



Rob Papen – Punch 2 €149

Rob Papen entered the plugin game only a few years after the VST spec first introduced the ability to receive MIDI data in 1999. In other words, his name has been associated with virtual instruments for nearly 20 years. It may not come as much surprise, then, to find that Punch, the RP virtual instrument dedicated to drums, first arrived almost 10 years ago. However, it's intriguing that it's taken so long for a new version to see the light. Punch 2 is a drum module that covers a lot of bases, and straddles both the worlds of DSP modelling and sample playback. In view of the fact that it comes with over 1500 samples, it

falls into both the soundware and synth categories.

In design terms, the plugin has been given a slight overhaul since version 1. However, the aesthetic ethos remains largely the same – shades of grey and cyan highlights. Although the pursuit of monochrome darkness does appear to dominate quite a few program GUIs these days, given the large number of parameters it might have helped navigation and usability if a little more variation had been employed here.

Punch 2 is based around a matrix of 24 drum pads. Each can be assigned a sound from the large library of presets that fall into a range of categories – BD, SN, CH, OH,

Tom, Clap, User, Sample or Slice.

Those labelled with a specific kit item in mind include highly tweakable virtual models of synthetic drum sounds alongside samples from classic drum machines and a large selection of other, so-called, 'Punch' samples. The User category contains further miscellaneous models and factory samples, with the Sample option available to load your own audio. Slice mode lets you load and map audio (and REX files) across multiple pads.

These drum models excel in their ability to create a wide range of drum sounds. The range of modelling and synthesis options alone are worth the price of entry, with the included

sample-based content widening the scope and appeal. However, it should be noted that, although round-robin and velocity switching is possible, this isn't the place to go for the latest in full acoustic drum kit emulation.

Punch 2 also functions as a self-contained sequencer, with playback triggered automatically by the host or via MIDI notes. The somewhat confusing naming (Grooves and Breaks – which are both in fact just 'patterns') remains from version 1, and there is quirkiness to the way drum sounds are assigned and the patterns programmed, but once you get to grips with it, this is a nice addition.

Punch 2 is a powerful sound design tool, capable of generating great drum and perc sounds. Given that it also comes with a large factory library and some very powerful effects, there's a lot on offer here. Though by no means a dealbreaker, it's let down in places by its interface design and usability. Despite this, it's well worth checking out.

robpapen.com

VERDICT 8.0

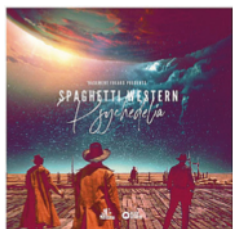
Audiotent – Magma

£37



It's time to crack the surface and reveal the underground sounds of modern techno in this rock solid set of scorching samples and piping hot hits. The 700-strong selection takes in a host of jackhammer drums and programming, some truly cavernous bass grooves, and synth lines so sharp you could cut diamonds with 'em. You'll have a blast mixing/matching the sounds, and everything chugs along at a steady 128bpm, with all loops categorised intuitively, allowing eager beat-miners to tunnel through with ease. Other highlights include a set of Rumble Loops so heavy they could rattle a tooth loose. Ouch! And a Pads & Atmospheres collection that sizzles so much, steam will come out yer speakers. Oof! **Roy Spencer**
audiotent.com

VERDICT 9.0



Octopus Sounds – Basement Freaks: Spaghetti Western Psychedelia \$7.99/mo

Greece's top funky beat-making outfit dons their ten gallon cowboy hats and hits the sample trail. Inspired by greats like Ennio Morricone, as well as the further reaches of 70s psych rock, this collection crams in bang for your buck. From horn sections as big as Texas, to drums that gallop like a thoroughbred, the Basement Freaks know how to deliver silver screen epicness. And with folder titles like Tarantino Bass and Spaghetti Trumpet, you can almost feel the cinematic tension. Looking for groovy guitars, tough beats, and FX-drenched loops with that old school Spaghetti Western edge? Pew! Pew! **Roy Spencer**
splice.com

VERDICT 8.0



Drumdrops – Horseman in Dub \$7.99/mo

Heavyweight business time as Prince Fatty teams up with the fella widely regarded as the best reggae drummer in the UK – Horseman. The results are top tier, with both joining forces to deliver nothing but highly useable samples from the get go. The 350 handcrafted loops have been recorded in pristine quality, through iconic analogue gear and a host of vintage mics, to get that classic sound that fans of the scene both strive for and demand. All the authentic bits of kit have been put through their paces, from string reverbs to tape machines, so the feel and tone of the samples has that presence only the true dub architects can capture. **Roy Spencer**
splice.com

VERDICT 8.0



Vital Vocals – Future Soul Acapellas Vol.2 £19.95

Sweet! It's like you've been given the acapella stems for a sleek R'n'B jam that never came out. All you have to do is pick apart the sessions and make them into a banger of a track. Whether you chop the vocals out of all recognition and ghost them through an MPC-style Dilla beat, or layer and loop them in eight-bar sections to make a soaring chorus on a neo-soul broken beat groover, the choice is yours. Presented as 102-120BPM song kits, they're broken into full verse and chorus takes, with bonus ad-libs and lead loops to play with. Recordings are crystal clear, and hold up to some savage time-stretching without losing their quality. **Roy Spencer**
loopmasters.com

VERDICT 8.0



Odd Smpls – Stuck At Home: Trap Smpls £19.95

The newly-formed Odd Smpls clique kicks off in style with this set of lockdown trap beats, for producers that don't wanna leave the house no more (we know the feeling). The 724MB of content takes in a gang of royalty-free grooves, recorded from scratch, and presented in key-labeled loops, ready to plug-and-play into your DAW of choice. You get dark pads and atmospheres, skippy and militant drums, and front and centre bass workouts that should turn a few heads your way (when you're back in the club anyway). Plus one-shots and synth melodies that more than hold their own. Noice! Can't wait to hear more from them. **Roy Spencer**
loopmasters.com

VERDICT 8.0