

cm mini reviews

A rapid-fire round-up of sample libraries, iOS apps and more

IK Multimedia iRig Pro £119

Web www.ikmultimedia.com
Format Mac/iOS

The iRigs just keep coming - this latest addition to the range is an input-only audio and MIDI interface for iOS and Mac. It doesn't support Windows PCs, though, oddly enough.

First impressions are good. It's small but chunky, with a rubberised finish that seems admirably scratch-resistant. We were quite surprised at how light it is, and while this imparts a slightly 'consumer' feel to the unit, it certainly can't be described as a bad thing, given its remit of portability. There are only two controls to negotiate: a 48v phantom power switch and a Gain dial for boosting the input. A pair of LEDs indicate audio and MIDI input and power status. While the iRig Pro draws enough juice from your iOS device or Mac to handle instrument, line and dynamic mic level signals, phantom powering a condenser mic requires the insertion of a battery, which is included in the box.

Connection to your recorder is made using the included dock or Lightning cable, while

Macs are catered for by a USB cable - the iRig end of each is the usual 7-pin DIN plug. You also get a six-foot minijack-to-5-pin-DIN cable for MIDI hookup. The 1/4" balanced jack/XLR combi input is located at the bottom of the unit, while the minijack MIDI input is on the left hand side. You also get a bundle of free IK Multimedia software upon registering the device.

The iRig Pro records at 24-bit, 44.1/48kHz, and the results are every bit as good as you'd expect from an audio interface of this price: low noise (even with the Gain pushed hard), good dynamics and generally solid capture.

There are a couple of omissions, though. We're not that bothered by the lack of a line out, but a USB input for hooking up MIDI keyboards without DIN sockets onboard would be appreciated. Nonetheless, the iRig Pro does absolutely deliver on its promise of furnishing the mobile musician with high-quality audio and MIDI input for the full gamut of sources.

8/10



Virsyn Cube Synth £14

Web www.virsyn.de
Format iPad

A scaled-down version of Virsyn's Mac/PC additive synthesiser, Cube Synth joins the pantheon of iPad 'power synths', producing ear-tingingly good sounds via a powerful, flexible, fun touch interface.

As any good iOS synth should, Cube enables you to get immediately hands-on with its top level parameters for instant results, then go far deeper when you're ready. 400-odd presets serve as excellent starting points, and the random preset generator is always worth a stab.

Cube's architecture is built on four simultaneous voices, with 512 partials per voice. The Spectral Morphing engine enables controlled morphing between the four voices, with the path of travel drawn into the central XY display, and in-depth adjustment of the 64-stage Volume, X-axis and Y-axis envelopes done in a very detailed trio of editors. All three of these parameters can also be modulated by the usual list of sources (mod wheel, velocity, keytrack, aftertouch, etc), as can Brightness (a very effective global filter that moves in mysterious

ways...) and overall envelope time.

The Detail editors are beautiful to behold, enabling sweeping changes to be made to various per-partial parameters (Level, Pan, Envelope Attack and Envelope Decay), as well as the Morphing Filter (used to create all sorts of crazy frequency-manipulation and formant filtering effects) and the noise generator, which adds noise to the corresponding partials within its defined spectrum. Yup, this is complicated stuff.

There's also a brilliantly designed arpeggiator/step sequencer that gives access to Note offset, Tie, Accent, Octave and Key within one window, and includes another Randomize button. At the end of the chain, a bank of seven well-furnished effects (EQ, Phaser, Delay, Overdrive, Ensemble, Chorus and Reverb) bring the polish.



Cube's four-voice morphing setup is its headline feature, fuelling mind-blowingly organic, evolving tones over which extensive control is given to the user. It doesn't hurt that it just sounds superb generally, either, of course.

A synth of serious importance - both musical and academic - this is up there with Animoog and Nave, even if it is a bit bewildering at times.

