

cm mini reviews

A rapid-fire round-up of plug-ins, sample libraries, ROMplers and more

ddmf

ColourEQ \$0.50+

Format PC/Mac, VST/AU
Contact support@ddmf.eu
Web www.ddmf.eu

The latest plug-in from the EQ fiends at ddmf is a very different equaliser indeed. Rather than imitating vintage hardware or being yet another bells-and-shelves affair, ColourEQ offers five bands of “superparametric” peaking EQ, which, rather unusually, use fourth-order filtering. What this means is that the curve shapes are not your standard bell peak – Type A gives a sort of flat-topped bell (similar to overlapping shelves), while Type B is like a bell with a concave peak. To further control the shape, there's an extra knob per band, in addition to the usual frequency, gain and Q settings, and there's a dedicated high-pass filter too.

In use, the Type A curve is the most practical. Similar to how you'd use a shelf to equally boost all frequencies above or below a designated point, you can use ColourEQ to boost a certain frequency range (unlike bell filters, where you boost *around* a given point and the centre frequency is always loudest). It's most useful indeed and gives musical results. The Type B curve gives a more pronounced timbre, which is less useful for basic EQ'ing, but still has its uses.

Further features include the ability to change the colour scheme, and A/B comparison. We'd love to see ddmf combine

ColourEQ's curves with a set of regular EQ filters, like those in their excellent IIEQ Pro plug-in. Still, considering ddmf's 'pay what you like' pricing scheme, it seems churlish to complain. Bravo, ddmf, for daring to be different!

9/10



Yellow Tools

Halls of Fame Origami Edition £345

Format PC/Mac, VST/AU
Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200
Web www.timespace.com

The follow-up to the original HOF library uses IRs captured from 13 analogue and digital reverb units. These include classics like the ancient AKG BX 20 spring reverb, EMT 240 plate, EMT 250 digital reverb/echo and Lexicon 480L, and more recent devices from Bricasti, Eventide, TC, et al. All IRs are true stereo, so a stereo convolution occurs for each channel, for a more accurate recreation. Annoyingly, you can't get your hands on the IR files as they're 'embedded' in the supplied Yellow Tools' Origami plug-in. The latter works well and lets you stretch the IR, EQ it, etc, although the envelope functions are a little basic. Still, you get over 1500 fantastic patches covering the presets and typical settings of each device – the only thing you may miss is the subtle modulated swirl of certain digital units, which IRs cannot capture.

The high price puts HOF Origami Edition in competition with the lofty likes of Audio Ease's Altiverb, but however you look at it, it's still far cheaper than your average Lexicon box.

8/10



Audio Ease

Cabinet £50

Format PC/Mac, VST/AU
Contact Unity Audio, 01440 785843
Web www.audioease.com

This spin-off from Audio Ease's pricey Speakerphone gives instant access to convolution-based emulations of five famous guitar cabs. The idea is that you disable the cab emulation in your regular amp sim package and place this after it instead.

Operation is simplicity itself: click one of the five speaker stacks to select a cabinet, then use the Mic knob to fade between two mic sounds. Turning up the Narrow/Wide knob widens the stereo image, and no surprises are had whilst pumping up the Bass control either. A spanking Spring Reverb can be dialled in, while the Room Mic knob gives an excellent natural ambience. We used Cabinet in conjunction with AmpliTube 2 and TH1 and were most impressed with the authentically thick tones that resulted – it certainly got us a step closer to 'the real thing'. A master volume knob and a compact interface option would be good, but otherwise, there's little to complain about here.

9/10



Toontrack Metal Foundry SDX £125

Format SDX for Superior Drummer 2.0
Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200
Web www.timespace.com

For the second SD2.0 expansion, Toontrack have gone back to their roots with a massive metal-focused kit recorded at Atlantis Studios in Stockholm. Naturally, there are two kick drums: for the right, you can choose from 12 different types, while the left one has matching drums for five of them. Turn on the Alternate option in the main kick's control panel and the program will switch between the two drums with each hit. Sonically, there's everything from tight, clicky and punchy, to big, beefy and downright boomy.

For snares, there are 14 on offer, and most are of the high-tuned variety, including the 7x13" Tomas Haake Engineering model and a Pearl Ian Paice 6.5x14". For a thumping rock snare, the 6.5x14" Pearl Reference Low Pitched and 12x14" WFL Marching Snare do the trick. There are three rack and two floor toms, with around eight kits' worth of drums to pick from. And for cymbals, you'll find five sets of hats, four rides,

and a jawdropping 40 crashes, splashes, Chinas, and so on. Oh, and a cowbell! All we can suggest that might enhance the 'instant metal' experience would be a few layerable pads with the sort of processed 'triggered' drum hits that are common in modern metal, but you can always use an external sampler for that.

Mic channels include all the usual suspects, with points of interest being four snare mics, 'snare trash' (a 1940s mic), four ambience channels and a reverb 'chamber'. There are some cool mixer presets too.

With the likes of name metal producer Daniel Bergstrand listed on the credits, it's clear that Toontrack haven't cut corners with Metal Foundry SDX, and the sound quality is fantastic. And while these kits are indeed great for metal, due to their punchy nature, they're great for genres like pop, funk and rock too.

