

# cm mini reviews

A rapid-fire round-up of sample libraries, ROMplers and music gear

Synthogy

## Ivory II Studio Grands £219

Web [www.timespace.com](http://www.timespace.com)  
Format Mac/PC, VST/AU/AAX/Standalone

Deviating from the concert grand tack, the latest in Synthogy's series of massively multisampled pianos comprises the Steinway B and Bösendorfer 225 - thoroughbred 7' studio performers both. Steinway invited the developers to their factory to choose the specific Model B used (which was then recorded at Power Station New England), while the 225 is resident at Firehouse Studios, Pasadena, where it's been tickled by countless LA sessioneers. Together, the two libraries weigh in at an epic 112GB.

The last time we looked at Ivory II was in **cm189**, when American Concert D scored 10/10. With the release of Studio Grands, the engine has been upgraded to v2.5, adding a handful of new features. The biggest is Shimmer, which enables tweaking of the decay rate of higher sustain harmonics, shortening and lengthening them for - in simple terms - a brighter or duller sound. Adjustable Half Pedaling controls,

compatibility with MIDI CC88 High Resolution Velocity, MIDI controller support for the Mac standalone version, and iLok-free authorisation are less exciting but all welcome.

The Ivory II interface gives plenty of sound-shaping control, from editable resonance and lid position to key and pedal noise, dynamic range and stereo width, and there's even a simple onboard synth should you, for some reason, fancy layering in a cheesy pad sound. EQ, chorus and reverb are on tap in the Effects page, while the Session page grants access to a similarly comprehensive range of performance-related parameters, including pitching, velocity response and the aforementioned Half Pedaling controls.

Ivory II Studio Grands boasts four more velocity layers than previous entries in the series, for a total of 24, upping the playability



and realism even further than before. Both pianos sound absolutely magnificent, and contrast well with each other - the raw Bosendorfer being the weightier of the two, the Steinway having the brighter sound. Another fine addition to the Ivory II line-up, but isn't it about time that noughties-style GUI got a makeover?

**9/10**

Sonic Faction

## Dope Matrix Mod Squad \$69

Web [www.sonicfaction.com](http://www.sonicfaction.com)  
Format Mac/PC, Max For Live

A major overhaul of the 2014 original, Sonic Faction's Eurorack-inspired "virtual modular rack" for Max For Live now features full graphical Macro front ends for every one of its oscillators and effects modules. Aside from the visual improvements, the four multisampled oscillators (the A-110, Plan B and Cwejman analogues, and Piston Honda wavetable) have been functionally redesigned and added to with Lithium and Freak Mod, the first built on feedback delay, the second randomised FM.

As a playground of sampled Instrument and Audio Effect Racks (with 11 of the latter, all beautifully designed), Mod Squad is fun, productive and sonically edgy, but it's the Dope Sequencer and two new modulation devices (Curvature and Super Slider) that really make it, empowering Ableton Push and Novation Launchpad users with deep step sequencing and automation from the comfort of their control surface.

A solid \$29 upgrade for existing users, and a powerful creative tool for newcomers, particularly those running the supported controller hardware. Some documentation would be nice, mind.

**8/10**



HoRNet

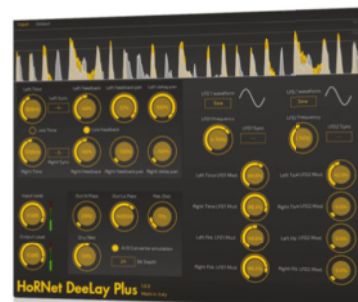
## DeeLay Plus €14

Web [www.hornetplugins.com](http://www.hornetplugins.com)  
Format Mac/PC, VST/AU/AAX

A dual delay unit with both lines freely pan-able from their default left/right positioning and able to feed back into each other, DeeLay Plus is flexible and easy to use. 6dB/octave low- and high-pass filters, vintage analogue converter emulation, and a distortion effect in the feedback loop bring the colour and noise, while a pair of LFOs (0.1-10Hz; Sine, Triangle, Square, Saw) are each independently assignable to the Left and Right Time and Feedback parameters for an endless continuum of modulation possibilities, from glitchy to dubbed-out. The display at the top shows input and output levels over time - pretty if not particularly useful.