9/10

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Native Instruments Kinetic Metal €99

Web www.native-instruments.com
Format Mac/PC, Kontakt 5/Kontakt 5 Player

Sound designer Jeremiah Savage spent a year recording the raw material for NI's latest Kontakt Player library, and a quick tour of the individual elements that make up its 200+ instruments reveals that it was time very well spent indeed. Drawing on an armoury of, er, metallica including a sword, an antique phone, a cauldron, some steel balls, a typewriter, a tailpipe and scissors, amongst many other objects, each instrument combines four 'Metals' with four 'Waves' (sampled synth sounds) to create a wealth of extraordinarily complex timbres.

The stunning, smoothly animated steampunk-style interface enables four preset mixes of the eight channels to be set up and morphed between (albeit in linear A-B-C-D-A fashion), using the Forge Morph Knob. The FX Morph Knob, meanwhile, does the same, but for four preset effects states. The effects themselves comprise Colour (EQ and filters), Distortion, Movement (a combination of

modulation processors and delay) and Space (reverb, delay and rotary speaker), and they bring plenty of mayhem to proceedings. Both knobs can be automated in the Motion section, following a series of preset LFO wave shapes or a recorded envelope, the rate and depth of which are controlled by the Speed and Strength knobs. They can also be linked for simultaneous operation.

Kinetic Metal's strengths are the sheer amount of sounds it gives you to play with, the unarguable beauty of those sounds, and the ability to shift the mix of them around within each instrument. It's a real shame you can't make your own instruments by freely loading up Metals and Waves from the internal library, however, and it must be said that there's also a certain amount of sameyness to many of



the instruments (which can be generally be categorised as 'percussive' and 'soundscapes'), as is probably inevitable with such a focused selection of source material. Nonetheless, this is a fascinating, fun and incredibly addictive sonic resource that would make a great addition to any sound designer's Kontakt library.

8/10

Sugar Bytes WOW2 £10

Web www.sugar-bytes.de
Format iPad

WOW2 is Sugar Bytes' third Mac/PC-to-iPad-app crossover, and following in the footsteps of Thesys and Turnado before it, it's a feature-complete port of their fantastic filter plugin (cm197, 9/10). So, you get the full 21 filter types, all seven distortion algorithms, the dual vowel filter and that superb modulation system, including the endlessly entertaining wobble generator. In fact, it even adds to the featureset with a trio of X/Y performance controllers, each assigned to a separate pair of parameters. Sonically, it appears to be 1:1 identical, with all the bite, versatility and character of the original. An audio player is built in, too, but with Audiobus support, that's really just for demo purposes.

Ultimately, apart from the fact that it's not running as a plugin within a DAW, the iPad version of WOW is even better than its desktop counterpart. iPad musos, this is a must!

10/10



Sample Logic Impakt £289

Web www.timespace.com
Format Mac/PC, Kontakt 5/Kontakt 5 Player

20GB of orchestral and world percussion samples (recorded on the scoring stage at Skywalker Sound, no less) have gone into the creation of this gargantuan collection of 850 instruments and multis from one of the best soundware developers in the world. Although you do get all the raw material to play with (timpani, vibraphone, marimba, cajon, etc), the vast majority of the library comprises heavily (ie, beyond the point of recognition) "morphed" variations thereon. Many of these are percussive in nature but wholly otherworldly, while the rest take in atmospherics, sequences, melodic instruments, pads, loops and so on. If there's a theme throughout, it's big, shiny noises of a largely cinematic nature, and Sample Logic's superb scripted Kontakt interface (as used in several of their libraries) gives access to a broad array of fully editable effects and performance tools that exponentially expand the depth of each and every instrument.

A very professional ROMpler for very professional producers at a very professional price.

