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Sean Tyas

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& Roland Gaia**

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PSST! Don't miss Korg's miniscule Monotron!



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Phone our UK hotline on: 0844 848 1602

Subscribe online at: myfavouritemagazines.com

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE... Tuesday, 18th May 2010

Printed in the UK by BGP Ltd on behalf of Future.

Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd,

2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT. Tel: 0207 429 4000

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Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).

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Welcome

Take A Break(down)



That's a big title for a big feature... Our *Mainroom Mixing: Elevators, Builds-Ups, Breakdowns & Drops* feature is something that we've been working on for months now and it's great to see it all come together (starting on page 36). We guarantee that there's a tip or a trick in there that'll help lift your music to the next level and

hopefully endear your tracks to a superstar DJ or two.

Alongside the great tips, it's been a great month for new hardware with the Frankfurt Musikmesse 2010 being the place to play with the latest kit. Our pick of the bunch starts on page 10 (watch out for some surprise new synths from the big guns at Korg and Roland).

Our *In The Studio With* this month has a Trance flavour as we visit Sean Tyas in Switzerland for an in-depth breakdown of how he makes his music. As ever, be sure to check out the accompanying video on DVD too.

In our reviews zone we've the return of a classic: the world's first review of Moog's Taurus 3, probably the ballsiest, bassiest synth ever made. Find out if it lives up to the legend on page 80.

And are you following us on Twitter yet? Why not? We're @futuremusicmag. Come join our (celebrity laden) throng and be sure to pick up the next packed issue of *FM*, on sale 18th May. Cheers!

Daniel

Daniel Griffiths, Editor
daniel.griffiths@futurenet.com

EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS THIS MONTH...

Marc '01
artist, producer



This month, Marc tackles the elusive art of breakdowns, build-ups and drops – aiming to create the perfect arrangement of the perfect club track. It all kicks off on page 36.

Dan 'JD73' Goldman
artist, producer



The Jazz Doctor himself takes on two major features this month. Firstly, it's the Moog Taurus 3, a monstrous bass pedal synth, restyled for the modern studio. Next, he explains all you need to know about musical cadences on the dancefloor.

Greg Scarth
music scientist



Greg's regular *Knowledge Base* tackles sampling and quantisation this month, while elsewhere he's revisiting old school working methods on the new Analogue Solutions Europa. See it all from page 58.

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Exclusive

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FMDVD

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INSIDE STORY



DVD Editor Will Seelig's inside track on the making of FM's DVD



This month we headed off to Switzerland to get in the studio with Trance star Sean Tyas. The added bonus was travelling by train to his home town. Despite being dark, it was still at great experience and a real break from the drudgery of international jet flight. The only downside was that – unlike Eric Prydz who's dislike of flying prompts him to craft his global smashes whilst travelling on trains – we didn't quite manage to do likewise. This time.

Enjoy the FM DVD? Want to see your favourite artist on video? Then email us at fmdvd@futurenet.co.uk



DVD HIGHLIGHTS

Quantisation & Swing

This month's first *Knowledge Base* audio examples help you understand the nuances of quantisation

From the Vaults: Italodisco Kits

750 This month, our trip to the archive has dug up an amazing set of construction kits in NI Kontakt format. All you could need to add that Italodisco flavour to your tracks

Builds & Drops

Dynamic arrangements are what make a great club track. This month's *Build Ups, Breakdowns and Drops* tutorial audio lets you hear the techniques you need to know

Sampling: Part Two

This month's second *Knowledge Base* audio examples offer further insight into the forgotten art of sampling

PLUS OUR SPECIAL BONUS SAMPLES COURTESY OF

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DRUMDOG LAYERED DRUM HITS



"Drums lacking punch? Tired of samples that don't fit the mix? Fear not. *Layered Drum Hits* contains 160 expertly sculpted kicks, snares, hats, percussion and FX hits all blended and processed to provide maximum transient energy whilst retaining sonic character."

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TECH-HOUSE



"Debut sample collection from the legendary Victor Calderone, whose residencies at New York's infamous Limelight, Crobar and Pacha clubs have cemented his status as one of the top-ranking DJs in the world. Along with Mike Frade, they present *Tech-House Essential Elements*."

FATLOU PRO SERIES URBAN ORCHESTRA 2



"Blastin' horns, powerful plucked pizzas, mammoth string sections and organic orchestral loops in the sequel to FatLoud's *Urban Orchestra*, boasting 100 all-new loops and 25 one-shot chords and hits. Inject symphonic sounds into your Hip Hop, R&B and Urban Pop productions."

ZERO-G PROGRESSIVE HOUSE



"Driving beats, hypnotic synths, throbbing basslines, euphoric FX, sizzling drum hits and more in this progressive and Minimal House library from Zero-G that kicks like a camel on steroids. Hundreds of loops and hits provided, recorded in pristine 24-bit audio, and professionally produced."

Sample Techniques

Each month, our sample creators work tirelessly to bring you original content for use in your music. As always, they go that extra step to make sure that the samples are both unique and usable...



Custom hand-made noise boxes

"As well as finding new audio toys via the usual route (online, eBay, hell even shops) we're also very lucky to have a few talented audio alchemists out there who knock us up the occasional magical box from a few scraps of wire and a few components. The 3 handmade one-offs we used this month were created by one such solder-wizard Andy Lemon (hit him up on Twitter @_lemon). The Punktastic and Tupperware Party are synth boxes contained in a mint tin and Tupperware lunch box (three for a quid at Poundland), while the Highly Flammable Filter is a rather fab low-pass filter built into a video case. Utterly fantastic."





GEAR USED



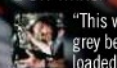
Noise Boxes
Groove Criminals
 use: Bleep Labs
 Thingamagoop



"It may look cute but this little monster spits, snarls, bleeps and pharts with the best of them. Based on a simple analogue synth circuit, a Thingamagoop's oscillator is controlled by a photocell – more light the higher the oscillators pitch. This cell in turn can be effected by the 'goops' blinking head LED for some mad bleep action."



Trance
Cyclick Samples
 use: Amek
 BCII Mixer



"This weighty grey beast is loaded with seven stereo line channels and two mono mic preamp channels, both featuring a sweet sounding three-band EQ section: hi- and lo-shelving filters (two fixed frequencies per band) and a fixed Q-swept mid peaking EQ. Perfect for shaping and summing layered virtual synths before sending it back via the A/D."



THE MAKING OF YOUR UNIQUE FM SAMPLES...

Noise Box Barmy

These diminutive colourful boxes truly bring the noise

This month's samples have two very different flavours. Cyclick Samples took on the challenge of equipping you with everything you need to make a great Trance track.

This collection also has plenty to offer for fans of the genre, as every instrument used is presented as multi-samples, all programmed for use in NI Kontakt.

Meanwhile Groove Criminals dug deep into their vast storeroom of boxes-that-go-bleep to bring us a totally unique collection of sounds from some of the strangest noise sources we have encountered at FM (a Tupperware synth anyone?).

We managed to interrupt the sonic smorgasbord that Groove Criminals was cooking up, to see if he could explain exactly what some of these knobbed-up boxes were and how they work.

"It's all about odd little noise boxes this month and a sample collection full of bleeps, bleeps, squarks, buzzes and not a 'proper' note in sight!"

Varied sources

"To mix things up as much as possible, we pulled out a varied collection of noise making contraptions, some commercially available from the big boys (Korg

Kaossilator), some smaller more limited units (Monotonic Labs N37/ Chimera BC8) through to some little gems we've had made just for us (see Sample Technique box)."

1,000 samples

Low down and dirty

"Lo-fi and unique is the name of the game, so we've sampled them off raw in all their warped glory with no external processing. The exception being the two Buddha Machines, (lo-fi scratchy sample playback boxes with a selection of chants and 'relaxing' meditation music) which we processed to hell to make them sound almost respectable – the bit rate was so low!"

Filter

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this month.

Korg's Miniscule Monotron

Get your magnifying glass out for Korg's brand new, 100% analogue synthesizer...

Twas quite a year for hardware at Frankfurt's Musikmesse 2010 show. Running from March 24th to the 27th, it's the place where manufacturers get to show off their latest goodies to a baying European audience.

One manufacturer delivered more than most, with an incredible 24 new 2010 products on display. Two of which – the SOS Recorder and the Kaossilator Pro have already broken cover on these pages, but the gaggle of hardware unveiled at Messe pushed us over the top.

We've got our pick of the bunch starting over the page, but the highlight for us was Korg's incredible Monotron. If ever a company is hell-bent on surprising its fans and confounding its competitors, it's Korg. Who could have predicted that they'd make a TRULY analogue synthesizer in 2010, and pack it into a box thinner than twenty Bensons?

The Monotron is a full analogue synth with a single VCO, VCF and LFO. In fact – and incredibly

– it's the same analogue filter found in their famous MS-10 and MS-20 synths. And yes, you can jack in your own sounds via an external audio input on the back. So say goodbye to chasing MS-10s and 20s on eBay and say hello to having the same filter in your pocket for rather considerably less.

It literally does fit in your hand while you use the other to rub and prod the tiny 'ribbon keyboard'. The casing is very plastic to the touch – in fact, if you were to carry it in your back pocket we wouldn't recommend sitting on it or you might hear a crunch.

After extensive hands-on playtime we're not convinced as to the accuracy of the notes marked on that cost-saving tape keyboard but for glissandos, portamento and slides it's bang on. You can even hold one point and tap another to have the oscillator quickly flick between two pitches.

The VCO is a super basic tone generator but in the hands of the filter and LFO can make some great classic synth swoops and effects. Set the LFO to control pitch or filter then wind the clear dial to ever-crazier levels. The dial even flashes red in time with the cycles, meaning slow settings are accompanied by an ominous red pulsation, while more frantic pushing sends the light into a blur.

The filter sounds tremendous with the Peak knob controlling its strength and cutoff winding from warm boost through to hi-frequency screams. We can't wait to send some more established fatter sounds through it and seeing how that classic filter gets to work on them.

But, even by itself, the Monotron is great fun. It even has its own tiny built in speaker (though we recommend jacking it into a larger set up ASAP) and on the back surface, you'll find audio out, that all-important audio in and a volume control. Flip it over for access to the battery – just two AAA batteries will get you up and howling.

Measuring just 120mm x 72mm x 28mm and weighing 95g without the batteries, it's really something to behold, and has a RRP of just £59. And we all know that as soon as the super nerds get hacking, we'll have a stereo rack-mounted MIDI controllable version in no time. Yuss! Lots more on this beauty soon. **FM**

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Head to korg.co.uk for more tech specs. And keep it **FM** for the world's first review!



Check it out. These pics are absolutely actual real size!





Adam Upgrades

Improvements all round and new jumbo and baby models for Adam's new AX range

We've been long-term fans of the Adam A series of monitors, but at Musikmesse

they got a upgrade to become the AX.

So what's new? Well, as well as X-ART tweeter revamps and porting changes across the AX5, AX7 there's a brand new baby brother AX3 and a range-topping AX8 too.