The freedom DeeLay Plus gives in terms of the stereo positioning and feedback of its two modules is central to its character, along with that simple-but-powerful modulation setup. We'd have liked a few more filter slopes, and the ability to modulate their cutoff frequencies, but even without those, HoRNet's nifty plugin delivers a hell of a lot of delay action for the money.

**9/10**



# Soundware round-up



## Billain Nervosa Subscription

This 1GB neurofunk library by DnB scientist Billain (aka Adis KutKut) really hits the spot. The 70 drum loops span a wide range of sonic and rhythmic colours; the 68 kurb-stomping basses constitute a tour de force of resampling dexterity; the 61 top and percussion lines are lively; and the One Shots folder is bursting with mix-ready drones, FX, bass and more.

Proceedings hit a bit of a lull with the synth loops, which are neither numerous nor particularly interesting, but the sheer muscle and bite of the rest of the collection makes up for that.

[www.noiiz.com](http://www.noiiz.com)

9/10

## Native Instruments

### Street Swarm £44

Produced by Snipe Young and evoking the sounds and flavours of 90s New York hip-hop, Street Swarm is a Maschine 2 Expansion presenting itself as a "crate digger's dream", and packed with retro funk-influenced hits and licks. The drums are the main draw, taking in a ton of rounded kicks, phat snares, ticky hi-hats and vibey percussion; but the basses, keyboards, horns, synths and other melodies are crackling with vinylistic atmosphere, too. We also greatly appreciate the use of Macros to bring hands-on immediacy to all 50 Kits, which should be a given with every Maschine library.

[www.native-instruments.com](http://www.native-instruments.com)

9/10



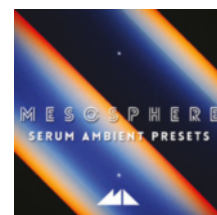
## Mode Audio

### Mesosphere £14

60 presets for Xfer Records' all-conquering Serum wavetable synth, programmed with ambient production in mind and thus largely of the slow-moving, evolving kind, making heavy use of filter and wavetable position modulation. Alas, there are no User WAVs involved – all of Mesosphere's presets use those that come with the synth – which is a shame, as new wavetables are always appreciated. On its own terms, though, Mesosphere serves up a decent number of truly gorgeous, lovingly crafted basses, textures, drones, leads, pads, FX and more.

[www.modeaudio.com](http://www.modeaudio.com)

8/10



## Loopmasters

### Pedestrian – Dusty Electronica £35

The masterful producer hooks up with Loopmasters for his debut sample library, and as those familiar with his work will expect, it's an idiosyncratic affair. Many of Dusty Electronica's 198 drum, bass and melodic loops are very long (often over 30 seconds), which is good to see, except there's a lot of silence involved in some of them. The sounds themselves are charmingly dusty, naturalistic and 'deep', and the 294 one-shots make great sampler fodder.

[www.loopmasters.com](http://www.loopmasters.com)

8/10



## Goldbaby

### Tape Drum Machine Collection \$49

If you don't already own any of the four libraries that have been remastered and brought together for this 7000-strong library of one-shot drums (Tape Drum Machines Vol 1, 2 and 3, Analog AutoRhythms Vol 1), you're in for quite a treat. 55 classic drum machines – including the Linn LM-1 and 2; Roland TR-55, 330, 505, 626, 707, 727; Acetone Rhythm; Combo Sideman and Super Spacedrum, to name but a fraction – are deconstructed and mapped to various sampler formats, sounding as lively and 'analogue' as can be.

[www.goldbaby.com](http://www.goldbaby.com)

9/10



Ilio

**Hardwired for Omnisphere 2 £30**

This 400MB preset library for Omnisphere 2 brings 103 new patches to Spectrasonics' amazing soft synth. The angle is modular synthesis, and an unspecified array of "cutting edge" devices were sampled to create the 92 Sound Sources involved, many of which are quite lengthy, with have a lot of movement and sonic development baked in. All kinds of sounds are covered - basses, leads, arps, drones, hits, pads, textural and 'sci-fi' FX, etc - and the producers have done a sterling job of capturing that modular character and quirkiness.

