

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated

Line 6 Sonic Port | £69

<http://line6.com>

Guitar interfaces for iOS have been around for a few years now, so it's a wonder manufacturers have taken so long to come up with a more desktop friendly chassis. Thankfully the penny has dropped for Line 6. Their latest foray into Apple friendly interfacing alongside the Mobile In interface is the Sonic Port and it won't disappear off the table as soon as you plug in the guitar jack. Straight out of the box and you won't be surprised at the plastic construction. However, its weight and all-round sturdy construction does

inspire confidence should it be used in a live situation.

It comes supplied with cables for both a 30-pin and Lightning connections, which is great as Line 6 have decided to use a proprietary connection from the Port itself. The front end is littered with connections you would expect. A 1/4-inch instrument input, 1/4-inch guitar/line output to connect to monitors or straight to your amp. The unit also benefits from a 1/8-inch stereo line input for synths, keyboards or sound modules and finally the obligatory 1/8-inch headphone output.

At £70 this unit may seem pricey just for a basic interface, but you are getting the feature-rich Mobile POD and Jammit apps as free downloads. Not only that, but it will also work with GarageBand and any other CoreAudio apps.

Fans of Line 6's POD tones will definitely love this for the Mobile POD software. For everyone else, the £70 price tag may be slightly off-putting with no MIDI or XLR input, but it's a well-bundled interface nonetheless.

Simon Arblaster

8/10



NI Traktor DJ Cable | £16.99

www.native-instruments.com

At just £16.99 this is one of the cheapest hardware products ever released by Native Instruments. The neat looking splitter cable performs the simple task of turning a stereo output (eg from an iPad running Traktor DJ) into two mono signals allowing you to attach speakers and headphones at the same time. It is one of most accessible ways of getting into Traktor DJing, but the appeal of this product is mainly for beginners with limited funds, because the outputs are restricted to mono and audio quality is limited by the device you plug it into. It is well built, and by God it works! But – of course – there are cheaper alternatives available. *Oliver Smith*

7/10



NAD Viso HP50 | £229

<http://nadelectronics.com>

The HP50 is a surprisingly stylish full-featured over-ear phone that cuts a dash between bulky over-ears and the rising tide of less capable (but more elegant) on-ears. They're well built, very sci-fi and make you feel like a Cyberman with them on.

While it's not in the serious sonic league of anti-social open-backed beauties like the AKG K712 Pro featured this issue, the HP50's Room Feel technology clearly doing some pretty clever crosstalk trickery and as a result sound bigger and wider than you might expect.

We were delighted by the unhyped and crystal clear sound stage with real pro mid and high clarity and some lovely tight bass. There's not the boom and 'warmth' that typically overpower consumer phones. Instead the sound is powerful but in check and we genuinely notice (and enjoy) new detail in familiar tracks when listening on the HP50 while we happily wear them for hours.

Final attention to detail touches, such as the ability to attach a cord to the left or right side and the inclusion of both (flat profile and tangle-resistant) cords for iPhone (with volume, and mic controls) and straight-up vanilla leads, only serve to hype this further in our affections.

Daniel Griffiths

8/10

Producer Loops – Future Pop Vol 5 | £25

www.producerloops.com



Let's welcome a new company to our sample pack reviews section – Producer Loops. New to our pages but not the

scene, as the latest installment of their *Future Pop* series clocks in at number five.

Like the previous four what you get for your money are construction kits as shiny as Madonna's teeth and as polished as Psy's dress shoes. Producer Loops pretty much kill it in the slick pop pack market, and this set sits nicely next to their *Pop Guitars* and *LA Pop Sessions* releases.

It does have a hum of cheese around it (big room synths, easy on the ear rave riffs, and a general 'Example playing to kids at Reading' feeling), but that's what they were going for and they NAILED it. If you make happy EDM for smiley-faced teenagers then you're going to want to plunder this. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

SM White Label – Slo-Mo House | £17

www.samplemagic.com



Been scratching your brain raw trying to capture the deep melodic fug that oozes from your favourite

Jimpster or Bostro Pesopeo record? Cheer up – this 600MB pack of emotive keys, dubby loops and crunchy kicks and snares will have you up to their standard in no time at all.