The AX8 pumped out some fantastically smooth bass in the side-by-side comparisons at the show and with at keen £1,100 price point we can't wait to get them on the FM

testbench. The real surprise however was the AX3s which despite their tiny, near-'bookshelf' size crammed out great mid and smooth, rounded highs along with impressive bass without a sub-woofer in sight. You could see the 4.5" cones working like crazy to do it but by God, they pulled it off. And at £400 a pair it's almost rude not to consider them for your studio.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

We'll be back with a review of the AX3s and the new AX8s shortly. In the meantime check adam-audio.com

Waldorf PPG 3.V

One of our favourite plugs gets a V3 update

The PPG 2.V is one of those plugs that just doesn't go away. A staple source of impressive digital sounds, it

emulates the classic PPG synths of the late '80s perfectly. Now in 3.V form, it goes even further to capturing

their crystalline brilliance. It's effectively a PPG Wave 2.3 keyboard plus their costly – and much coveted at the time – Waveterm sampling system that allowed you to get real sounds inside the synth. The 3.V gets better oscillator emulation too, being even more random and glitchy like the original synth's.

The emphasis here is on that '80s crunch digital sound and – upon first impressions at the Musikmesse – we're pleased to say they're hitting the mark royally. We can't wait to try this one out!

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Head to waldorfmusic.de for the specs on this retro beauty



Roland Strap On the Lucina AX-09

It's a synthesizer for girls! Wait, come back!

Reduced size? Reduced price? (Result!) Decent feature set? And now available in a new 'black sparkle' finish? Neat-o.

At first glance the new Roland Lucina seems to be the credible, more portable, more affordable alternative to their costly-but-great AX Synth keytar. However – in a fit of marketing opportunity gone mad – Roland seemed far more interested in pushing the Lucina as a keyboard "perfect for girls and children". A fact that clearly delighted the decidedly masculine and Rock 'n' Roll demonstrator who

had to step up on stage to show it off at Musikmesse.

But despite the brand-tastrophie the Lucina is a great little synth. Derived from the AX, it's just as playable and – in black – rather more stylish and subdued. All that said we'd ditch the built in 'solo synth' trim off a few pounds (in both senses of the word) and have it as a MIDI/USB controller instead. Thanks!

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Price is TBC. But what's the betting it's £100 more than you think it should be? roland.co.uk



Is this you? No?
Didn't think so



Mini Recorders Go Head-to-Head

With Roland taking control of Edirol, get used to seeing Roland appearing on field recorders such as their brand new sleek and sexy R-05 which is smaller, lighter with a shiny aluminium finish.

There's the same quality IARC recording as on the R-09HR and a looping feature and novel rehearsal mode for checking your levels.

Meanwhile at rival Korg they've gone overboard with their new MR-2 pocket recorder, which they boast is the highest quality recorder you can buy. It's all thanks to their unique 1-bit DSD that gives true SACD quality recording. We'll be putting both through their paces very shortly. Go to roland.co.uk and korg.co.uk



Pioneer DJM-2000

As the CDJ-2000 hype dies down, it's time to wheel out the daddy of all DJ mixers

Korg's New Electribes!

They're back! The EX and SX Electribe production units were a popular 'Groovebox' solution back in the late-early 2000s but have been quietly shelved in more recent years. However, with a newfound emphasis on beat production it was time to resurrect not only the MX synth but the SX sampler too at Musikmesse 2010.

Physically, little has changed but the addition of an SD card slot gives them infinite scope for storage – particularly on the SX sampler. The main revamp is a brain full of entirely new sounds and patterns arming the Electribes with the ammo to make today's Dance music.

We'll let you know how they fare in a review soon. korg.co.uk

What does today's modern super DJ deserve? How about the ultimate super mixer? Styled in the same fashion as Pioneer's recent CDJ-2000 showstopper, when placed side to side with its brother, no other DJ rig has ever looked so fantastical.

Musikmesse featured an abundance of four deck set-ups with the new DJM centre stage. As we approached the Pioneer stand it was more like walking onto the deck of a spaceship. The rig really looks that amazing. Central to the device sits a large, full colour multi-touch screen which offers multiple layers of control and including an incredible new crossfaderable EQ. Now, with a few swipes of the finger you can crossfade individual frequencies or reset them

all to zero with a single central vertical swipe. Introduce the hats, vocal or bass from a cued track, individually, via multi-touch. It really does feel like the future. The screen also becomes an incredible MIDI control section with templates to trigger clips in Ableton or faders for apps like Traktor which worked seamlessly with the set up, detecting a laptops presence on USB with all four decks offering up the option to use your Traktor library via the CDJs LAN network.

The final screen highlight was it's use as a Kaoss pad-style remix unit where you manipulate effects and filters making you more futuristic than Richie Hawtin with a jetpack.

The effects and tweaks don't stop there. The top section of the mixer contains a pioneer EFX section that

can be assigned to any channel including the master, while also combined to the per-channel, instrument effects. The coolest of these is the new noise effect which pumps white noise to a channel and can be filtered and tweaked to add your own high-frequency exciters for build-ups and drops.

According to the chaps at Pioneer this will be available by the end of June. It's got a strictly pro price of 2,000 Euros but given that this is the king, queen and entire royal family of DJ kit (and the pinnacle of turning the DJ into a performer, producer and musician) it'll be considered bargain by today's top stars.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Get knee-deep in amazing specs and possibilities at pioneerprodj.eu



SPECS

Keyboard: 37 keys (velocity sensitive)

Controllers: Pitch Bend/Modulation lever, D Beam

Arpeggiator: Preset pattern: 64

Phrase Recorder: User: 8, Number of Tracks: 1

Maximum Polyphony: 64 voices

Sound Generator Section: Oscillator + Filter + Amp + Envelopes + LFO x 3

Patch Memory: Preset: 64, User: 64

Oscillator: Saw, Square, Pulse/PWM, Triangle, Sine, Noise, Super Saw

Filter: LPF, HPF, BPF, PKG (-12 dB/-24 dB)

Envelope: Attack, Decay, Sustain, Release

LFO Section: Triangle, Sine, Saw, Square, Sample

Effects: Distortion, Fuzz, Bit Crush, Flanger, Phaser, Pitch Shifter, Panning Delay, Reverb, Low Boost

Jacks/Connectors: Output jacks 1/4-inch phone L/R, Headphone jack, Pedal jack (TRS phone type), MIDI Connectors (In, Out), USB Computer, USB Memory, Ext In jack (Stereo mini jack)

Dimensions

689 x 317 x 100mm

Weight

4.2kg

Gaia at Musikmesse

Roland were clearly keen to push the ease of use and 'fun' to be had making sounds with the Gaia at the recent Musikmesse show in Frankfurt. Five Gaia's were on display, available for try-out with a sixth manned by a Roland demonstrator who took attendees through lessons in making sounds. Whether you wanted him to or not... Still, great demo and a great introduction to some old school patch making.



Roland Gaia

Roland's big reveal at the recent Frankfurt Musikmesse 2010 was a startling and welcome return to their roots

After years of badgering the big R to make an old school synth, it seems they've finally relented in the shape of their brand new Gaia.

It's a three octave, three oscillator polyphonic synthesizer that's a remarkable U-turn for a company waist-deep in high-price, high-power workstations and complex Cakewalk software solutions. Gaia brings back the fun, credibility and usability of their classic retro synths. So much so that they've even sub-titled it the SH-01 – a reference to their famous SH-1 and SH-101 monosynths.

The new SH-01 however is anything but mono. It's got healthy 64-note polyphony designed to accommodate the three virtual

analogue oscillators on board. Yes, the SH-01 is three synths in one, each oscillator acting independently through it's own filter and amplitude envelope to allow anything from simple doubling (tripling?) and detuning to combining dramatically

different tones for sounds with plenty of harsh bright attacks and warm analogue tails.

Under control

At first glance the Gaia is a bit of a revelation. Gone are the familiar LED

Computer Connections



It's an ideal partner for your computer. Plug in with USB and it's sounds appear as audio in your DAW and – of course – you can use it as a MIDI input device. The integration isn't up to the level of the SH-201 – the machine it replaces – and there's no full-on screen patch editor yet. However, having Gaia truly appear as a plug-in rather than a 'soundcard' is surely just a software release away.



numbers and long narrow LCD displays that are a staple of today's synthesizer and in their place are a hoard of knobs and sliders each dedicated to a specific purpose. These aren't 'assignables' – when it says Filter Cutoff, that dial really is Filter Cutoff...

Using Gaia is like discovering synthesis again after years of manual reading and squinting. Hit 'Tone 1' to enable that voice then pick a wave in the OSC section and you're off. There's seven classic waves to choose from (including Roland's classic fat Super Saw) and each has three variations so 21 in total.

Next comes the multi-mode filter with five options with some great harsh resonant settings possible. And finally there's a simple ADSR amplitude envelope with a Level knob denoting the level of that particular tone.

Now go back to the start hit 'Tone 2' and start again...single tones do sound great too though. The waves in the oscillator give plenty of options and while they're not Moog phat they're certainly sizey. Layering Tones produces the real meat however. The pulse width setting

(with two sliders especially dedicated to it) and that super saw gave some blistering leads and fat Trance gated pads when combined with that powerful Tone-independent filter.

Special mention to the LFO here which serves up six shapes, is tempo syncable and who's controls run in positive and negative directions. There's even a second, completely independent LFO for the mod stick. Just press Shift, nudge the stick and you're now tweaking the stick's LFO instead. And remember that all three Tones have independent LFOs so there's great sound design potential as each Tone bends and swoops out of sync.

Feature full

And if the synth section still isn't cutting it, a new effects section lets you bitcrush, distort, delay, flange and more with three tweakable parameters per effect. Note that the effects section is the only section that's across the whole output. There's even an external in for running your backing tracks through and a Center Cancel mode for removing vocals from your play-alongs. Add in extra bonuses such as



Hard Case?

The Gaia is light at just 4.2kgs and can run on (eight) batteries for true portability. We like the mix of black and white panels and while the casing seems a little flexible, the controls feel sturdy enough for ferocious on-stage tweaking.

a powerful arpeggiator (with 64 arpeggiator presets), Roland's hand-wavy D-Beam (which can be assigned to any knob with a button push) and even a phrase recorder and it appears that Roland have thought of everything.

It looks good, it sounds great and at a UK street price of £500 it's not too badly priced either.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Head to roland.co.uk/gaia for the full specs fest. Available soon.

Roland Synthstry



SH-1000 1973

It starts here. 10 presets and dials for tweaking the tones



SH-2000 1974

Even more presets! But dedicated filter sliders too



SH-3a 1975

Now with additive synthesis, combining five different waves



SH-5 1975

Two VCOs, two LFOs, five sliders for mixing tones



SH-1 1978

Small, 'portable' and packing a single bass-heavy oscillator



SH-7 1978

A less bulky SH-5 and boasting and external input to its filters too



SH-2 1979

Now with two oscillators giving the first layerable tones



SH-09 1980

Portability and price, a single oscillator and basic controls



SH-101 1983

Now we're talking. Still loved today and keytar-able too.



SH-32 2001

The SH goes desktop for this four-part foray into computer-friendly multi-timbrality.



SH-201 2006

Easy to use with great DAW support and being replaced by the Gaia. Grab a bargain now!



Korg microSTATION

More micro from Korg with the world's biggest mini keyboard! Er...

Yes, that is a five-octave mini keyboard but trust us, it's surprising how quickly those sausage fingers get used to it.

The microSTATION takes Korg's famous micro theme and runs with it, making a keyboard that's part microKORG XL (the looks, the ease of use) and part M3 and M50 (the sounds and workstation possibilities).

Yes, despite its size and portability (with all those keys it's still just 78cm long) this is in full-featured workstation that really can do the lot. It's got the same EDS-i engine as the M3 and M50, a 16-track sequencer with 480 programs and 256 combination sounds all ready to go. Controls and knobs were a little plasticity and

lightweight, but that's what you get on such a portable keyboard. However, the sound was rich and very M3 (i.e. excellent) with plenty of favourites from the M3 making it through. And great to see THE House piano sound from the M1 even making it on-board too!