9/10



LiquidSonics Reverberate £30

Format PC VST
Contact via website
Web www.liquidsonics.com

A new entry into the currently-bulging reverb marketplace is Reverberate by LiquidSonics, aimed at making impulse response-based reverbs sound "richer and more dynamic". Reverberate offers not only true-stereo processing capability (as seen on Christian Knufinke's SIR2, amongst others), but also the ability to support two such true stereo IRs at once, all with zero-latency operation.

Reverberate is a nicely designed plug-in with well apportioned controls, making it easy to operate and get to grips with. There's an edit page for each impulse response, enabling you to stretch the response and apply an ADSHR envelope, as well as independent EQ pages, where you can apply five-band parametric EQ to tweak the sound of your reverbs. A built-in chorus is on hand to thicken up the sound, should you desire, and a post EQ can be applied to both channels of convolution - both of these are genuinely handy functions.

The main draw, however, is Reverberate's comprehensive modulation system. Many

high-end hardware reverbs use modulation to create a less 'static' sound, typically by manipulating the filters or delay line lengths inside the reverb. While such qualities cannot be captured by traditional impulse responses, Reverberate does have modulation options of its own. These allow you to modulate the chorus delay amount, the post EQ and even the mix between the two IR channels, within whatever range you wish. For example, you could move the EQ's centre frequency between 1 and 2kHz over a one-second period, or slowly cycle between two impulse responses. In practice, it's very effective, and offers creative potential too.

The small but decent native IR library is good, and to further put Reverberate to the test, we



tried it with some true stereo impulses captured from a high-end Bricasti M7 digital reverb, with incredibly impressive results. Reverberate stands up to the competition in terms of sound quality, and the additional modulation options make it an absolute steal at £30. There's also an entirely free LE edition available to try.

9/10

Soundware round-up

Big Fish Audio

Electron Smasher £72

Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200

Web www.timespace.com

Format Acidized WAV, Apple Loops, REX, RMX

Electron Smasher proves to be a novel idea for a sample library, flaunting a selection of glitchy electronic sounds. There are over 700 unique samples in total, with Grooving construction kits, Ambient construction kits and Xtra loops categories. Everything seems to be unpredictably mangled in a very stylish way that's totally in keeping with current production trends. It'll easily slip into any electronic producer's arsenal but shouldn't be overlooked for other forms of music seeking a certain 'edge'. The ambiances conjure up moods, while the grooves set the pace and make great fills. All samples are categorised and labelled for easy use.

9/10



Big Fish Audio

Bollyhood Beats £72

Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200

Web www.timespace.com

Format Acidized WAV, Apple Loops, REX, RMX

If you're seeking a hint of Indian inspiration for your hip-hop and R&B productions, you'll want these 92 construction kits. Each contains a full mix and separate instrument loops. The tabla is all over this title, as well as the dholak, duff, manjira and ghungroo, blended seamlessly with electronic kits from the hip-hop world. The recording quality is super-pristine 24-bit (stereo where appropriate) and the performances are stylish, dynamic and easy to work into a mix. The vibe is exceptionally authentic and modern, with lots of rhythmic action in the bottom end and sparkling tops. Awesome.

10/10



Big Fish Audio

Hip Hop Exotica 2: United Nations Of Hip Hop £72

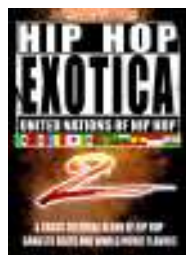
Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200

Web www.timespace.com

Format Acidized WAV, Apple Loops, REX, RMX

This release is made up of 36 construction kits labelled by key and tempo and containing instrument loops and drum hits. The concept merges hip-hop sounds with ethnic instrument performances from around the world. While there are some interesting flavours, and the producers have attempted to arrange the sounds in a hip-hop fashion, the style hasn't been captured – the sounds are flimsy and the grooves are off. However, the so-called exotic sounds are fantastic and are certainly what give this library value.

7/10



Dark Side Of The Tune DOWNLOAD

Drum Abrasion \$9

Contact info@darksideofthetune.com

Web www.darksideofthetune.com

Format WAV, MPC

This pack reunites us with the classic Akai MPC format, hailed by so many hip-hop legends as the be-all and end-all for drums and percussion – thankfully, there are WAV files for non-MPC users. This short but sweet collection of drum samples is filthy and raw in the best way, and comprises 64 single-hit acoustic samples (some using unusual found instruments) that have been captured and processed using character-rich equipment, the result being a large, gritty texture. The beats you make with these drums and percussion samples will always be fat and authentic.

9/10



Loopmasters

The Nextmen – Hip Hop & Electronica £40

Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200

Web www.loopmasters.com

Format WAV, REX2, Acidized WAV, Reason, HALion, Kontakt, EXS, Stylus RMX, SFZ, Apple Loops, Cakewalk, Emulator X2, Ableton Live

Prolific urban producers The Nextmen have produced a very unique and diverse library here. The overall sound is extremely large and carries a distinctly British underground vibe. You'll find over 400 'unique' sounds organised into categories of bass, drums, FX, instruments, vocals and scratches. There are loops as well as one-shots, and the quality throughout is truly outstanding. If you're working on virtually any form of music that requires a thick, groovy sound, you'd be a fool not to pick this up!