9/10



Soundware round-up

MonsterSounds

Forward Thinking Dubstep By Genetix £30

Representing the techier side of dubstep, Genetix's debut sample library covers its bases well with a total of 1.7GB of drums, percussion, synths, basses, pads and vocals in both one-shot and looped formats. There are some gems in there, and the bulk of the material is well-produced and workmanlike, but the whole pack isn't hugely memorable.

www.loopmasters.com

7/10



Big Fish Audio

Illusion £85

1100+ "cinematic" guitar samples, generally treading the dark and mysterious path, but getting quite groovy at times, too. Most of the sounds are lengthy and elaborate, and a wide range of playing styles is covered, including bowed and drilled. The distortion gets a bit overbearing in places, but since every sample comes in both amped and raw versions, that can be corrected.

www.timespace.com

8/10



Sony Creative Software

Urban Poet £28

Ten stultifying hip-hop construction kits - 124 full-length samples in total - that could serve no real purpose other than to recreate the repetitive album of tracks from which they were culled. The individual sounds themselves are OK, but as a sample library to be used for practical production purposes, Urban Poet is boring, overpriced and not particularly "urban".

www.sonycreativesoftware.com

5/10



Zero-G

Perpetuo £80

8GB of flute and piccolo phrases in 62 Kontakt 5 instruments. The performances are flawless, and each phrase has been recorded three times for layering. Keyswitches are used to move between chord or rhythm types, while the mod wheel controls dynamics. The main phrases are predefined (albeit reversible), but the FL Rhythms instrument brings real flexibility. Flutey!

www.timespace.com

8/10



Raw Cutz

Blow The Spots £15

Another peculiar, budget-priced crate from Raw Cutz, this one comprises a handful of so-so breaks, some usable single-hit drums and 87 hits, licks and phrases lifted from all manner of classic soul, funk and jazz tracks, presented at three pitches. As you'd expect, they sound great - musical, vinylistic, earthy and tastefully edited. It's all over rather quickly, though.

www.rawcutz.com

7/10



Resonance Sound

SOR Minimal Techno Revolution Vol. 3 £50

The fastidious Oliver Schmitt returns with the third instalment in his MTR series. With enough material here to keep you busy for months, the 127BPM (mostly kick-free) drum, synth and bass loops are bursting with vibe and rhythm, while the one-shot drums, FX and SID sounds are polished, imaginative and hard-hitting.

www.loopmasters.com

9/10



Native Instruments

Lazer Dice €49

The sounds of "future bass" (ie, post-trap meets post-dubstep) are brought to Maschine in NI's latest lavish expansion. The 47 'drum' kits (they go way beyond just drum sounds) incorporate 400MB of high-impact samples and 50 truly earth-shaking Massive presets. While versatility might not be on the agenda, consistency and low-end power certain are. Bouncin'.

www.native-instruments.com

8/10



Sonokinetic

Minimal \$200

...But not as in 'house'. Dividing the orchestra up into four freely mix-match-and-repeatable sections (Strings, Brass, Woodwind and Percussion), Minimal is a 21GB orchestral Kontakt phrase library with an impressive level of rhythmic and melodic/harmonic control, four mic positions and a rich, expansive sound. It's also immense fun to play - look at that interface! Genius.

www.sonokinetic.com

9/10



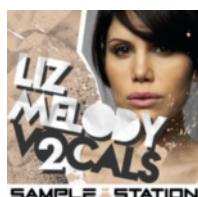
Sample Station

Liz Melody Vocals 2 £25

A second set of vocal tracks from the talented Liz Melody, comprising ten full songs, complete with harmonies and ad-libs. The recording and production are top-notch, but once again, we're just not sure what the point is in terms of usability. Are we meant to just put backing tracks under them for our own pleasure, because we wouldn't feel particularly comfortable or fulfilled basing serious projects on them?

sounds.beatport.com

6/10



Groove Criminals

Analogue Synth FX £5

We love a bargain, and the Crims' latest definitely qualifies as one, consisting of 112 24-bit bleeps, bumbles, zaps, wooshes and sweeps generated by a tasty line-up of analogue synths and outboard including the SH-101, Little Phatty, Filter Factory and Monotron. There's lots of stereo movement throughout, but no effects processing has been applied, making this a solid source of raw FX materials that's well worth a fiver of anyone's money.

www.soundstosample.com

9/10

