

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated

IK Multimedia iLoud | €240

www.ikmultimedia.com

The iLoud is IK Multimedia's first wireless speaker system. Packed with 2x3-inch drivers and 2x3/4-inch tweeters belting out 40 Watts of power, it certainly lives up to its name.

The box itself feels reassuringly dense but not too heavy and will grant

you up to ten hours of battery life. Bluetooth serves wireless connectivity and the Bluetooth Pairing button on the rear panel is all you need to get connected. A 3.5mm stereo input is available to 'go wired', which will eliminate any latency present with the Bluetooth connection. The rear panel

also reveals a 1/4-inch mono jack input to connect a guitar or dynamic mic. This signal is routed to your iOS device via a supplied cable, effectively using the iLoud as an interface for IK's excellent AmpliTube app. The effected sound then reappears out of the iLoud. Clever.

And it is indeed loud. Highs are detailed and the low frequencies are deep and not muddy, and overall the sound is well-balanced courtesy of the digital crossover and DSP. Solid sound with more than a few tricks up its sleeve. *Simon Arblaster*

8/10



ACS T1 Live! Monitors | £699

www.acscustom.com

You're probably more familiar with ACS in-ear 'phones than you might think. Chances are if you're watching the good and the great belting it out on TV they're wearing ACSs in their ears. Or fashionably draping them around the neck.

These are custom 'phones – buy online and you'll be directed to all the places in your area that can take

moulds of your ear canals. Even larger branches of Boots will do the job.

Wearing is a breeze and once in place the soft silicon fits undetectably and stays put, flexing slightly to give a snug fit as you move. Kevlar coated (replaceable) leads stay untangled and feel predictably bulletproof.

The sound is remarkable – the best in-ears we've ever tested – which is only made more impressive given

their invisibility. The T1 Live! we tested employs three drivers inside each ear's nugget delivered by two tiny sound holes, delivering bass levels that – when pushed with EQ – genuinely sound like full-size phones. Out of the box response is very flat but treat them to a little EQ and top and bottom really sing out.

The T1 Live! are ACS's latest models and – incredibly – even include microphones in each ear to provide ambient feedback alongside the direct signal. No more draping one around your neck if you feel too disconnected from the band. Right now these mics are dormant, as an Ambient Processor unit which uses them is 'coming soon'.

Yes, they don't come cheap but these are a potential best friend for life. *Daniel Griffiths*

9/10



Impact Soundworks Shreddage 2 | \$139

<http://impactsoundworks.com>

Emutating guitar sounds is problematic – or it was until Impact Soundworks launched Shreddage.

Version 2 for Kompact 5 is rammed full of chords and articulations to get the most authentic sound possible. It has more development for lead guitar techniques, and, building on from the huge sample set for rhythm guitar playing, the library also features pinched harmonics and control over slides, pull-offs and hammer-ons.

With so many different samples to trigger and options to produce authentic playing styles, this may not seem a very easy instrument to play. There is some intelligent mapping in place here. Velocity sensitive control on each single note allows for fluid performance. The hardest velocity produces a pinched harmonic, whereas the softest velocity will trigger a palm-muted version, and in the middle is a standard picked note with natural sustain.

The quality of the samples here is really good. Although aimed at Rock and Metal, it lends itself to any genre. For those more accustomed to keys than strings, it is ideal with its impressive soundset and amount of control. But some guitarists may find it frustrating when the real thing is easier to play. *Simon Arblaster*

8/10

Urban Elite Urban Pop Vol 1 | £20

www.producerloops.com



Step up *Urban Pop Vol 1*. In its folders you'll find construction kits (claps, bass, guitars, one shots...) for five cool and edgy tracks for you to dismantle. How do you define Urban Pop? Think of a moody Rihanna number, or a Timbaland album cut, and you'll be in the right ballpark.

The super slick tracks come in at 66, 80, 90, 95 and 100bpm, and each kit has a folder of MIDI files so you can swap the rumbling basses or strings for ones from your own collection. The vibe as standard, though, takes in mournful chords, tough beats, heavy basslines, power synth, and a splash of digital sonics here and there. And there's a polish and sheen on every last one of them that you can almost see your face in. **Roy Spencer**

7/10

Loopmasters Atmospheric Vinyl Breaks | £18

www.loopmasters.com



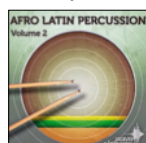
Digging for drum breaks is a staple pastime of any self-respecting producer. True masters of the art will know their Library records from their Polish Jazz breaks, and live for the musty smell of a dusty vinyl spot. This collection aims to recreate the type of lucky drum finds tucked away in such obscure records.