Looks like a great all-rounder and of course it comes with Korg's famous DAW support giving a full on-screen standalone editor and a VST/AU plug-in that lets it appear right there in your DAW. Top marks for Korg and yours for £528 RRP.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

We'll be back with a full review next issue, but for now check out facts and figures at korg.co.uk



Radikal Accelerator

The makers of Spectralis bring real gigging power!

We love a great new synth and a surprise attendee at Musikmesse was the Accelerator from Radikal.

Based on the same subtractive, eight-voice synth engine as their Spectralis 2 supersynth it's a five octave surprisingly thin and lightweight gigging keyboard with three oscillators, two filters and six envelope generators. The sound is thick, with leads and basses coming particularly easily to the architecture. Hold down a chord and the powerful sequencer and arpeggiator can produce a track right before your ears.

Need more? How about a built-in motion sensor that can map tilts and shakes of the keyboard to different envelope parameters or pitch. We're not joking. It's a June release so more on these pages soon.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Go to radikaltechnologies.com for the full specs.



Four Channels of 710

You can't beat a bit of UA class and quality and at Musikmesse, their new creation fits right in to a line up that's received rave reviews in *FM*. Their new 4-710D Four-Channel Twin-Finity Mic Pre & DI combines four channels of famous Twin-Finity mic pres with true-bypass 1176-style compression.

Each of the channels allow for variable tone between 100% tube and 100% solid-state. The 1176-style compression/limiting circuit is per channel and it's rounded off with 24-bit, 192kHz A/D conversion and ADAT. universal-audio.com

John Bowen Solaris

A quick catch up with the Solaris – a keyboard we've featured and enjoyed in 'almost finished' form for the past two years. It's big, it's genius and it sounds great with four oscillators, countless modulation options and – new for 2010 – a large CS-80-style ribbon controller across its six-display laden control panel. We spoke with the man himself and he told us that it'll be out September 2010. [Crosses fingers]



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Elektron Octatrack

The latest incredible box from our favourite Machine makers

Making an almighty (and enticing) racket at Musikmesse were the ceaseless demos by the Elektron team of their new Octatrack production box. It's an eight-track sampler and sequencer that lets you mangle sound in real-time, with no computer necessary. It's as simple to use as an old school sampler, with easy track select and record, but once a sample is inside and looped, it's entirely elastic and can be snapped to a sound on another track or warped in real-time with the controls on the top surface.

Sample again mid-playback for more ammo, then mix in your new loop to keep the sound

moving. Samples can be stored on or dragged from a computer via USB and the on-board optical crossfader configured to any controller option from chopping between samples to toying with tempos and pitch.

Intriguingly we were told that the engine is so powerful that it can warp in real time: Feed it a 120bpm set from a DJ via any of its four inputs and it'll output the results at 100bpm (or whatever you choose) simultaneously. Weird. Can't wait to test it. Price on the way.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Check it out at electron.se

Cakewalk V-Studio 20

Cakewalk's drive to get their gear into more studios than ever took it's next step at Musikmesse with the introduction of the V-Studio 20. It's an all-in-one recording solution with an interface, controller and brand new software included.

Plug it into your computer, plug in your guitar, mics, whatever into its input and record into the super-easy Guitar Tracks software. The whole package is designed to introduce bands to the notion of computer recording with as few boxes, wires and software interruptions as possible.

It even has built-in amp-modelling and effects by sister-company Boss to make your guitars sound great. Once inside, Guitar Tracks (secretly powered by Sonar) lets newbies cut and paste like a pro while the V-Studio 20 acts as a control surface while mixing. Yours for £260. Full review shortly.



Yamaha CP-1

OK, it was at the NAMM show earlier in the year, but this time around we finally got to spend an hour playing the brute.

The CP-1 is Yamaha's new superpiano, being a world-class sampled piano and amazing emulation of their legendary CP-80 and CP-88 stage pianos. It's even got a DX-style FM synth engine for recreating classic DX-7 electric piano tones. It's big, beautiful, weighs a ton and the metal controls and construction show that it means business. We loved the CP-80/DX-7 layer presets, being bright and digital yet real and warm and chewy thick. Review soon.

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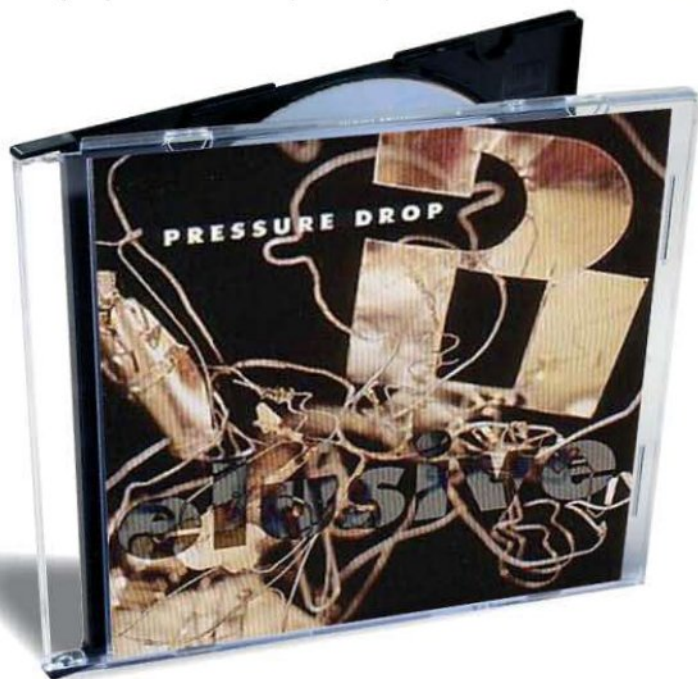
THE
CLASSIC
ALBUM



Pressure Drop Elusive

Hard Hands, 1997

This masterpiece of deep torch songs was criminally slept on the first time around. **Roy Spencer** re-drops the pressure



Back in '97 *Big Beat* was staggering around the charts, having taken over the nation's swill holes thanks to a Prodigy/Chemicals double-headed assault. And over in the style mags, and at the Mercury Music prize, they fawned and cooed

over a hot new sound called Drum 'n' Bass like it was a solid gold baby.

In another corner of clubland, when nobody was looking, the duo of Justin Langlands and Dave Henley dropped their latest evocative, innovative and epic Pressure Drop album. Like its title, commercial

success would be elusive. Critical acclaim, however, poured in. It was their broad CVs that helped define the sound of *Elusive*. With two albums under their belts they were already well into developing their blend of crisp samples, bottomless bass and live instruments.

And thanks to their status as DJ kings at the Heavy Duty nights in the East End's Wag Club they knew a thing or two about heavyweight vinyl sounds. But, perhaps the most vital ingredient to the mix was the time spent as radio DJs for East German station, Radio Sputnik.

"The show was going out up to the time of the release of *Elusive*, which we were recording at the same time," says Dave Henley. "The two were hand in hand at one point. So all the tunes from the show inspired the creation of the album when we were writing it. We were sourcing a lot of upfront tunes and Dancehall/Reggae selections. Then Hip-Hop, D'n'B, Soul, Funk, Classical, Soundtrack records..."

Such eclectic playlists affected and infected their ongoing productions, be it as sample fodder or tangents for their music to bounce off. So when it came time to work on the new album their heads were filled with sounds from each corner of the globe, trails blazed by the past, and promises of the future.

Armed with a decent taste in music, Dave and Justin applied live instruments to their palette of tweaked technology and battered beats. "We've always used musicians to record our music," says Justin. "There was a singer, Anita Jarrett, who previously worked with the band Yo Yo Honey. Martin Fishley, and Constantine Weir from Galliano, who we knew from DJing in the Wag Club in the 90's."

The results were at times dark: a very close friend passed away during the making of the album, affecting the band and the music dramatically. At times weird and wonderful: who else would sample Kama Sutra records as well as vinyl for teaching your budgie to speak?

Ultimately the album failed to get the following it deserved. Because of the aforementioned tastes in Dance music, and aided in no small part by the characteristic misfortunes of the band themselves.

"We were invited to play on Later...With Jools Holland, which

might have helped," says Dave. "But once we finished the album, Constantine didn't want to promote it. Anita went to Jamaica and got into a bit of trouble importing marijuana while we were in the studio rehearsing for the Later...thing."

"So, she was banged up and it just didn't fall into place." Pressure Drop is still an active concern in 2010. Besides a remix for the Danger Global Warning Project, a campaign to raise awareness, and a Dub album in the pipeline, Justin also produces and co-writes material with Martin Fishley, who now calls himself Mr. Melody, and Rider Shafique, under the name Black Canvas.

Track by track with Pressure Drop

Intro

Dave: "This has a reference back to our first album, *Upset*. Basically there was this railway bridge right by the studio in Queen's Park Road, London."

"So, we went out with a portable DAT and recorded the traffic on the bridge in the rain. Then we took one of our tracks, *Your Mine*, and pretended that it was playing in a car as it passed by in the rain, underneath the bridge."

"You can hear the bassline if you listen really carefully. That's the thing with all of our albums, we always try to have intros."

Writing on the Wall

Justin: "We'd met Anita Jarrett before, and tracked her down through her band, Yo Yo Honey. She lived in Brixton at the time."

Dave: "What we normally do is write a backing track and get the vocalist and musicians in once we decide what it needs. With this song we all sat down and talked about how we wanted a very Blues-based track, with a kind of classic call and response thing going on."

"We chucked about a few lines and bashed the lyrics out in about an hour. We also had Scott Garland who did a sax solo on that as well. He worked with us before a few times."

Justin: "It was quite an 'up' track, because we had a reputation for being quite downbeat and moody [laughs]. 'Musically moody' and 'Trip-Hop' and all that."

LIKE IT? TRY THESE...



Marvin Gaye

What's Going On

Social commentary from the Soul legend, and the finest example of the album format, according to Pressure Drop

ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:

Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler); Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)



Ennio Morricone

The Black Belly of the Tarantula OST

Soundtrack legend's sumptuous score for this cult perverted Horror. Morricone was always on heavy rotation during the making of *Elusive*.

ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:

Goffeur Pour Dames; Spirale Misteriosa



Arthur Lyman

Taboo

The boys were put up on this brand of bonkers Exotica by their dusty-fingered record dealer in Greenwich Market.

ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:

Miserious; Taboo



Wanda Robinson

The Soul-Jazz Poetry of Wanda Robinson

Conscious 'flo-etry' from hip spokenword sista from the '70s. Excerpts used on *My Friend* by PD, and early DJ Shadow.

ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:

John Harvey's Blues; Nobody in His Right Mind



Pressure Drop

Tread

A move to Brighton spawned the band's next album on Leftfield's Hard Hands label.

ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:

Freak Show; Warrior Sound

In the Studio with... Pressure Drop

Dave: "Our studio was in Battersea in Queenstown Road. We'd been buying equipment piece by piece. When we got album advances we got more gear."

Justin: "We used a hybrid of digital and analogue. We had a Studio Electronics SE-1 and a Clavia Nord Lead keyboard. We also had a Drawmer 1960 valve mic, and an AKG 414 condenser mic. Oh, and a Drawmer DS201 noise gate."

"We did the whole album on an Atari 1040ST using C-Lab Creator. The sampler for the first album was an

Akai S1000, everything got bounced down to tape."