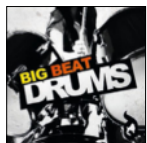
The grooves are chilled, the melodies classy, and the tempo (110-115bpm) is positively languid. All the playful tops and luxurious layers you can slot straight in have acres of room to take centre stage. The bass loops hold the most attention (and can be purchased on their own for a mere £3.70). They'll rattle a sub and hold the weight of anything you balance on top.

This shimmers and shimmies in equal measures and should provide a nice new set of tools for your next laid-back journey onto the dance floor. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

Delectable Records – Big Beat Drums | £20

www.loopmasters.com



Although Big Beat had its lager and poppers-fuelled moment in the sun some years ago, it's worth revisiting for the heaviness of its kicks and snares alone. The good people at Delectable Records have saved you the job of scouring old breaks records for, erm, breaks with this punchy drum pack.

There's plenty to choose from in this 470MB collection – from frantic workouts on live kits, to swinging drum machine

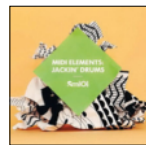
sessions, courtesy of the Roland TD15K. And they can all be picked apart for their crispest components. All the sounds have been crafted with custom DSP routines, and passed through a Manley passive EQ, and Manley Mu limiters and compression chain for a real high-end finish.

If you're still pining for the days of The Chems, Fatboys, and Rhythm Aces then this old skool/new skool sample pack will bring back a few memories and hopefully inspire a few new ones. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

SM101 – MIDI Elements: Jackin' Drums | £13

www.samplemagic.com



Jackin' Drums is a unique MIDI pack focused on beats, rather than melodics. Each beat has been programmed with the

perfect amount of 'jackin' house swing' synonymous with US house. For the authentic feel they've included 120+ vintage-style drum hits and 'dust' and 'air' layers, which are triggered by MIDI to give the beats that analogue warmth.

You've got ten ready-made drum kits to load up, all mapped to GM, so you can leaf through the 101 drum loops super fast to find groove and drum sounds. It gives you the flexibility of beat building with one-shots, but all the convenience of using loops (the hits work together, and the programming is done already).

All the best bits of deep house, early UK garage and '90s house drum kits, then. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

Lack Of Afro Presents Analogue Soul | £35

www.loopmasters.com



This one will get the funk heads turning. Adam Gibbons aka Lack Of Afro has been churning out dance floor bombs for the last couple years on labels like the peerless Freestyle Records. Fans of his infectious grooves will be in their element here with this 1GB pack of vintage sounds.

Not only has his brain been picked, he's also had his studio plundered. He's clicked on his Fostex R-8 reel-to-reel tape machine, tightened up his 1950's Premier drum kit, and polished the keys on his vintage Wurlitzer Piano, amongst other treasures. The results are so far in the pocket you'll have to pluck the lint off them. Gibbon's status as a master of any classic bit of kit he cares to dust off is never in dispute. The keys are warm, the percussion lively and the drums solid as a rock. You can see why everyone from Tom Jones to The Pharcyde ropes him in for remix duties. Essential. **Roy Spencer**

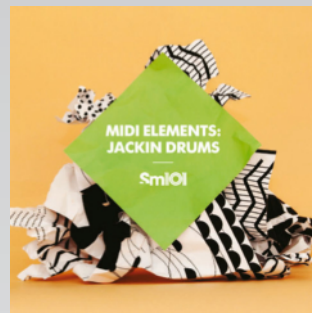
9/10

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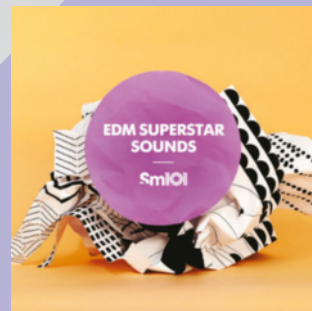
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