This simply dope collection of live and synthesized drum hits and loops oozes character, and the found sounds, moody samples and shuffling percussion also provide the depth and the atmosphere the title promises. 938MBs of samples make up 30 kits, and helpfully labelled bpm range from 78-132, so everything from Chillout to Nu-Skool Breaks is catered for. I wonder if the crackling vinyl sound on some samples was added after? It's that hard to tell. Also included are patches for Kontakt2, HALion, SFZ, EXS24 and Reason NN-Xt. **Simon Arblaster**

8/10

Wave Alchemy Afro Latin Percussion Vol 2 | £25

www.loopmasters.com



I imagine you've spent many an hour fiddling with shakers in a bid to create a sweet percussive layer to your track, only to end up with a stiff loop that lacks any groove whatsoever. So, why not call in the professionals? World-class percussionist Ed Uribe [Ray Barretto, Tania Maria, Donald Byrd] is back with a full-bodied selection of loops and samples.

This drum-heavy collection is bursting with congas, djembe licks, bongos, and

timbales loops to spice up any production. Amongst the folders you get both 'raw' and 'time-corrected' loops, so you can either get inspired by the natural swing, or drop a quantised version into your rhythm sections. The sounds in this 1.5GB pack are wonderfully recorded with high-end mics and pre-amps, and have an organic feel that's full of expression. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

SM Studio Disco & Funk Keys | £15

www.samplemagic.com



Piano man Julian Chown fires up his classic 1977 MKII Rhodes on this warm and inspired collection of Disco and Funk

keyboard loops and one-shots. Like all the samples, the 43 one-shots are key labelled so fitting them into your DAW workflow, or with each other, is quick and simple. The 235 loops take in solos, backing loops and melodic top-lines. They're also bundled into 120, 125 and 130bpm folders, but sit well in any tempo.

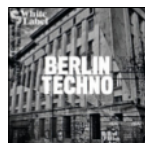
The chord progressions are emotive, and the loops playful. Chown's playing has been picked up on classic mics and run through vintage amps, and the results are given just the right amount of processing and compression to make them sound straight out of a '70s studio session.

Ideal for Broken Beat, Funky and Disco House or the groovier side of Breaks, and available in a choice of WAV, Rex2 and Apple Loops formats. **Roy Spencer**

8/10

SM White Label Berlin Techno | £17

www.samplemagic.com



If you've ever sweated at notorious clubs like Berghain, this banging bank of samples is bound to give you flashbacks. It's

420MB of tough, taut Techno inspired by the cutting-edge sounds that have taken over the non-negotiable Berlin scene.

The 311 loops and 100 one-shots are built for the big room. Each bass has a punishing throb, and the drums want to burst free of the fog of reverb they're wrapped in. Together with the nerve-tingling tops, ominous melodies, and moody atmospheric samples, they make for a pack charged with a primal energy. The basses either rumble and squelch like a tank rolling through a marsh, or push you into a corner with analogue muscle.

A dynamite tool kit for channelling the shuddering sounds at the Teutonic heart of modern Techno. The 24-bit Wav, Rex2 or Apple Loops are tempo-sync'd at 128bpm and key-labelled where applicable. **Daniel Griffiths**

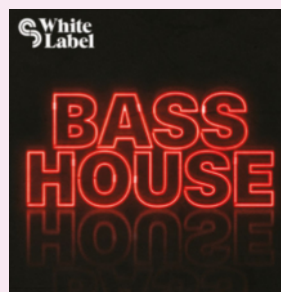
8/10



SYNTH SHOTS

£24.90 OUT NOW

Sample Magic present the ultimate synth one-shot collection, serving up over 1,000 key-labeled shots, chords, bass hits, pads, keys and FX expertly sculpted for almost any genre of electronic music.



BASS HOUSE

400MB of garage-flecked grooves, burbling basslines and moody melodics direct from the UK underground.

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DISCO & FUNK KEYS

Song-starting progressions, topline solos, backing loops and chord one-shots from the iconic Rhodes piano.

£14.90 OUT NOW



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