great washed under your favourite filters. You also get a folder of 248 drum-hit loops and 85 hands-in-the-air synth loops to play with. Sorted!

Roy Spencer

8/10

SM101 – MIDI Elements: Chillwave Drums | £13

www.samplemagic.com



It's time to give the drummer some again with the help of another Sample Magic pack. This time around it's for all the glo-fi

heads out there that like their drum programming on that Chillwave tip.

What you get here is the magic number of 101 MIDI drum loops. Vintage machines like the Akai MPC60 and MPC1000 have been dusted off and tapped up for some great downtempo grooves. Each one is skilfully mapped out to the general MIDI, so all you have to do is figure out which one of the 11 bundled drum kits you fancy fleshing the arrangement out with.

It's the flexibility that's the real selling point. Whether you pick the Battery, Kontakt, Kong or Ableton templates, you can run the *Chillwave Drums* 12-hit kits over them, or make your own variations out of the extra 131 analogue one-shots bundled with the pack. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

SM White Label Analogue Techno | £17

www.samplemagic.com



Techno music sprang from a bleeping bunch of analogue machines. In that spirit, the boys at SM White Label have dusted off their

vintage analogue synths and outboard units to bring you a vast section of sounds

that inspired a generation.

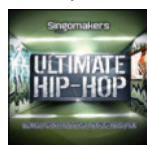
It's basically the best of the gear that put Detroit and Chicago on the map. The 800MB of royalty-free loops bristle with character, and crackle with the correct degree of analogue impurity that coloured the underground sounds of these machines all those years ago.

Distinctive hat loops come to life, bass riffs fill your room, and raw dog synth lines ooze classic status. It's vintage, but with the added bonus of being brought bang up-to-date with some expert tweaking and circuit-bending. **Simon Arblaster**

8/10

Singomakers – Ultimate Hip-Hop | £20

www.loopmasters.com



With all their *Doomsday Dubstep* and EDM and *Main Room House* packs you might think

Singomakers are not the most qualified people to be putting out something called *Ultimate Hip-Hop*. Fans of their *Soulful Glitch Hop* pack won't mind though, as the basslines have that edge on the whole, as do the majority of melody samples. And classic Hip-Hop fans will be appeased, as the drum loops have bounce and really punch through. The snare hits have a lot of potential, and could find a happy home in any style of Rap tune. Same with the kicks and stabs.

The scratches in the Vinyl FX folder are weak and uninspiring, however. But the Synth Loops are moody and orchestral, with just the right amount of chopping to be funky. Plenty to pick at then, but not Ultimate. **Roy Spencer**

6/10

Raw Cutz – The Raw Cutz Super Pack | £150

www.loopmasters.com



Hip-Hop changed up after the sample boom of the mid '90s.

Producers like J-Dilla and DJ Premier stopped relying on

simple four-bar loops, and instead got funky by chopping up one shots, stings and samples into their beats. This gigantic pack is brimming with the kind of material those cats would have gone bananas over.

This 3.34GB pack has been lifted from over 30 previous titles, with the choicest drum breaks, musical flourishes, stabs, and individual drum sounds from packs like *Smokers Delight*, *Premier Beats*, *Vinylistics* and the *X-Static Goldmine* series plundered for your pleasure.

It might be nearly £150, but at up to 70% off the original list price it's a steal. And with nearly 6,000 files to hand, you may never need to buy another Hip-Hop sample pack again. **Roy Spencer**

10/10

Lyra

Everybody's Talking

Ultimate USB audio interfaces for music production



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