

# Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated



## Ultrasones Proline 750 | £270

[ultrasones.com](http://ultrasones.com)

**U**ltrasones have been making headphones for around ten years – they put a lot of emphasis on their S-Logic Natural Surround Sound technology, which claims to spread the sound around the ear, so that it emulates listening to speakers as much as possible, but personally I couldn't sense this. The sound quality is probably good enough for the bedroom DJ, but doesn't compete

with other phones in this price range, if you're looking to use them playing out. The 750s handle bass pretty well, but the overall sound just seems slightly musty and bland – so not a good choice for studio work.

With velvet ear pads, they are more comfortable than the leather equivalents, but the ear pads themselves pop off a bit too easily. The 750s look like your average headphones and disappointingly,

are made of lots of plastic and not much else, so don't expect them to last a lifetime.

Ultrasones claim that their ULE technology significantly reduces radiation by up to 98% from low frequency magnetic fields, but the World Health Organisation say there is no scientific basis for this. I smell a fish. **Sam Mildon**

**6/10**



## Etymotic

**HF5 | \$149**

[Etymotic.com](http://Etymotic.com)

**E**tymotic's in-ear headphones – for better or for worse – are a pretty unique shape. Their three-tier design is intended to provide an airtight seal, with each tier seemingly providing response for that frequency band.

It takes a while to get used to the HF5s – I couldn't get much bass out of them until I went 'up' rather than 'in', and a world of low frequencies appeared. It's not the usual sub-rumble though, the HF5s present bass subtly and with plenty of thud. You will have to twist and turn them to make it appear, but when it does, it's suitably set-back, rounded and pleasant – a rarity for in-ear bass response. The other impressive feature on the HF5s is the almost dangerous levels of noise isolation – you won't hear a thing, music playing or not so make sure you look both ways. Twice.

To round it all off, the mids and highs are represented nobly without being too present or harsh. Suffice to say, after a day alone with the HF5s, I made them my default iPod phones – the bass is pleasant, the isolation is dangerously good and their silicon material is comfortable to wear over long periods. Oh and they're the perfect price for their features – a solid deal all round. **Declan McGlynn**

**8/10**

# Behringer DJX750 | £201

[behringer.com](http://behringer.com)

**D**esigned in a very familiar style, Behringer's latest DJ mixer offers a huge amount of features at an extremely low price point. This, of course, isn't without compromise however as the build quality isn't quite as robust as we'd like but it seems to be a trade off between build and the huge feature list. The faders feel a bit flappy and the rotaries don't feel like they'll take excessive amounts of twiddling, but it isn't all bad news. There are dual BPM counters which seem to work much more accurately than the counters in Behringer's previous DJ mixers and also have a pleasing dual LED feedback above the cross fader to help with beat matching.

There's a fun set of 24-bit effects on board and they are decent enough for some brief manipulations and delays and echoes are happily synced



to the BPM. Inputs and outputs are also plentiful, with an FX send/return plus master, booth and tape outs although unfortunately all connections are unbalanced phono connections. Three kill switches sit each side of the crossfader and are

always a welcome addition. Sound quality is OK, but you have a sense of things becoming messy if you crank the channel gain too much and the bizarre XPQ stereo surround effect is pretty much useless. Overall though, there are few mixers with this many

creative features for so little money. If you're looking for your first DJ or performance mixer, this is definitely a product worth considering.

*Chris Barker*

**7/10**



## Loopmasters: The Nextmen | £40

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

Loopmasters' Artist Series has been producing some of the best sample packages around and this one is no exception. As you'd expect, it's mainly focused on Hip Hop but there are elements of Soul, Funk, Reggae and Dancehall to make things even more interesting. Loops are in the 96-105bpm range, making this most suitable for mid-tempo break-based production. Every popular format's catered for and it's all easy to fit in a variety of production styles and different tracks. *Greg Scarth*

**8/10**



## Big Fish Audio Electron Smasher | £72

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

Intended as a Breakbeat construction kit, Electron Smasher doesn't stick to the usual construction kit formula, offering a series of variations on each loop rather than stripped down elements for you to pick and choose from. The vast majority of loops here are in the orthodox 100-140 range. The problem is that it's still all a bit unfocused. With just a few variations on each loop and no individual drum hits, it's hard to recommend this one. A rare disappointing release from the usually reliable Big Fish Audio. *Chris Barker*

**5/10**



## Ueberschall Pop Music | £90

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

This new one from Ueberschall, is about as slick as they come. A selection of expertly produced samples following the usual construction kit formula with parts split into intro/outro, verse, chorus and a few variations. A variety of Pop sub-genres from R&B to Soft Rock get a look in, so there's plenty for everyone and it's mainly quite versatile stuff. This isn't going to win any points for originality but that's not really the intention; it's meant to sound almost like outtakes from other sessions. Expensive but good. *Greg Scarth*

**7/10**



## Big Fish Audio Hip Hop Exotica 2 | £72

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

This United Nations of Hip Hop package from Big Fish avoids the clichés by mixing in a little global flavour, ideal if you like your Hip Hop with a pinch of sitar, koto or shamisen. The overall sound is similar to recent productions like Diplo and Switch's work with MIA. On offer here are 36 proper construction kits plus individual drum and percussion hits. REX2, Acidized WAV and Apple Loops formats make sure that just about everyone should be able to get the most out of this leftfield offering. *Declan McGlynn*

**8/10**