Dave: "We did a lot of mixes live. We used outboard delays and even ran vinyl in live. When we got to *Elusive*

it was the ADAT, which was an eight-track VHS tape.

Then we had a back-up driver, and we started using zip disks, which was a big change because we started

out using floppy discs. Like ten floppies for one tune."

Justin: "We had a Spirit first, then we got a Mackie 32-channel to do *Elusive*'s final mixes. It had a really crisp sound."

Dave: "The studio was just a desk and Acoustic Energy AE1 monitors and JBL Control SB1 sub bass unit in a room. We did have a little sound box as well, a live room, built with a patio door, peg board and rock wall! We were near a railway line as well, so we had to be careful when they came by as there was a bit of a rumble."



Got To Be For Real

Dave: "We wanted the old analogue Korg MiniPops drum box vibe. We expanded it more as the track developed and brought a breakbeat in to beef it up. When it came out as a single, we had some pretty cool remixes from Grooverider, Stereo MCs, Attica Blues and Dave Tipper did a really brilliant remix."

Justin: "We've always kind of tried to flow one track into the next on albums. We wanted it to be a whole entity, which you kind of lose with the digital age as it's much easier to cycle through an album."

stuff from Photek. We always liked the 'stupid' Drum 'n' Bass [laughs]."

Foetus

Dave: "There was a lot of Classical music and Soundtrack influences, because we loved that stuff and wanted to use that style. That's partly how it evolved. We didn't really want any beats here."

Justin: "It's almost like a requiem for a lost life. It was a dark period for us as we had a close friend called Paul Guntrip, who we were DJing with, who died, tragically. He committed suicide. It affected us deeply. It

stuff, then we wanted to capture the anger of being in the situation our friend was in before it explodes into the main Classical part of it."

Dave: "The middle-eight part goes right off, but when we decided to put it out as a single we elongated that part and made it the main thing."

"On the album it lasts maybe 30/40 seconds, on the single it was like five minutes."

Let Me Be Me

Dave: We had Anita again, and Scot Garland was on the flute. It's about someone at the end of a relationship

and the other person is too possessive and clingy. This is about needing some space as your development as a person is being restricted

by the relationship you're in. Also it sounds very Barry White with the melody and guitar lines, but then it goes into this crash, which is very dark and menacing."

Justin: "That contrast of light and dark is represented quite a lot through the album actually. The smooth love and anger."

Uh Oh

Justin: "That was more of a kind of upbeat, jam, kind of thing. We felt that there were a lot of heavy tracks on the album up to this point and wanted to lighten it up. A 'spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down' type of thing [laughs]."

That contrast of light and dark is represented a lot through the album. The smooth love and anger

Silently Bad Minded

Justin: "This was a track that we worked on with Constantine Weir, who wrote a lot of the lyrics and the chorus part towards the end. Martin Fishley is also singing on that as well. It started off with a poem that Constantine had written. He was a great poet and lyricist. He liked the vibe of the track and tried out the poem with it."

Dave: "This has a great Roni Size remix. We were always interested in D'n'B, it was the freshest scene around at the time, and it was diversifying from its Rave roots into the Ed Rush Tech Step, Congo Natty Ragga Jungle style, and 'intelligent'

happened while we were working on the album. The emotions were there when we were going into it, although it's not directly about him. The one track that people latch onto, which might have been just as about those events, was *My Friend*."

My Friend

Justin: "We took the lyrics from an early '70s album by American poet Wanda Robinson. Constantine recited them. The track kind of built up from there. We went into a big orchestral sound with the timpani drums. We wanted to represent anger as well. As the track starts it's very melancholic, and sets the tone for depression and

Dave: "It's still quite dark though, just look at the title [laughs]. We're both on vocals too, swinging away. It's kind of a Donald Byrd, Be Bop. Almost Giant Steps-ish, in a kind of way. Jazz, but more Hip-Hop."

"We wanted that mad Jazz element with the sax. We thinned it out, it was a soprano sax. We also had Duncan Mackay on trumpet. The solo instruments are quite cutting and hard on there as well."

Darkness

Dave: "This was a dark themed musical opera. We had a friend at that time, Kevin Maynard, who ran a record stall in Greenwich Market, and he was turning us on to a lot of Arthur Lyman. He was a famous Exotica guy. He used to record in Hawaii in this mad concert hall."

"It had a weird sound in there and he used to use weird instruments like conches. Real roots instruments. It was quite Easy Listening but dark and desperate, like being in a hole. With what was going on with us, and the death of our friend at the time, the track was about depression. We wanted to go into the depths of that, not the depression, but the feeling you get when you're faced with this dark place."

Don't Run Away

Justin: "This track had Martin Fishley on lead vocals. He's giving his side of a story with his girl at the time, asking her not to leave."

"It's the classic old school way of Soul songs where you'd have a male and female singer doing both sides of the story. Like, she'd do part one in a sassy, direct and tough way, a bit like Millie Jackson, the original Independent Woman. And then the man would do a reply."

Dave: "Martin was the perfect vocalist for this particular track. He has a beautiful high and sweet singing voice, which really worked well with the deep bottom end of our style of production."

Dusk

Dave: "It was the first mix off the album, the first track we wrote. We were asked to submit a track to one of the Café del Mar compilations. I knew Jose Padilla, and he really liked our music. He used to play *Unify* out a lot, so when he compiling stuff for Café del Mar he asked us to contribute a track."

"We decided to give him this. Again that's John Harris on the flute, another brilliant performance, he's a very talented player."

Justin: "It is called *Dusk* because that's when you used to go to Café del Mar to see the sunset."

Sounds of Time

Justin: "We had a sample that we replayed from a very old Brazilian record that we got a guy called Mike McAvoy to do. He was from the early 90's independent London Soul scene. He came in and played a few bits of guitar and we got that going. Then Constantine came in to lay down his vocals. We already had the tune and the chorus, but he added a poem yet again and it slotted in perfectly."

Dave: "We've got influences from Ennio Morricone in there, a Chinese violin, and a sort of trumpet calling the spirits. The drums have a break in there lifting it up and forward."

Obsessed

Dave: "We sample an LP called *Teach Your Budgerigar To Speak*. This bloke in a budgie voice says 'give us a kiss'. It had this weird, almost obsessive sound to it as well."

Justin: "We also had this mad, Asian woman. She's really manic. It was from a Kama Sutra record [laughs]. She sounds scary, obsessed. That set the pace really when it came to the lyrics we wrote with Anita."

"It also has a big Hitchcock influence in there as well with the Bernard Herrmann strings. It was the only track that touched on the Drum 'n' Bass vibe with the drums later on. It's quite light, but I think

Elusive Production Secrets

Dave: "Most of the bass sounds were coming from the Roland SH-1. It was like a Minimoog – monophonic, with three oscillators. It was the first time we used it so there was a lot of experiments with sounds going on as well."

"We used to tune the oscillators so it could have chords on it. So you'd have the root notes, a third and a fifth, and play a triad chord with the one note. We used that quite a lot. Like the Minimoog it's

quite a classic and versatile synthesizer. We also used the Roland SH-2 for some sounds as well. You could get it to CV with a Kenton MIDI converter. We just used to record bits of it and loop them up and sample them."

Justin: "The way we used to work was that, we'd have the track, record the musicians and then comp the performance. It's a lot easier to do on computers today, but then we did it the old

traditional way. And although it was digital audiotape with ADAT, we'd still mix and bounce it down and muck about with the bits we liked best – even sample parts of it and spin it in to make it more of a performance."

Dave: "We used a piece of kit called a Mutronics Mutator as well. It's like a filter box of envelopes. You can bung sounds through it and add resonance and cutoff. It disintegrates sounds."



it fitted in well with the whole flavour of that track."

Road

Justin: "We were listening to really old American Gospel. We'd been working with John Harris, compiling solos of his work and comping them – we had this old, simple drum loop, pitched right down so it almost sounds orchestral with the tom toms, almost like timpani drums."

"John came round one night and sat in the studio and turned the lights down and ran a few takes for about ten minutes. He was using harmonica and a clarinet...the length of the track was defined by the playing of John. His playing is so strong it just carries you along."

"We couldn't have made it shorter as it grew and grew..."

End of the Road

Justin: "...hence why we did a Part 2 of it with Anita here."

Dave: "It's a good last tune. I think the album stands up really well. In retrospect we tried to put too much on it, but all the tracks stand up. Personally I think some are stronger than others. It is a long album, maybe looking back we could have taken three off, but at the time you were pressured to put 13 tracks on your albums. It was ridiculous. Sometimes less is more. Some of the Jazz albums we were listening to at the time were three or four tracks and that was it [laughs]." **FM**

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Check out Pressure Drop's official website for more release info and discographies: pressuredrop.co.uk

NEED TO KNOW

Five essential facts about...

Pressure Drop and Elusive

1 Roni Size liked *Silently Bad* *Minded* so much he rang Justin and Dave, begging to remix it.

2 *My Friend* features a tiny guitar refrain. After clearing the sample, it came back with five different writers' credits.

3 The deep, Old Testament-sounding 'darkness' vocal on *Darkness* comes from a Brummie gangster friend of the band called The Prince of Darkness.

4 *Elusive* was a double-album, pressed on 180g virgin vinyl, meaning non-recycled material, for better sound quality.

5 The duo's Battersea studio had a black asphalt flat roof and no insulation, making it freezing in the winter and boiling in the summer.

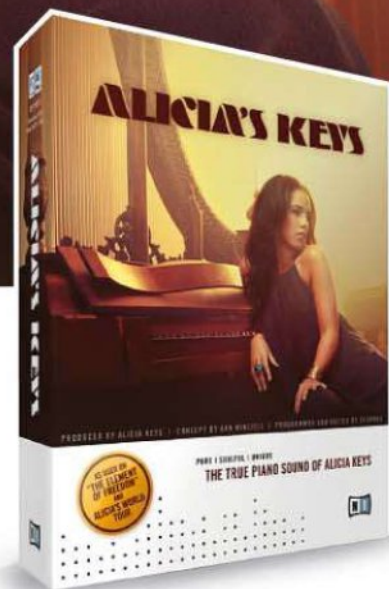
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141 Kirkstall Road
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS3 1JJ

WHO RUNS IT?

Will Jackson

WEBSITE

soundworks-studios.co.uk

TELEPHONE:

+44 (0)113 245 9099

Situated in the basement of an old industrial building on the edge of Leeds city centre, Soundworks

Studios was set up in 1995 by producer, writer and all-round music guru Will Jackson. As we wander around with a cup of coffee, Will explains what the Soundworks facilities have to offer, from pre-production all the way through to mixing. "If a band's coming in, I always like them to email me a rough recording so I can have a listen in advance. It gives me a bit of an insight and I know what I'll be dealing with before they get here.

"When they do, I always start recording straight away, even when they're having a warm-up. There's always something magical about that first process, when the ideas are fresh. I love the immediacy of four or five people in a room just playing together. If you're after 100% separation and everyone nailing their parts individually then it kills it for me because there's no interaction going

on." This no-nonsense approach has seen the studio host clients from around the world, and Jackson has worked extensively with the recent crop of successful West Yorkshire Indie rockers which includes the Kaiser Chiefs, The Music, The Pigeon Detectives and The Cribs.