10/10



Loopmasters DOWNLOAD

Full Cycle Drum and Bass Collective £35

Contact info@loopmasters.com

Web www.loopmasters.com

Format Acidized WAV, REX2, ReFill, Live Pack, Apple Loops, HALion, Kontakt, EXS, SFZ, Stylus RMX, Live Presets, NN-XT

D Product and UV Ray from the Full Cycle camp have produced just over 450 unique samples in the form of authentic drum 'n' bass loops and one shots, with additional production by Roni Size and DJ Krust. The style is exactly what you'd expect from the label that was home to the Bristol sound that once led drum 'n' bass. There are musical elements here as well as breaks, dirty basses and effects. It's authentically Full Cycle, but don't expect to find the toughest DnB sounds here. Note that the Apple Loops version is £30.

8/10



AcousticsampleS **DOWNLOAD**
The Box €14

Contact via web
 Web www.acousticsamples.net
 Format Kontakt 2, Mach Five, EXS24, sfz



According to Wikipedia, the cajón is the most widely used Afro-Peruvian musical instrument of the 20th century - for the uninitiated, it's basically a box with a hole in it that you sit on and slap with your bare hands. This lo-fi instrument now has a hi-tech virtual counterpart in the shape of The Box, which is a multisampled patch that enables you to smack your virtual box with left and right hands in six different places. The patch certainly seems professionally recorded, and the round-robin sample playback makes it highly convincing, so cajón feel the noise!

8/10

Simplosive **DOWNLOAD**
Hard Kicks €25

Contact Click Produce, 020 8780 0612
 Web www.clickproduce.com
 Format WAV, AIFF



They don't come much simpler than this: Hard Kicks from Simplosive is a collection of 500 kick drum samples that are, as you might imagine, quite bangin'. Ranging from thumping acoustic bass drums to the full-on distorted gabber variety, the pack comprises 100 different kick sounds in five different versions, each recorded through different effects. As such, you only get one relatively dry kick for each of the 100 basic sounds, which is a little limiting if the more distorted sounds aren't your thing, but this pack still represents decent value for money.

8/10

Loopmasters **DOWNLOAD**
Hyper – Electro Rock & Breaks £25

Contact info@loopmasters.com
 Web www.loopmasters.com
 Format Acidized WAV, Rex2, Reason, Live, Apple Loops, HALion, Kontakt, EXS, SFZ



This library from breaks veteran DJ Hyper delivers all the elements you'd expect, including a selection of one-shot drum hits, multisampled synth sounds, and tons of loops. The flavour reflects the sound of his live band Hyper with vaguely rock-styled riffs and dirty bass sounds. While the sounds will no doubt delight fans, they're not particularly impressive compared to similar Loopmasters or Sample Magic collections, and while no one who buys this will feel ripped off, there are more inspirational libraries in this vein available already.

7/10

Producer Loops **DOWNLOAD**
Hard Dance Constructions £30

Contact Producer Loops, 0845 094 3077
 Web www.producerloops.com
 Format Acidized WAV, Apple Loops



This collection of five large construction kits focuses on the more bangin' end of the commercial 4x4 dance scene. The kits feature individual drum tracks, a selection of synth line and bass variations, sound effects and, in some cases, vocals. While veteran producers would no doubt prefer more one-shot sounds and multisamples, there are still plenty of elements that can be used out of context, and the construction kits will be very useful to beginners, who will be able to create their own versions of the five tracks, learning something about dance production in the process.

8/10

Sonokinetic **DOWNLOAD**
Q's – Designed Sound €20

Contact Via website
 Web www.sonokinetic.com
 Format WAV, Kontakt



A selection of sound effects for multimedia as well as music production, this pack features 50 big effects, comprising various combinations of booms, bangs, blips and radio-esque noises. The quality is high, and what's more, you also get a folder of 52 simpler "element" sounds, which you can combine and process to create your own larger-than-life effects. There are some great sounds included that will make life easy for those looking for huge, expensive-sounding effects, and the pack is very reasonably priced, considering the inclusion of the element sounds.

9/10

Prime Loops **DOWNLOAD**
Drum n Bass Drum Loops €11

Contact Via website
 Web www.primeloops.com
 Format Acidized WAV, Ableton Live, Apple Loops, MPC, Reason, REX2



The latest from Prime Loops is a bargainous collection of DnB beats, with which both the quantity and quality of the supplied material are surprising, given the minimal outlay. For 11 quid, you get 110 loops ranging in tempo from 161 to 178 BPM, and while the standard does vary a bit, many of them are great. Stylistically, they range from breakbeat-fuelled affairs to steppier rhythms and more esoteric experimental beats, though generally the junglier, break-based loops are the most polished and immediately inspiring. A sound investment for loop-loving junglists!

9/10