

cm / mini reviews

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

4PocketsAudio Meteor £11.99

Format iPad (requires iOS 4.2 or later)
Contact Via website
Web www.4pocketsaudio.com

Meteor is a multitrack recorder for iPad offering up to 12 audio tracks and featuring a built-in mixer. It can use either the built-in audio capabilities of your iPad, an adapter such as iRig/Ampkit, or an iOS 4.2-supported USB audio interface. All the basic trimmings you'd expect are included such as a sample editor, simple (though slightly fiddly) automation and effects.

The effects are very good, including reverb, stereo delay, chorus/flange, tone boost, compression, distortion and EQ. Our only objection is that the last three are paid add-ons, which isn't made clear on the purchase screen, so budget for at least another £1.79 each for compression and EQ, as both are pretty much essential, we'd say.

Other nice touches include sidechain compression, track freeze, three send buses, fast loading/saving and a great no-nonsense manual that tells you how much you can

realistically expect from the app and how to maximise its potential.

Even for such a compact app, we still think there are a few omissions, including track-labelling and track delay. But it's easy to forget about these in use, as the sound, look, layout and ergonomics are truly fantastic, including the mixer. And with the ability to import audio via iTunes and export as cCAF or WAV, simple but professional-sounding results can be had. This is definitely a tool, not a toy.

Should you get it? Since it's got no virtual instruments, bundled loops, etc, it is primarily for those who just need to record and/or mix audio on the move, so it could be useful for anyone recording live gigs or demos out and about. It's also good for laying out and



combining voice recordings or soundtracks (you can import video using a paid-add on).

As great as Meteor is, if you don't fall into one of the above categories, you might not get much out of it. If mobile recording and mixing are your thing, though, it's highly recommended.

9/10

Toontrack Number 1 Hits EZX £55

Format EZX for EZdrummer/Superior Drummer
Contact Via website
Web www.timespace.com

Last month we rocked hard with Metalheads EZX, and this time we're popping to the top with Number 1 Hits EZX. It features classic TR-808, TR-909, Boss DR-55 and Linn drum machine sounds, all pumped through producer Niklas Flyckt's tasty outboard hardware. The resulting sounds are as juicy as you'd expect from the man who manned the mixing board for Britney Spears' massive *Toxic*. There are even some treated acoustic hits thrown in to keep it keen. Oh, and some MIDI grooves, of course.

There are 22 pads altogether. You get short, regular and long kick pads, with plenty of choices for each. Sounds include thumping dance 909s, booming 808s, classic clicky Linn kicks, and a bunch of processed acoustic sounds. There's also a TR-808 "pad" that you can play chromatically via MIDI - a nice touch.

For snares, you have regular, small and fat pads, ranging from curt snaps to punchy dance hits, on through to big 80s-style sounds. Elsewhere, there are closed/open/small hi-hats,

high/mid/low toms, small/large crashes, a ride, four percussion pads and two for FX impacts.

The mixer setup is one of the more complex in an EZX, with the 19 channels colour-coded to group them together. Each group (except FX) has an Attitude slider for dialling in appropriate effects - eg, overdriven kicks, compressed snares, reverb where appropriate, etc. You can turn down the main sound to hear only the processed version.

Sound-wise, it's crisp, fat, punchy and all the other sonic superlatives you can think of. The effects sound professional and bring a real radio-ready, up-to-the-minute vibe to what are otherwise old-school sounds. Flyckt's proven processing expertise has clearly done the trick.

The drawback is that you don't get the



flexibility of a proper drum sampler - you can't even do basic things like tune the drums or use, say, two short snare sounds in the same kit. Still, if you need to do that, you can always render a sound out and stick it in a sampler.

You don't get as many hits as some packs - we counted about 260, not including effected variants - but if you value quality over quantity and the EZX format works for you, then this pop-tastic effort comes highly recommended.

8/10

Best Service

Ethno World 5 £389

Format Kontakt Player/Kontakt
Contact mail@bestservice.de
Web www.bestservice.de

This latest edition of Marcel Barsotti's Ethno World is subtitled Professional & Voices, and it brings voices and choirs to the mix. It adds 15 categorised folders (199 patches) to the existing ethnic instrument package of over 600 patches across ten categories. As a whole, Ethno World now covers massive ground, including stringed, wind, keyed and percussion instruments from around the globe, as well as newly recorded solo voices and an ethnic chamber choir.