Rock 'n' Roll desk

The main control room is based around the 64-channel SSL 4064 E-Series console equipped with G-series computer. Will tells us he found it while hunting for bargains on eBay. "It turned out that it was from Parr Street Studios in Liverpool and I'd already worked on it with Embrace. I like the E-Series because it's the first generation and it's just got something about it. They're proper Rock 'n' Roll desks, but they're also incredibly versatile.

"The EQ can be quite sweet or very nasty – it's just vicious. The mic amps are really in-your-face, extremely high level. I don't really use the automation that much. I just set



JBL 4412

"In the old days, JBLs used to give me a headache in studios but this is pretty much the first set I've used that are very pleasing to listen to."

SSL 4064 E series

"It's just a proper Rock 'n' Roll desk! We were looking for some gear on eBay and this came up. So we went for it. It's a classic. Love it."

Genelec 8050A

"I generally mix on the Genelecs, which I think are great speakers. Very uncoloured. I love them for that."

PC running SSL Soundscape

"The thinking man's Pro Tools!"

Fostex 6301

"Great for checking mixes for vocal levels and to see what they'll sound like on the radio. Obviously you can't give it much bottom end."

INTRODUCING...



Front L-R

Paul Brown
Engineer/Producer

Will Jackson
Engineer/Producer

Back L-R

Max Lamond
Assistant

Simon Gamble
Assistant/Runner

12-string Fender Stratocaster

"A bloke turned up at the door with this one day and I bought it on the spot. Apart from a Rickenbacker it's the best electric 12-string ever made."

Danelectro 5912

"This is brand new, I haven't even put it through an amp yet. It's a budget guitar but the quality's well in excess of the price. The six-string version always sounded great in Jimmy Page's hands."

1963 Gibson SG Junior

"This was the first year they stopped putting 'Les Paul' on them, so it's not worth as much as the earlier ones but it plays like a dream."

Gretsch Electromatic

"This is the complete business. It feeds back a little if you get too close to an amp, but the tonal range is amazing."

The Guitar Collection

One look at Soundworks' outstanding guitar collection instantly confirms that Will Jackson is a dyed-in-the-wool rocker. He shows us round his seriously impressive collection of guitars, offering a variety of

tones and sounds for recording. "The one guitar I'll never get rid of is my 1974 Les Paul Custom 20th Anniversary, which I've had from new. It's got a third pickup wired out of phase with the bridge pickup.

It's a monster." To complement the guitars, you'll also find a room crammed full of some of the finest amps money can buy, from modern Laney combos to vintage Orange heads, various Fenders and a battered 1960s

Vox AC30 belonging to the Kaiser Chiefs.

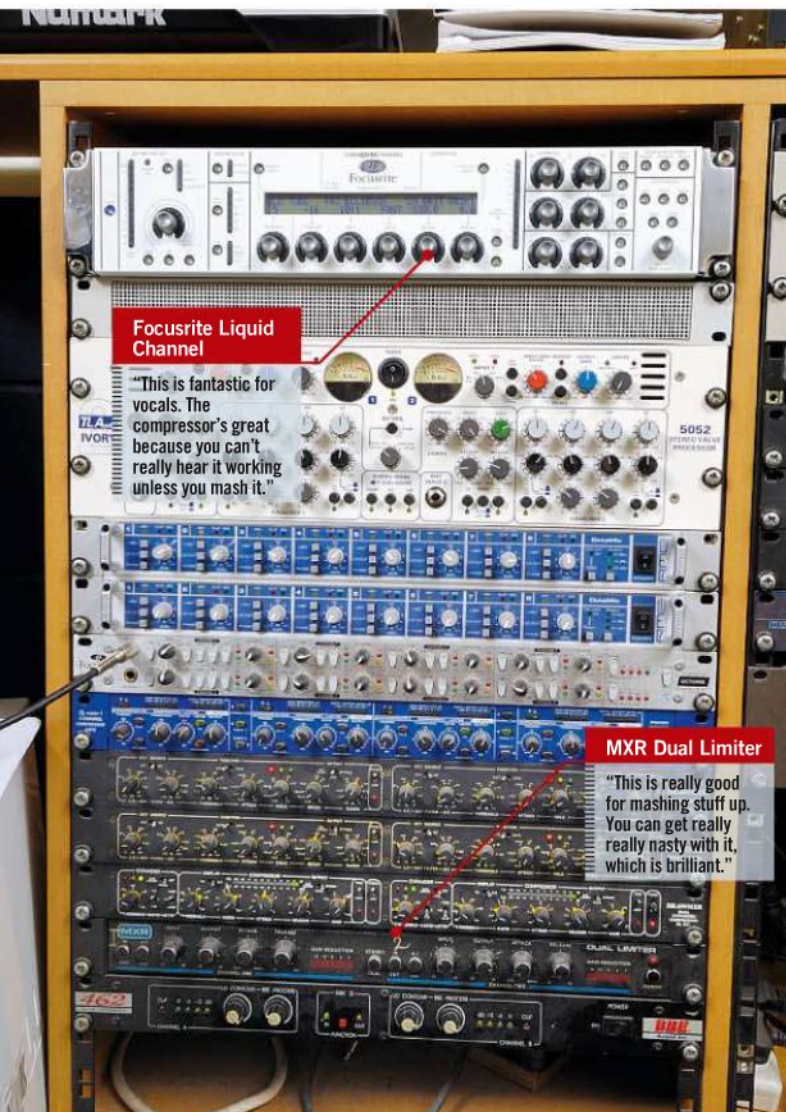
The pick of the bunch for Will is his trusty 1972 Fender Deluxe Reverb: "It might only be twenty watts but it's twenty proper watts!"



Hammond organ with Leslie Cabinet

"This needs a bit of refurb really but I got it for nothing out of someone's garage. We sometimes run Native Instruments B4 through the Leslie cab and it really brings it to life."





all the faders to zero and send stuff down channels from the computer."

Despite all the high-end gear on display, Will is clearly not a fan of gear for gear's sake, favouring the 'if it sounds good, it is good' approach. "I don't think the general public are that bothered about what equipment you use, quite frankly," he tells us. "I don't get people writing in saying, 'I'm very sorry, I have to return this album because I noticed you didn't use such-and-such compressor!'"

The thinking man's Pro Tools

We're so used to seeing Pro Tools in top studios that Soundworks' choice of DAW stands out from the crowd. "We run SSL Soundscape," Will tells

favourites. The majority of synthesis duties in the studio are handled by a trusty Roland JX-3P equipped with the optional PG-200 programmer. "I bought it from a guy in Canada and he'd had a touch-sensitivity mod done. Obviously the keyboard isn't velocity-sensitive, but it's good if you're controlling it from a sequencer.

This experience still comes in handy when working on projects. "With the basic grounding and knowledge of synthesis, you can program any analogue synth." As well as handling recording duties, the computer setup is also loaded with soft synths and sequencing software for ultimate flexibility. "I've used Cubase for MIDI sequencing since it was Pro 24 on an Atari 1040 back in

I don't think the general public care about what equipment you use

the day," Will tells us. "We use it for soft synths – like FM8 and East West strings. Strings are difficult to synthesize so if there's a budget, I'd get the real thing in and get some human interaction."

us. "It's our best-kept secret. I got the first system in 1992, when it was four tracks. It just works and it's really transparent." Although he acknowledges that the difference is small now, Jackson tells us how experience of a buggy early '90s version of Pro Tools pushed him towards Soundscape, developed by Sydec Audio in Belgium.

We ask Will if he ever tracks to tape any more and the answer is a categorical no. "I've got a Studer but I never use it," he says. "Is it an A80? I don't know. It's quite good for tape echo..." But having worked so extensively with tape in the pre-digital era, surely there must be something he misses about the analogue recording days? "No, it was a ballache! I grew up with splicing tape and you get really good at it but it's destructive editing. Your heart was in your mouth when you were splicing two-inch 24-track tape. As soon as I got into hard disk recording I thought it was brilliant."

Bonkers synthesis

Despite the Rock 'n' Roll vibe of the studio, Will certainly isn't afraid of Electronic music, citing Kraftwerk and Brian Eno as particular

Breaking the rules

As we chat about recording and producing techniques, Will gives us some tips on recording vocals. "Just go for it! The most important thing is to use a nice mic. I've got a Neumann KMS 105 hand-held condenser which has got amazing rejection but I've used SM57s and 58s. Of course, you get a bit of bleed but who cares as long as the sound's right? I remember Ricky out of the Kaisers leaning over the desk with his head right in the middle of the monitors yelling his nuts off into a 58. It's nice to have clean vocals but I'm not really bothered as long as it sounds good."

This attitude extends all the way to composition, and classically-trained Will is happy to lend a hand with arrangements and musical ideas. "As a producer I'm trying to get the right texture and ambience for any song. Sometimes bands benefit from a bit of an education. Some people don't know the difference between an oboe and a cor anglais!" **FM**

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Want to show us around your studio? Drop us a line at futuremusic@futurenet.co.uk, and we'll pop round for an Appletiser.

 ON
THE
RADAR

Juan MacLean

Fresh off the back of a whirlwind year, we caught up with Juan MacLean in London, on the eve of his DJ Kicks release...

DFA stalwart and dancefloor slammer, Juan MacLean and his foot-tapping beats have been relentlessly circling the globe over the past year in both band and DJ forms. Having stamped all over 2009 with his second album *The Future Will Come*, Juan took off on a live tour followed by a spray of DJ dates around Europe, Australia and the Americas.

The acclaimed *DJ-Kicks* mix series took notice of his brooding jams and Juan's offering will join classic company on April 27th. We caught up with him in London to talk all things live...

FM: Your live show is definitely gear-focused – not a laptop in sight. What's the set up?

Juan MacLean: "The sequencer is an MPC2500. It's a big point of contention that we don't use a laptop. Not a whole lot is sequenced though – the basslines always are and there's some percussion for the drummer to keep time to. There's also random samples that we don't have enough people to play it. But mostly, we're playing it all live."

What are the synths on stage then?

"Our drummer Jerry Fuchs [who sadly passed away last November] has a standard drum kit with snare, floor tom, kick and hats and three Simmons pads. DJ, who's the other guy in the band aside from Nancy [Whang] and I, he's the one surrounded by gear. He controls the MPC and he's got a Nord Electro that he only uses for piano."

"For strings, we've got a Waldorf Micro Q which is racked with a Moog Voyager, and that's what our basslines are coming from. He has an SH-101 for playing leads which is also synced from the master clock of the MPC via a Doepfer MIDI to CV sync box [MSY2] so that the sequencer is in time."

You've got a few more 101s right?

"Nancy also has a 101 that she doesn't play very much, but it's also synced to the MPC and I have one too that's synced, so we can get the sequencer triggering all three at the end of *Happy House*, opening and closing the filters and stuff like that. I also have a theremin that I play leads and melodies

live. It's the hardest instrument to learn in the world I think, it takes literally years to play it. I remember there was one at Plantain [DFA studio base, New York] when we first started the studio there in the late '90s and no-one wanted it so I took it home and started practicing and I really enjoyed it."

"I've got it going through loads of delay to make it really psychedelic. I've also got a Future Retro Revolution which is like a 303-clone with a circular sequencer. I sync the MPC to it and my 101 is synced to the Revolution. It has some cool features like a 'Random' knob that re-assigns the order of the notes while keeping it in time."

"Then we all play different percussion things like tambourines, cowbells, stuff like that."

Do you have your own monitoring control on stage or is it all front of house?

"We have our own guy – Scott Adamson – who controls everything from front of house. Having our own sound engineer is really important, he's like another member of the band – we'll turn down shows if he can't make it. Sound check can take hours and he can get really mad at sound guys!"

