

## SMALLER PADS

Three smaller pads are designed to be struck with the shoulder of the stick

# ROLAND SPD-SX SAMPLE PAD

**£585** An exclusive first look at Roland's new sampling pad

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**R**oland's spanking new SPD-SX is the replacement for the excellent SPD-S sampling pad, which has been with us now for around nine years. The new model has inherited many of the great features of its predecessor, but now boasts infinitely more sample memory, USB sockets, larger graphics display (with a raft of on-screen wave editing features), improved sound routing, more responsive pads, intuitive menus, innovative sampling and a host of significant system enhancements and design refinements.

The SPD-SX has nine playable pads with two dual input sockets, allowing up to four additional external pads, drum triggers or a combination of both. Due to its ease of use

## Build

The rectangular-shaped SPD-SX is constructed from ABS and finished in matt black with contrasting trims of brushed aluminium. Inset into the casing is a thick, durable rubber, covering 80 percent of the uppermost surface. This is divided up into nine velocity-sensitive pads, consisting of six equal squares (taking up much of the playable surface) and three smaller pads (to be struck with stick shoulder) sited along the uppermost edge.

Sited below the playing area is a range of controls within easy reach of the performer. These include power, volume for master, phones (the SPD-S had this sited to the rear) click level, start/stop button for the click and the essential 'all sound off' button. One of the

## Also try...



### 1 YAMAHA DTX-MULTI 12

**We say:** "As an out-of-the-box, onto-the-stage solution, it presents a very convincing argument."



### 2 ROLAND SPD-30

**We say:** "For drummers looking to add electronic sounds to an acoustic set-up with the minimum of fuss, the SPD-30 is a great choice."

## CONSTRUCTION

*SPD-SX is made from ABS with contrasting brushed aluminium trims*

## WITH MANY OF ITS PREDECESSOR'S GREAT FEATURES, IT NOW BOASTS INFINITELY MORE SAMPLE MEMORY

and user-routable sound outputs (headphone/main out or sub out), the SPD-SX is equally happy on stage and in the studio. Having 2Gb of sampling memory available will give around two hours of stereo (six hours in mono) - it is feasible to sample a whole gigs' worth of music in CD quality.

Included with the pad is Roland's Wave Manager app for the PC (XP, Vista or Windows 7) and a copy of the pre-loaded samples on CD, 80-page manual (PDF version downloadable from Roland's website) and power supply.

most useful features for a live performance is the 'pad check' which mutes all sound apart from through the headphones.

## Hands On

A second or two after powering up (following a brief, animated 'SPD-SX' on the LCD display and a cool 'sweeping' display of the nine pad LEDs), the machine is ready to go. The display shows the last selected kit and is large enough to provide a variety of useful information such as kit name/number, signal level, tempo, EFX1

and EFX2, and three selectable parameter buttons for 'padvol', kit FX and tempo. Many of the functions such as tap tempo, kit increment/decrement, FX on/off etc, which would normally be performed by a foot switch, can also be assigned to any of the pads or additional triggers.

Once a sound is triggered, a dedicated LED (bottom right of each pad) illuminates with varying intensity, depending on the peaks of the waveform. This is extremely useful as a visual guide as to which of the pads are sounding. Initially I begin striking each pad in turn, triggering one or more of the longer pre-loaded samples, pressing the 'filter' button and twiddling the 'control 1'



## PLAYING SURFACE

Surface is divided into six durable, rubber velocity-sensitive pads

## CONTROLS

Sited below the playing area, controls are within easy reach of the performer

knob, creating a whole new sound and rhythm - awesome.

Having had a great time with the supplied sounds and various effect features - it is a sampler after all - it's time to check out the various methods of capturing/creating samples. This is performed by either the Wave Manager software (import or drag and drop facilities) or importing samples from a standard USB stick and, sampling directly into the SPD-SX via the mic/line input. Having imported a variety of samples using Wave Manager and the simple utilities of the SPD-SX itself, I find myself compelled to create some 'fresh' samples - I opt to sample my own snare, an empty bottle for a percussion sound

and my own voice. For this task I am using my trusty old Shure SM58 plugged directly into the rear of the pad.

Sampling starts with a selection of menu options and an intuitive display guide - the only difficult part is choosing what to sample! After following the guide I manage some convincing samples with ease but decide to leave the snare and the bottle sounding 'dry' for now as these can be edited later. However, after sampling my voice, I wanted to create something a little sinister so I lowered the pitch and applied plenty of reverb - scary!

Once a sample is created and stored in the SPD-SX, any of the onboard effects (for example, filtering) can be applied.

Samples may be reversed, chopped, resampled, truncated, normalised and have the pitch altered - then it's just the task of saving the result as a new sample or overwriting the original. **R**

**VERDICT:** This is a must-have product which could make me run out of adjectives describing it - suffice to say the SPD-SX is as stunning as it is formidable!

**BUILD QUALITY**



**PLAYABILITY**



**VALUE FOR MONEY**



**RHYTHM RATING**



## Essential spec

**Roland**

### PRICE

SPD-SX, £585

### PADS

9

### POLYPHONY

20 voices

### RECORDABLE WAVES

10,000

### SAMPLE TIME (APPROX)

180 minutes (stereo) or 360 minutes (mono)

### DATA FORMAT

16-bit linear PCM (WAV/AIFF)

### SAMPLE FREQUENCY

44.1 kHz

### NUMBER OF KITS

100

### KIT CHAINS

8

### EFFECTS

Master Effects (21 Types), Equalizer Kit Effect 1 (20 Types), Kit Effect 2 (20 Types)

### GRAPHIC DISPLAY

Contrast adjustable backlit LCD 128 x 64 dots

### SOCKETS

USB (A Type) for memory stick, USB (B Type) for computer, 1/4" jacks for headphones, Master Out (L/MONO, R), Sub Out (L/Mono, R), Audio In, Trig In, Foot Sw, MIDI connectors (In, Out), DC In

### USB INTERFACE

Hi-Speed USB (MIDI/AUDIO depending on selected mode), USB Mass Storage Class, USB Flash Drive

### POWER SUPPLY

DC 9V (AC Adaptor) Roland PSB-1U

### CONTACT

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