

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated

Voix MPY & MPX | £260

voixftd.com

There's no denying it – this is a great looking speaker system! And if the glossy black finish isn't your thing, there is a choice of three further colourways – purple, gold and red.

Sold as a 2.1 system you can also run the docking speaker, with its built-in subwoofer, as a standalone where clever internals split the speakers to run the stereo vertically. A good selection of inputs allow you to integrate it with just about any form of musical device, games console or TV. All this clever technology and design is great, but it just doesn't have the fullness and gutsy power of some far cheaper 2.1 systems. But if you want style over sound, this is it.

Phil Cheesbrough

6/10



ART SyncGen | £120

artproaudio.com

Though this pocket-size tool may not be the most exciting addition to a digital audio setup, it could be the

most important. With an array of digital interfaces and processors one can easily encounter a clocking nightmare when trying to get them to sing (or sync) from the same sample rate hymn sheet. As most digital audio equipment comes with S/PDIF and/or wordclock connections, ART have created the SyncGen to act as master clock with two S/PDIF outputs (RCA coaxial) and four wordclock outputs (BNC).

The SyncGen has a large LED display to indicate the chosen sample rate (44.1kHz, 48kHz, 88.2kHz, 96kHz, 176.4kHz and 192kHz) with a button to toggle the clock rate. The two S/PDIF connections send a clock

source made of zeros (or 'digital black'), which will mean the S/PDIF on the receiving unit will no longer be available for audio input.

With four BNC wordclock outputs the SyncGen is more than adequately armed to deal with this format, especially as one output can be daisy chained across a number of devices. Two T-adaptors and four 75Ω terminators are also included to help setup your routing. The SyncGen may not be a straight competitor to Apogee's Big Ben and other clock generators in terms of features and high-end audio reputation, but even so, the price difference is massive. For those in need of external clocking on a budget this is well worth considering. *Robbie Stamp*

8/10



STK Bluetooth Stereo Headset | £40

santok.com

This quirky, square set of cans look like they've time travelled from a '70s vision of the future – which

frankly, we love! They have the bonus of being decent sounding larger driver alternative to the usual MP3 earbuds, but not being so big that you look like one of those idiots on some kind of mission to tell the world that they're a DJ. In the box, a USB lead charges the cans and they pair up easily with any Bluetooth audio device (mobile, computer and such). They sound

really decent considering the price and with a built in mic, plus, calling, volume and track controls built in to the side of the headphones, you can pick up your calls without digging your phone out of your pocket. When a call is incoming, the volume fades and a ring sounds – hit the central multifunction button to answer the call and chat away. When you hang up the music starts again. Easy to use and at a bargain price. *Chris Barker*

9/10



TDK 16GB Trans-IT USB | €40

tdk-media.eu

This handy little drive is small enough to have in your pocket all the time and is a bargain for 16GB of

storage. No doubt by the end of next year we'll be walking around with 200GB in our pockets – but for now, this handy little thing has backed up projects and transferred multitracks with ease. Fast, driverless, and small – get one! *Chris Barker*

9/10



Logic 3 Valve80 | £299

logic3.com

When the Logic 3 Valve80 – an iPod dock/Aux amp with three valves – landed in the *FM* office, I was incredibly sceptical. The idea of colliding respected analogue technology with the icon of digital media was enough to raise a cynical eyebrow. Couple that with the price, and you'd be forgiven for raising both. That would be until you open the box.

The Valve80 is delicately packaged – each element getting its own box and protective material. Lifting out the amp and you're greeted with a very heavy unit. It's

minimal design coupled with the stainless steel casing and the glowing valves made it a very chic and slick unit. Top marks on the style front.

On the front there are a source switch and a volume knob. Round the back – there are banana plug speaker outs, two Aux ins and a composite and S-Video out. It also comes with a remote control and everything feels very high quality. Even the speaker cables supplied are thick and weighty.

Maybe it's the valves, maybe it's the speakers, but something along the way makes this one of the, if not THE best-sounding iPod dock I've ever heard. The low-end is tight and

controlled, the high-end is crisp and complementing – everything sits together perfectly at pretty much every volume level. There are a few issues – of course – that only really crop up as you're spending £300...

There's no 'adapter' for different iPod sizes, so every iPod sits in the same-sized dock, resulting in electrical buzz at times when it sits a bit loose, from the iPod Touch at least. The remote has Bass and Treble EQ controls, but with no reset, so when you change the EQ, you'll need to remember your settings in order to get it back to flat. On top of that, you can't change the audio source using

the remote control. A USB port (to use this as a proper dock with your computer) would have been nice too.

I don't think anyone who has a dedicated hi-fi system already would be interested in the Valve80. That being said, for anyone who's looking for a central media amp for their music, TV and/or games console, with an iPod dock for added convenience, the Valve80 sounds fantastic and comes with some high-quality speakers. It's pricey, but you may find that you won't need anything else.

Declan McGlynn

9/10

Airwaves and Radiophonica | £25 each

timespace.com



Ace sound synthesist Ian Boddy is back again with a couple of themed sample packages.

Airwaves is a collection of samples recorded through a radio transceiver and the result is 552MB of wacky sounds separated into the broad categories of atmospheres, backgrounds, noises, signals and voices. I suspect that the vast majority of the samples are aliens' attempts to communicate with me but I haven't figured out what they're saying yet. Sticking with the Sci-Fi theme, the

analogue synth sounds of Radiophonica are a tribute to the work of the legendary BBC Radiophonic Workshop and it's a slightly better all-round package as there's a bit more variety to the samples.

Everything's delivered in 24-bit 44kHz WAV format and Kontakt instrument files. It's not immediately apparent what type of music you could produce with these, so they won't be for everyone, but they're both worth a listen if you're after something unusual that's still slickly produced and well recorded.

Greg Scarth

7/10

Delicious Allstars Funk Constructor | from £30

loopmasters.com



The title sounds like the kind of thing you might come up with if you stuck a few pins in a dictionary but this

new collection from Loopmasters is an absolute belter. With loops, hits, vocals from Jocelyn Brown plus loads of horns, flutes, bass and organs, there's enough for anyone who needs a big stack of Funk-based samples or breakbeats. It's a little more pricey than some of the competition, but when the samples are this good it's hard to argue.

Chris Barker

8/10

Human Beatbox Samples | £15

loopmasters.com



Fed up of covering your microphone with spit while attempting your best Biz Markie impression? Here's your answer. Recorded by

Mowgli, it's not just a collection of the same old beats that you're used to hearing wannabe B-boys spitting. Unlike most beatbox sample packs, there are no loops, so you'll have to get creative with the 200 or individual hits. The nice price makes this one a useful addition to your sample library. *Greg Scarth*

8/10