So you're totally against laptops, even just for spitting out MIDI when no sound is involved...

"Yeah I mean, maybe no one else can hear these things anymore but I feel like I do – it's more stable



and it feels more like an instrument. I'm just terrified of using a laptop. The Junior Boys played a show in Webster Hall in New York recently and after one song, their laptop crashed and they had to cancel the show. That said, it is such a pain in the ass carrying all the analogue stuff around, plus you have to be willing to fix it on the fly. I'm always amazed when I switch on my 101 and it works, and that's not always the case. I own five 101s because they're always in rotation – things like that I don't think were ever meant to be taken on the road."

Any nightmares?

"I remember we were playing a gig in Helsinki and the next one was in Glasgow and we were flying on BA through Heathrow with our rack that had a Moog Voyager, Waldorf Micro Q, Alesis 3630 and a Moogerfooger low-pass filter pedal and when we arrived in Glasgow it wasn't there, and we never got it back. BA just said 'sorry, we just don't have it'. Fortunately I had it insured privately."

"When you rely on all this really specific gear – you can't just run down the street and buy a 101 at a music store. Luckily, I had done SysEx dumps of all the presets so we were able to rent a Voyager and some string synths for the rest of the tour."

And you only use vinyl for DJing too right?

"Yeah, I mean, there's a couple of things I might play on CD, but I am mostly vinyl. That's another DFA thing. Everyone on DFA uses vinyl. No-one would be allowed to have a laptop on stage either."

So even if you're new coming into DFA, you need to learn to DJ with vinyl, even if used CDs before?

"Yeah, it pretty much is a rule!"

There's one staple sound in DFA I wanted to ask you about – that really tight, funky bass guitar sound. What's the bass behind that?

"[laughs] Yeah we've all got one, it's this crappy Epiphone SG bass that costs like \$200. We always

swap out the pick-ups for the [Gibson] Ebo pick-ups and that runs through this Ampeg Class-A bass amp head, never mic'd, and then through a [UA] LA2A compressor. The LA2A is amazing, it adds so much harmonics – it's like a \$3,000 distortion pedal, that's what we use it for. Any bass we record – synths, guitar – we put it through that."

Tell us some more DFA tricks...

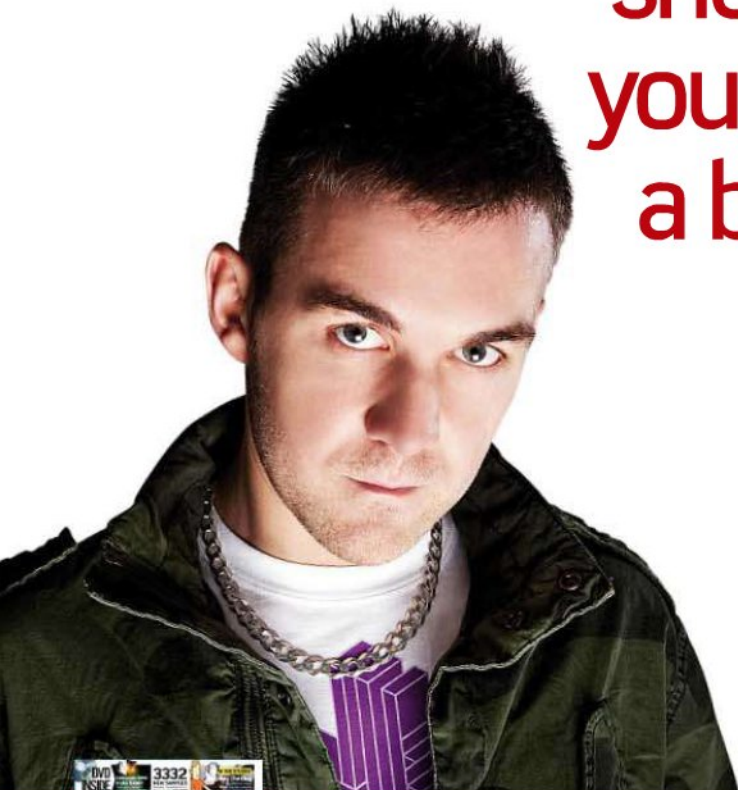
"Another thing that we have is a real dry setup and a more live setup for drums. We have a small room that kinda looks like a vocal booth and it's really dead. We record drums in there sometimes. If you use ambient mics, you can record the sound of the room as it sucks away the drums. It's an old Fleetwood Mac trick." **FM**

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Juan MacLean's *DJ-Kicks* mix is out on April 27th. See myspace.com/thejuanmaclean for upcoming DJ dates, live shows and releases

If you're serious about music production, *Future Music* should ALWAYS be in your kit list. It was like a bible to me when I was starting out!

Funkagenda
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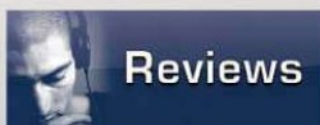
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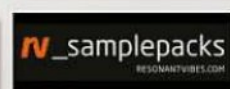
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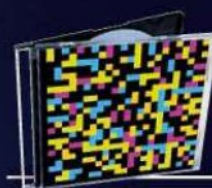
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Albums



If it's hot, it's here. Welcome to this month's new releases, all lovingly rated by the *FM* review crew

Album Of The Month



Grum Heartbeats

Heartbeats



Grum's been sending us to retro synth heaven with his remixes over the past couple of years, and his cover of David Bowie's *Fashion* has been blaring out of the *FM* office stereo for a while. So, it was with much excitement when the anticipated album from the Leeds youngster dropped through the letterbox.

There's no real surprises to the sound Grum delivers. It's fuelled by Flashdance's energy, Madonna's melodies and the production icing of the '90s French Filter House scene. There are collaborations on practically every track with hook-spattered vocals being a solid fixture. Although there's an over-arching '80s sound here, the production is relatively modern sounding and sometimes sounds a bit thin and soft-synthy which cheapens the musicality and ideas a little bit, especially as the album is so jam packed with wobbly basslines and sharp modulated synth stabs. Saying that, when Grum comes up with the goods, he's making perfect Pop with tracks like *Turn It Up*, *Can't Shake This Feeling* and *Through The Night* being nothing short of brilliant. Grum isn't breaking any boundaries with this album, but in terms of songwriting and sound there's some classic tracks, delivered with style. **Chris Barker**

ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:

Through The Night, *Can't Shake This Feeling*,
LA Lights, *Fashion*.

9/10

Robert Babicz Immortal Changes

Systematic



Not as well known here in the UK, Robert Babicz, previously operating under the moniker Rob Acid, is one of the finest craftsmen of sound in Electronic music.

His new album is an unashamedly aural treat of incredible production, kicking off to a relatively organic feel, with lush delicate pianos surrounded by strums of acoustic guitar.

It's an unexpected start, but a welcome one. There's sonic sculpting everywhere, with Babicz carving out his own umbrella genre over Breakbeat, Downtempo,

Minimal and Deep House influences. Melodies and hooks are subtly buried beneath the ridged foundations and just when you thought the album had moved into deep and dark waters, again, Babicz shifts to a more orchestral interlude. As a complete package, *Immortal Changes* is a masterclass in production with its rich, warm sound and perfect marriage of electronic and acoustic elements. The subtleties in arrangement, movement in tempo and choice of sounds keep this twelve-track long player as one of the slickest in 2010.

Chris Barker
Playlist: *Astor, Out Of Order, Meet The Blue Elephant*

9/10

Hybrid Disappear Here

Distinctive



Original Hybrid members Mike Truman and Chris Healings first album (*Wider Angle*) was released ten years ago, with its mix of Progressive/Nu Skool Breaks and cinematic undertones swiftly leading to a support slot touring with Moby. The band's fourth album, *Disappear Here*, should widen their appeal further still. Enlisting singer/songwriter Charlotte James, Hybrid has moved away from producing Dance music with vocals, to something a lot more sophisticated. This works a treat on the powerful

and marvellously expansive *Can You Hear Me* and the Trance-Rock of the title track – not to mention the outstanding closing Rock ballad, *Numb*.

In fact, Hybrid's new approach to songwriting is so effective that when, on occasion, they revisit previous territories, tracks that might once have been revered now seem curiously lifeless and uninspiring. Although Hybrid might not have fully nailed their new direction, *Disappear Here* is still a cut above the rest, and their future perhaps more promising than ever.

Danny Turner
ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:
Can You Hear Me Now, Empire, Numb

8/10

It's On Our iPods



Caribou Swim

Merge

Caribou has always been one for evolving and carefully considered textures. Following up his 2008 Polaris Prize winning album *Andorra* wasn't going to be an easy task – it boasted rave reviews across the board, including in *FM*.

Luckily for Caribou, aka Dan Snaith, the aforementioned evolutionary and considered approach is just as applicable to his discography as it is his individual tracks. *Swim* is no different – taking the electronic soundscapes he's known for and crafting a more driving, four-four sound.

Snaith doesn't just stick a beat under some samples though, tracks like *Kaili* hint at a non-existent drum beat, creating a bouncing yet tense pace, a trick Snaith

reuses throughout the album, to great effect. I think it's fair to say, *Swim* is all about the pulse, even when it's not audible. Snaith does a great job moulding interesting sounds and patterns, with meandering melodies and heavily treated vocals hitching a ride.

That's not to say the song structure is lost – you can clearly hear Caribou's comprehensive musicality, even when rhythmic elements are in focus – tracks such as *Lalibela* are perfect examples. *Swim* is another step forward for an already reliable artist. **Declan McGlynn**

ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:
Kaili, Sun, Lalibela

8/10

A Guy Called Gerald Tronic Jazz: The Berlin Sessions

Laboratory Instinct



A Guy Called Gerald (aka Gerald Simpson) follows up his 2006 venture *Proto Acid*:

The Berlin Sessions to hopefully re-establish his reputation amidst the Acid Techno scene, although this time offering standalone cuts rather than a seamless mix.

Simpson's machines tick along mechanically throughout, albeit at variable tempos, but the programming is anything but impromptu – the sounds are too carefully placed, with avidly syncopated chord progressions. Meanwhile, the 13 tracks are fairly minimalist, with the devil in the detail – an art in itself, but far from spontaneous.

It would be cruel to say Tronic Jazz is bog standard Techno – not to mention untrue – but neither does it break new ground. *Pacific Samba* provides evidence of Simpson's drift, however, deriving from 808 State's memorable *Pacific State*, which Simpson claimed to have wrote, its smoky ethereal samples and warm ambient synths punch emotion into the album like no other.

Otherwise, Simpson delivers what you might expect from such a consummately experienced DJ and producer – but above that, *Tronic Jazz* sounds a little flat, uninspired and subjugated by Techno's illustrious history. **Danny Turner**
ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:

Nuvo Alfa, Pacific Samba, People Mover

6/10

Portion Control Violently Alive

Sigsley Transmissions



Industrial Electro Punks Portion Control have gone into

overdrive in recent years, following an 18 year semester between 1986 and 2004. Modern albums have done well to kick start the Industrial genre, and remind everyone just who the daddies are.

The opening *Icon* barks at popular culture – or perhaps the state of mainstream music – with vocalist Whybrew growling "Icons, no more icons – I don't believe in you". Industrial music still remains the closest thing to Punk – it's platform allowing plentiful scope to tear down society's cultural ills.