[www.timespace.com](http://www.timespace.com)**8/10**

Puremagnetik

**Aleph I \$20**

31 Alpha Juno patches mutisampled for Live, Kontakt and Logic Pro X. The Live Racks include effects and are all fully Macro-assigned for instant tweaker gratification, while the Logic Pro X patches include a consistent effects rack and Smart Controls, and the scripted Kontakt engine features filter, envelope, LFO and effects parameters. The sounds are quite diverse, ranging from basses, leads and strings to plucks, percussion and keys, and if Roland's classic 80s synth floats your boat, this is a great - if short-range - way to get it into your productions.

[www.puremagnetik.com](http://www.puremagnetik.com)**7/10**

Loopmasters

**MDE – Vocal Underground £30**

The debut sample library from house production duo My Digital Enemy includes a moderate number of well produced, energetic drum, bass and synth loops, but is really all about the vocals. Eight folders divide 286 processed vocal loops and one-shots (many of the former built on many of the latter) up into Garage, Tech Chops, Phrases, Tones, Hits, Phrases and Stabs, between them encompassing rhythmic cut-ups, downshifted hooks, soulful ad libs, sidechained lines and much more. It's all good stuff, although we'd have liked a few more female vox in the Loops folders.

[www.loopmasters.com](http://www.loopmasters.com)**8/10**

Artisan Audio

**Ethereal Deep House £20**

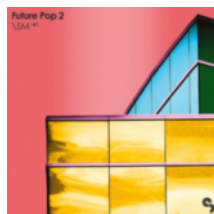
This budget-priced 500MB collection of loops for deep house production doesn't do anything wrong per se, but it struggles to leave a lasting impression. The 51 drum and percussion loops aren't particularly strong and don't get the creative juices flowing, and the 20 basslines are serviceable but unimaginative. Better things happen in the Melodic folder, though, where 100 mostly synth-based loops see Artisan Audio playing to their evident strength, bringing together an enjoyable set of hooks, riffs and arps that could light up any dancefloor.

[www.loopmasters.com](http://www.loopmasters.com)**7/10**

Sample Magic

**Future Pop 2 £35**

The original Future Pop scored 9/10 in **cm231**, and the follow-up continues down the same stylistic path, fusing R&B, hip-hop and (to a lesser extent) trap. Highlights among its 919 loops and one-shots are the 40 stemmed beats, 60 heavily processed vocals and 51 synth lines. The 20 melodic mini construction kits are a little more samey than we're used to from Sample Magic, though. The deal is sweetened with 12 Live Racks and 20 presets for Serum, and Future Pop 2 is an impressive proposition for urban producers, albeit not quite as engaging as its predecessor.

[www.samplemagic.com](http://www.samplemagic.com)**8/10**

Sample Magic

**Rolling Tech House £35**

The low drum loop count in Sample Magic's new genre library is a bit disappointing (16, with stems, totalling 81 files), particularly given how tantalisingly good they are, but that's made up for somewhat by a very well-stocked one-shot drums folder. On the other hand, the 'tops' situation is almost overwhelming, with separate sets of hat, percussion and top loops, the last pairing up yet more hat and percussion loops! Beyond that, the basses are sub-tastic, the plucky synth loops are awesome, and the vocal cut-ups are suitably 'tech'. Outstanding.

[www.samplemagic.com](http://www.samplemagic.com)**9/10**

Zero-G

**Sound Bites £57**

These 982 categorised spoken word samples are intended for music production, but lack the edge and attitude required for such deployment. Part of the problem is that American voiceover artist Earon B Mackey's sound and delivery are inescapably commercial - a plus in his day job, but at odds with the house or urban music samplists ethos. The other issue is writer Allan Cerf's scripts, many of which are just unusable ("Nice shirt, dude. Charlie Brown know you stole it?"; "You ever bit down on a man's shoulder?"). Maybe we're missing the point, but we don't get it...

[www.timespace.com](http://www.timespace.com)**5/10**

Looptone

**The Night Shift – Downbeat Soul £25**

Looptone's latest 310-sample offering is vague in its stated direction but essentially coalesces as an eclectic chillout library full of ear-tickling surprises. There's an obvious dub influence in the drums that sets them apart from the usual downtempo fare and works well with the mellifluous piano and Wurly loops; but if there's a headline, it's probably the 119 laid-back synth loops, with their 80s vibes and analogue warmth. MIDI files for most of the basses and melodies seal the deal.

[www.loopmasters.com](http://www.loopmasters.com)**9/10**