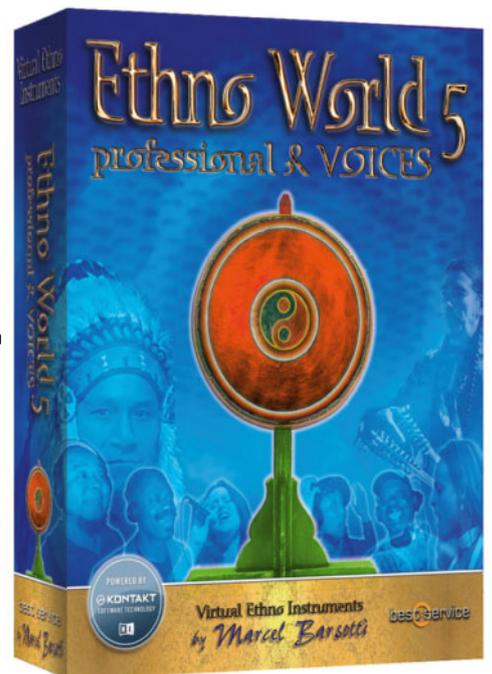
The 'ethnic' tag denotes both the source and intended application of the library. However, in use, you'll find much of the instruments section simply grouped by type rather than source location, and we had to head to the manual to discover that the Saron Gamelan, for example, is from the Indonesian island of Lombok. By contrast, and more sensibly, the voice library is more specifically labelled (Bulgarian Female Voices, Peruvian Male Voices, European Ethnic

Voices, and so on), and this often makes instrument selection quicker.

Also very positive is the implementation of Kontakt 4 features. Not only do you get a five-tab interface (quick edit, effects, group edit, microtuning and performance), but new features include sample start time, legato mode, humanise and use of K4's Beat Machine and Time Machine II features to enable loop-by-loop adjustments. Use of these last two is clearly indicated in the patch names (BM or TM) and is a massive bonus for anyone wanting to sync or tweak the many percussion or instrument loops on offer. Also rather useful is the inclusion of separately tabbed effects within the main effects page, and unbelievably for an instrument of this type, resonant low- and high-pass filters with envelopes.

EW5 is not a cheap package (existing users benefit from a competitive upgrade deal), but if you have the time to explore and tweak, there's a lot here that will appeal to producers working in most musical genres.

9/10



Way Out Ware

SynthX £3.99

Format iPad (iOS 3.2)
Contact info@wayoutware.com
Web www.wayoutware.com

SynthX draws upon the same synthesis engine that powered Way Out Ware's KikAxxe plug-in - it even comes with KikAxxe presets. It has, however, been designed specifically for the iPad's multitouch screen and provides multiple performance variations, including keys, X/Y graph (similar to the one in MorphWiz) and a grid. The vertical axis on the former two can act as a mod source. It also records and AudioCopy is supported.

All the usual synth stuff is here: You get an oscillator with mixable pulse, square and noise. A wicked resonant filter provides the squelch, and there's an LFO and an ADSR envelope. You can throw distortion, flanger, delay and chorus effects on, and even apply effects to an external signal routed into the iPad. Sounds good? Sounds great, actually. The trouble is that it hasn't been totally stable for us. Polyphonic use repeatedly crashed it on an iPad 1 and it occasionally crashed on opening on the iPad 2. Nevertheless, the included presets are awesome and inspired many hours of widdly soloing. Once they get the stability issues fixed, this one'll be a no-brainer.

7/10



Tim Bolstad £2.99

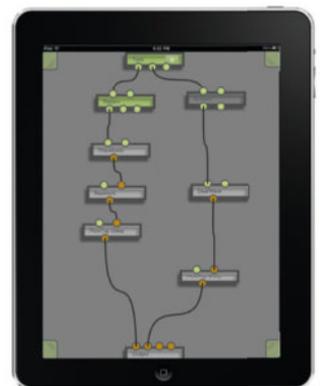
Dingsaller

Format iPad app (iOS 4.2)
Contact timbolstad@gmail.com
Web timbolstad.com

Billed as "a workspace for creating algorithmic compositions", Dingsaller resembles Bidule or Audiomulch, with modules that can be patched together as you like. There's a sampler with loop points, while the two synths feature multiple waveforms and, on the DualWave model, an LFO.

Sound shapers include Resonant filter, Chorus and Multitap Delay. Control devices such as an XY Pad, Slide, MIDI Control I/O and Tilt are here, too. There's a master clock that drives the pattern-based sequencer modules. In addition to the Random Note Generator, you can also use the basic Pattern Sequencer to roll your own sequences. Note Filter, Pitch Shift, Doubler, Flip-Flop and MIDI Note In and Out are included to help you manipulate the patterns. Core MIDI is supported, so you can use an interface plugged into the dock or go wireless. There's just enough here to create interesting and engaging sounds and sequences that can be manipulated in real-time. Live noodlers will love it, and modular synth fans will want to give it a look as well. Dingsaller is a humdinger!