Where *Violently Alive* differs to Portion Control's more contemporary Wellcome and Filthy White Guy is that it's more cultured – the track *Relapse* more in-line with Nitzer Ebb's polished EBM ethos. Meanwhile, *Bloodless* hints at a more expansive

direction, bellowing with mutilated audio samples – scrubbed and vacuum-sealed to perfection!

It's impossible to have the energy and enthusiasm for the Industrial genre as one might have had in the mid-late Eighties, when tracks such as FLA's *Mindphaser* or Front 242's *Headhunter* lit up the underground and propelled the bands to the mainstream periphery – but *Portion Control* remains a sublimely relevant reminder of how to produce hard and aggressive music.

Danny Turner

ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:

Amnesia, Blood Loss, Icons

7/10

Booka Shade More!

Get Physical



Masters of the live show and possibly two of the biggest heroes of the Berlin Electronic scene, Booka Shade's new material is always highly anticipated but it's sadly a bit of a slow starter. Track one, *Havanna Sex Dwarf* has a title that is regrettably much more interesting than the track itself, even if it is immaculately mixed and balanced in true Booka style. But, as the album develops, it grows into something much more interesting with metallic synths and bouncy pitch-modulated percussion leading the grooves.

In fact, by the time track seven, *Scaramanga*, arrives, its tinny faux agogo percussion hooks you so hard that you forget about the slightly disappointing moments of previous

tracks. There's definitely a retro feel here, with spoken word samples and a flurry of loud 909-style hi-hats leading most grooves. This slightly 1990s Acid edge to the album is clever but becomes a bit overwhelming at times with Booka Shade losing their identity. It's worth checking out and the production is of course, immaculate but you might be left feeling a little cold. One for the remix tip, maybe. **Chris Barker**
ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:

The Door, Scaramanga

8/10

Ellie Goulding Lights

Polydor



Having won the BBC's influential Sound of 2010 poll and the Critics' Choice Brit

Award, expectation is high for Goulding to deliver. There are moments on *Lights* which hint at what the 23 year-old Londoner is capable of, most notably the single, *Starry Eyed*, on which restrained synths and hyperactive beats form a foundation for delicate vocals about young love.

Unfortunately, there are far too many weak tracks which couple uninspiring songs with hackneyed Pop production. I have no doubt that Goulding will sell albums by the bucketload with this safe formula, but it's a missed opportunity for such a clearly talented singer-songwriter.

Goulding's voice is strong throughout, but the album ultimately fails to match the standards set by

her Pop rivals. With none of the androgynous '80s swagger of La Roux, none of the eccentric experimentation of Lady Gaga and none of the quirk or foul-mouthed honesty of Little Boots or Lily Allen, *Lights* seems strangely old-fashioned in 2010's girlpop climate. **Greg Scarth**
ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:
Guns and Horses, Starry Eyed, Under The Sheets

4/10

Broken Bells Broken Bells

Columbia



Broken Bells is a collaborative project between James Mercer of The Shins and Brian

Burton, aka Danger Mouse. Burton's presence might suggest that Mercer's songs have been given a Gnarls Barkley-style neo-Funk treatment but (thankfully) that's not the case. Instead, this debut album instead owes more to Sixties Psychedelia.

Album opener *The High Road* sets the scene with a lazy groove, synth bleeps and a fine example of the solid song writing that underpins the album. Neither the songs nor the production ever quite reach the dizzy heights of Nu-Psych heavy-hitters like Animal Collective and MGMT, but there are enough moments of magic to sustain interest for the length of the album. **Greg Scarth**
ADD THESE TO YOUR PLAYLIST:
The High Road, Vaporize, Sailing to Nowhere

7/10

Compilations

PICK OF THE MONTH

Juan MacLean DJ-Kicks

!K7 Records



MacLean's more traditional song stylings get kicked to the curb for his

DJ sets – this is all about infectious deep grooves and bouncing basslines. A Summer party starter with too many highlights to list. **Declan McGlynn**

Todd Terje Remaster Of The Universe

Permanent Vacation



Here's one of the first clues that Summer's on the way, Balearic

guitars and Nu Disco beats are mixed into fresh re-edits and mixes of tracks such as M's *Pop Muzik* and José González' *Killing For Love*. A great mix with nine unmixed reworks. **Chris Barker**

Get Darker Presents... This is Dubstep Vol.2

Get Darker



This double-CD compilation, the second instalment in this very popular

series offers you a full selection of the top Dubstep tracks with all the big players you would expect to see featured. This is a proper 'Bangers in a Box' compilation. **Will Seelig**

Various Backstreet Brit Funk

Z Records



A double-CD brimming full of obscure and highly-collectible

classic '70/'80s British Jazz Funk compiled by the legendary Joey Negro. A must for fans of the scene. **Will Seelig**

Roman Flugel Live At... Robert Johnson Vol 5

Kompakt



Probably best known for his clubland hit *Geht's Noch*, Flugel here

serves up an ultra Minimal mix which broods along with a significant amount of darkness while occasionally coughing out Acid moments and textural tones. It's very grown up and a tad Deep and Ambient, but we like it. **Chris Barker**

Retro Respect



Propaganda A Secret Wish

ZTT/Island

The melancholic pounding of Germans playing German synthesizers in a Germanic fashion turns out to be one of the '80s sweetest synth spectacles. Signed by Trevor Horn then produced by Steve Lipson, the sound is threatening, massive and complex yet at the same time beautifully controlled. Despite being a showcase of state-of-the-art and as cold as a shard of digital ice, it's the superb tunes that still warm the heart. **Daniel Griffiths**



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Big room anthems are like blockbuster films. There's tension, there's pace and there's the mother of all payoffs at the end. We're here to show you how to craft the roller coaster ride of drama and climax that make today's club tunes

Piecing together a modern club hit is a matter of isolating and understanding the sonic building blocks that today's producers use to activate excitement on the dancefloor. The techniques are many and the science is still a work in progress, but in this feature, we've nailed the state of the art methods in making a perfect club tune.

The masters of the main room sound know exactly how to build the excitement by increasing the intensity of the music using directional sounds and dramatic effects. Each is designed to move up or down in a purposeful way so that the next section is a direct reaction to what comes before it.

The biggest trend in the House music today is the rise – most tracks have at least one rising section, and in some tracks such as Dubfire/Huntemann's *Dios* or Kid Mescal's *Do You Want It* – it's actually the main feature. As far as rising goes, one track that

stands out is Smith and Selway's *Total Departure*. This track exploits the sonic illusion known as the 'Shepard Tone' (have a look at Wikipedia for more) to produce the sensation of a perpetual rising sounds throughout the entire track.

Big rooms – bigger breaks

If you want to hear the crowd react to the music, then make space in the track for them to show their appreciation. That's the role of the breakdown. A breakdown unites the dancefloor and primes them for lift-off when the drop hits. This is why it's important for a break to last long enough to gather everyone's attention and focus them on what's about to happen next, i.e. the drop.

If you listen to the difference between DJs who play big room parties vs small intimate clubs, you'll notice that the long breaks and big rises work better with big crowds, so it naturally takes a bit longer to

THE EXPERT

Marc '01'
artist,
producer



Marc '01' is an Dance music guru with plenty of high profile remixes and tracks under his belt. He's also the author of the book *The Secrets of House Music Production* from SampleMagic.

get everyone focused for the trick to work its magic. In the studio, you might think that dropping to a kick drum is just too boring, but at peak time in the main room, after a huge build, dropping to a slamming kick leaves enough space in the music to draw a cheer from everyone in the room – DJs will love you for it.

Pace the action

Just like a movie changes pace at key moments, you need to direct the action of your track. Think of the arrangement in terms of direction, when does the track need to go up, when does it level out and when does it wind down?

Once you have this mapped out for your track, plot a course so that the changes need to happen at regular intervals such as every eight, 16 or 32 bars. Remember, when designing tracks for big rooms, things can take a bit longer to happen...

Crafting a tune is like arming a DJ with the ammo he needs to devastate the crowd

10 Commandments of Dance Tracks

1 Build musical tension to make the eventual drop worthwhile and more impactful

2 The breakdown must never be louder than the drop – keep an eye on your compressors

3 Reverse sounds draw you in and let the listener know a transition is about to happen

4 Expand sounds during the breakdown – open the ADSR release on the synth to fill the space, then close it back up for the drop

5 Faster momentum increases tension – this includes the speed of LFOs and delay times

6 Hi-pass filter the bass in breaks so that it allows the sub cones to retract and has maximum impact in the drop

7 Shorten the turnaround of loops through a break to pick up the pace

8 Silence between breaks creates more impact for the drop and lets the club compressors reset their attack time

9 Pace the break – make enough time for all the elements to reach their conclusion

10 Hide subtle ear candy into the body of a build up such as sine wave pitch rises to reinforce the direction of your build

The Perfect Build-Up

Build-ups are all about sonic tension – filtering, pitch-shifting and spatial effects can all play their part

Build-ups are about direction, and that direction is up. If you want to get the dancefloor buzzing with anticipation then there's no two ways about it. You need to make those synths rise in pitch, the LFOs must cycle faster, the reverbs must grow bigger, and the filters have to sweep up.

When composing the build, you can increase the pace by making the loop time shorter by half the amount each turnaround. Fatboy Slim is the original master of this technique, and there is an art to choosing the right part of the melody line to loop around so that it sounds musical or just plain cool.



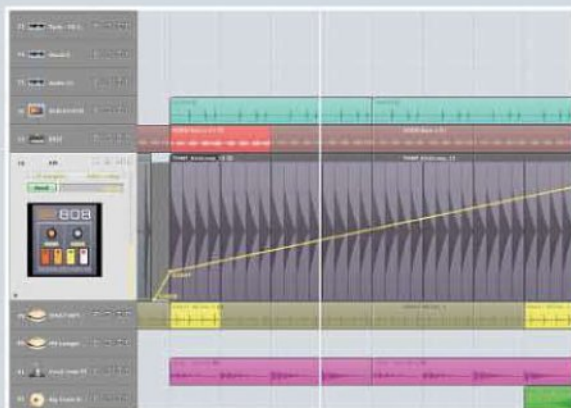
ON THE DVD

> Load up the *Build Ups – Drum Reverb* file on the DVD, for another example of a build-up. Listen how the reverb mix slowly automates from bone dry to dripping wet throughout the length of the break while the reverb decay gets longer.

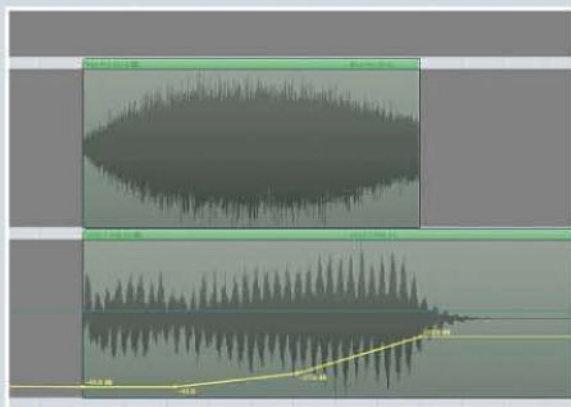
For extra spice we can add some 16th note echo that plays off the regular snare drum. In the last eight bars of the break, the high-pass filter rises up and as a cheeky surprise at the end, we top it off early and finish on a bone dry snare, before kicking in.



1 An easy way to start marking out a breakdown is to delete or mute the kick track. We can then get stuck into the other elements, and draw in volume and filter automation to gradually fade parts down, giving us space to add the extra elements.