9/10



Soundware round-up

Synth Magic

Sounds of the Quadra £20

The ARP Quadra is a classic analogue synth that you'll find slathered across John Carpenter's finest soundtrack work, amongst other pieces. This Kontakt instrument recreates its tones via samples of the real thing. The impressive GUI mimics the layout of the original and the results are excellent. This is a go-to old-school synth soundtrack machine at a silly price.

www.synthmagic.co.uk

9/10



Hollow Sun

Oscillosine \$8

This Kontakt instrument uses samples from a vintage Hewlett Packard sine tone generator. An odd choice, perhaps, but the results aren't quite as pristine as modern digital synths, and when coupled with LFOs, effects, envelopes, etc, it makes perfect sense. Think classic sci-fi blips and rich sub tones. With plenty of tweaking options at such a low price, it's hard to fault.

www.hollowsun.com

10/10



Loopmasters

Reggae SoundClash £30

Canadian dub wiz Dubmatix brings his experience to the table. It's no pastiche, though; this is as modern as it gets, and with 475 loops at between 60 and 180bpm, it's suitable for a wide range of genres. What makes the pack so appealing is its authenticity - you can even hear the breaths between notes on the horn samples. Classic sounds with a modern edge.

www.loopmasters.com

9/10



Puremagnetik

Opus \$12

Moog's Opus-3 analogue synth gets the Puremagnetik sampling treatment. The Opus-3 was a brass, string and organ machine, and although the approach of the synth is pretty basic, there's enough in the presets and versatility of the editing options to keep things moving. If you're after Kraftwerk-style tones and clean oscillators, you won't go wrong here.

www.puremagnetik.com

8/10



Prime Loops

Dirty Pitch £15

Every one of these 120 lead synth loops is at 127bpm and labelled with its key. While this is a fairly flexible approach, most of the loops are similar. Think Afrojack gliding leads and you're on the money, but unless you're incredibly lazy, you could whip these up in no time. And surely half the fun with this sort of stuff is making your own signature leads, no?

www.primeloops.com

6/10



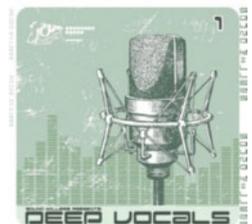
Sound Killers

Deep Vocals Vol 1 £8

A solution for those seeking vocal snippets and phrases, this pack contains 205 WAVs of everything from millisecond clicks to full sentences. There are chopped and glitched vocal noises while elsewhere you'll find phrases such as "Scream", "I am a superstar" and "Booty machine". It's a tad cheesy but well produced, and the price is very right.

www.producerloops.com

7/10



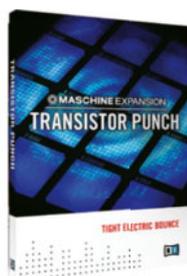
Native Instruments

Transistor Punch €49

NI finally launch their long-awaited official Maschine add-on packs. With 30 kits, 28 multieffects and 50 instruments, there's not a massive amount in this one, but what you're paying for is categorisation and quality. The samples sound great and are tight and of professional quality. They'll integrate into your library nicely, but it's fair to say that the price is a bit high.

www.native-instruments.com

7/10



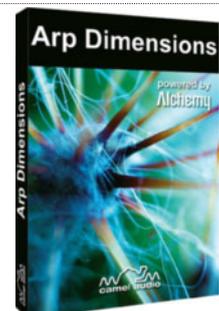
Camel Audio

Arp Dimensions £39

Rather than the tired and simplistic arpeggios you often find, this Alchemy soundpack offers refreshing bells, chimes and wispy lush textures alongside droning basses, ravey stabs and classic acid sounds. Most of the patches are deep and complex, and some are outright cinematic. There's no real leaning towards any particular genre and the standard is generally high.

www.camelaudio.com

8/10



Sonokinetic

Sultan Strings €80

The fact that Sonokinetic can cram all of Sultan Strings' 5500 samples into just one Kontakt multi demonstrates the company's dedication to versatility and usability. There's really no other library out there to match the variety of articulations and outright playability of these Middle Eastern string loops. Add a simple but effective reverb menu and easily adjustable sample start points and you get some real Turkish delight at a tasty price.

www.sonokinetic.net

9/10



Zero-G

Spiritoso £100

This time-saving library is designed to complement other string section ROMplers with 17GB of cello phrases. The quality and realism can't be faulted and the simple interface is consistent across the 57 tempo-synced patches. It's a shame there are no legato articulations for creating your own unique melodies, aside from the keyswitched arpeggios included. Even so, the package will add a human touch to any virtual string section. **cm**

www.timespace.com

7/10