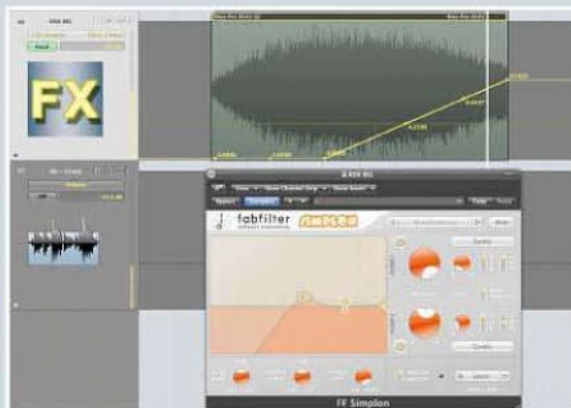
3 Keeping the kick running through the break can make the transition much smoother. To make it less banging, use a hi-pass filter to take out the low end. Start around 120Hz and work your way up using automation until the kick disappears from the mix.



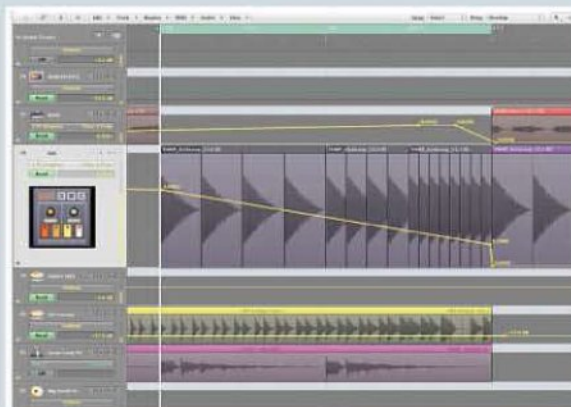
5 Just when you thought we couldn't go any higher, we throw another uplifter into the mix. This one plays a supporting role, so we automate the volume of this so that it creeps in slowly, and then rises exponentially towards the end of the break.



2 Build the atmosphere by adding some noise FX at even positions throughout the break – I've used two different types. The 'Crispy Hit' noise marks the beginning of the break and comes in on the drop. The 'big crash noise' hits half-way through and has a bit of a lead in for variation.



4 The big pitch rise comes in for the last eight bars of the break and directs the energy upwards. To give more upwards motion to the sound, add a hi-pass filter and automate it. Begin rising the cutoff in the second-half of the break.



6 Program the kick to play a roll using 1/4 notes, 8th notes and 16th notes. Use a high-pass filter to bring the kick in, and automate it to so that the very low bass frequencies are saved for the drop.

Silence is golden

Nothing creates more anticipation than silence. Leaving a small pause between the break and the drop can be highly effective way of creating maximum impact as it gives the ears (and club system compressors and limiters) a split second to rest from the punishing volume of club sound system.

Carve it up with contrast

One of the most effective ways to create contrast between the break and the drop is to switch between a big wide-open reverb in the break to a tight, dry pumping sound for the drop. Some producers love to add sidechain compression to the reverbs for the body of the track, and then take them off for the breaks so they can breathe for a while, before slamming them back on for the drop.

Take it out and bring it back

If you want them to appreciate the bass, then drop it out for the last bar of a section then drop it back in again. This can work well with the kick or the bassline, drop them out altogether or just use a high-pass filter on the whole mix.

Mess with the echoes

Messing with delays in the breakdown can yield some amazingly trippy effects. The key parameters here are feedback amount and

delay time. If the delay uses tempo sync to set the timing, try automating the timing so it gets faster at key moments during the build. Make the tempo changes happen exactly on the beat so that the riff doesn't lose the rhythm, and half the speed from 1/4 to 1/8 to 1/16 right up 1/64th notes at the climax. Alternatively, switch between straight and triplet rhythms to shift between feelings of tension and resolution. If the

Reinforce the feeling of winding down by automating the LFO speed

delay time is set manually in milliseconds, you can create moments of tension and resolution by shifting the delay time in and out of sync.

Downshifters

If elevators take you up, then downshifters are designed to have the opposite effect. The ideal place for one of these is at the start of the breakdown, on the first beat

where the kick would normally be. The downwards pitch drop doesn't have to be long to be effective, usually four to eight beats. Sonically, it can start from any point in the frequency range. The main synthesizer trick here is to make the pitch move from high-to-low to create the feeling of winding down, which can be done using the pitch bend, modulation envelopes etc. If the sound uses a fast LFO to modulate the

filter cutoff or pitch, you can reinforce the feeling of winding down by automating the LFO speed to go from fast to slow, and/or decreasing the modulation depth.

Drum rolls

Drummers love to add rolls and fills at the end of a bar to help

transition into the next section. The general rule of thumb here is to use short rolls when the transition is slight, and longer rolls for the important changes. The classic 909-snare roll gradually creeps up in volume, starting at 8th note intervals, and rising to 16th, 32nd and even 64th note rolls. If you think it can't get more intense, try adding a kick drum underneath or automate the pitch of the snare.

The Perfect Breakdown

A good breakdown is vital for a track aimed at the dancefloor – let's look at a few key tips and tricks

In Dance music, the breakdown can be as important as the chorus is to a Pop song. Breakdowns tend to fall into two distinct types. The rolling break is the type where the kick drops out, but the main riff or bassline

keeps running. It can be as simple as adding some FX hits, filtering the synths a bit, then adding some rising noises before kicking back in with the drop.

The second type of break takes a different approach and drops

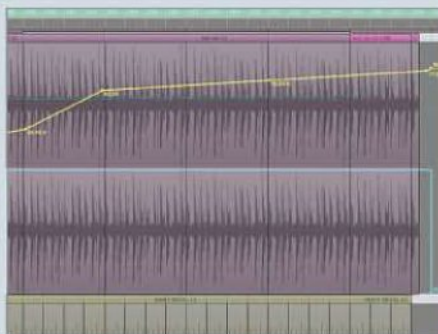
out the bass/lead etc and switches to a new hook line instead. This can be the part of the track that features a new musical hook or vocal line, and in this way, it is more like the chorus of the song.

There are no absolutes when it comes to the 'correct' length of a breakdown, but one thing that's for sure is that the breakdown should never be louder than the rest of the track, especially the eventual drop.

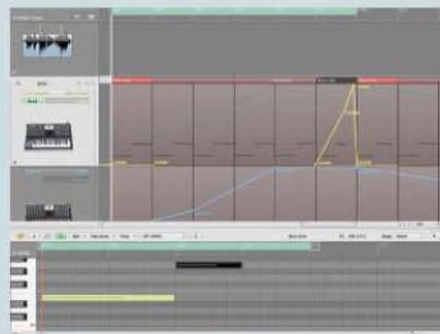


ON THE DVD

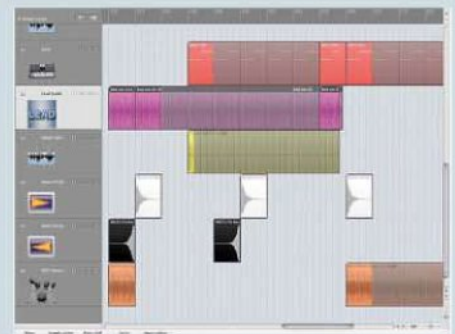
> This breakdown starts with white noise and the melodic synth. After eight bars the bass comes filtering up. The tiny bit of silence creates drama.



1 The break begins with the melodic synth line, this has a touch of echo to help it groove. Automate the delay mix from the initial value to 50% over the first eight bars. For the second half, increase it slowly up to 80% and cut the synth loop short so you only hear some echoes at the end. Use automation to mute the track before the drop hits.



2 The bassline follows the same chord progression as the lead synth. Automate the low-pass filter to creep in over the first eight bars, then stays open for the rest of the break. In the final four bars, shorten the last note and use a high-pass filter to take out the bass entirely so all you hear are the last echoes of the lead synth.



3 Drop in a steady hi-hat loop after four bars and add some noise crashes at even intervals to give the break more atmosphere and impact. Reverse the noise blast and add that before the blasts to build into the break and create more drama.

Musical Climaxes

It's not just mixing. Understanding musical phrases and cadences can enhance your track beyond the clichés. Here's what makes them work and some of the key musical devices to build the tension your build-ups need



EXAMPLE 1

The effectiveness of the peak or climax of a track depends much on the build up preceding it. Any effective climax in a track will rely

mainly on a dramatic change in the music, normally after a period of something fairly repetitive or constant. While it's easy to go for the usual white noise, filtering and reverse cymbal transitions to provide ear candy and enhance musical build ups and climaxes (and these work great) there are often overlooked musical devices that can be used to highlight the climax in your tracks. The most effective include changing keys from major to minor and back (modulating) to provide a change of mood and to create musical tension and release, while changing to any other chord within a key can provide very effective too, adding spine tingles and creating light and shade.

Also, moving chromatically (by step) or by octaves up or down the root scale is great for building tension and driving people wild, particularly if the rhythmic pace is increased over a few bars leading up to the climax of the track. By using these devices on their own, or combining several together, you can easily add variety to the climaxes in your tracks and create some real rushes, interest and excitement.

Don't forget you can also use these devices in different rhythmic patterns to twist things up even more.

Other tricks include holding a chord for several bars or repeating a phrase/riff over and over to build tension, then suddenly on the last beat of the bar jumping to a new octave, key, or chord, thus catching your listener off guard and providing surprise and release. Experiment with the following examples to enhance the builds and climaxes in your tracks.

Example 1: Changing to the dominant chord (chord V)

This example demonstrates that changing the tonality via just one chord change can be a hugely effective mood-changing device. An easy way to do this is to find the root key you're tune is in and move to the dominant chord (chord V).

For example, if you're in the key of E flat, this would mean modulating to the key of B flat, as B flat is five notes up in the E flat scale from the root key.

You could also move to any other chord in the key of E flat, i.e. chord II (F) or chord IV (A flat). Here, I've also added a B flat sustained chord on strings to build the tension even further.



EXAMPLE 2

THE EXPERT

Dan 'JD73' Goldman
artist,
producer



JD has been tinkling the keys for the likes of Morcheeba and Jamiroquai as well as releasing a wealth of Jazzed-up Funk under his own name.



ON THE DVD

On the DVD you'll find each of these examples as audio files, so you can hear exactly how each of them work.

Example 2: Moving to the relative minor or relative major key

Each of the 12 keys has a related major or minor key that has the same number of flats or sharps in its key signature. The key signature of a tune denotes the number of flats or sharps in a key. For example G major has one sharp (F sharp) in its key signature and equally E minor has one sharp (F sharp) thus E min is the relative minor of G major.

In this example, I'm moving from G major to E minor (chord VI). Using relative keys is a very smooth and effective way of building a climax and transitioning without straying too far from the feel of the original key. Experiment with moving from relative major to relative minor and vice versa. Check out this chart which shows all the relative keys: <http://bit.ly/PkrBP>



Example 3: Moving chromatically up or down

Moving chromatically means moving up or down by step (i.e. by semitone steps up or down). In this example (which is in the key of C minor) I'm simply moving up a semitone (to C sharp) in the bass and in the chords (using minor triads) to provide tension, then creeping up the octave to build to a climax.

It can be effective to move up a semitone just for a few bars to provide tension, then move back down to the root key again to release the musical tension after the build-up.



Example 4: Using octaves

Another effective way to provide climax and build is to use repeating octaves. This can be done in a number of ways, including moving from one chord to the same chord an octave up or down, or by jumping between single notes in octaves across the keyboard (as in this example).



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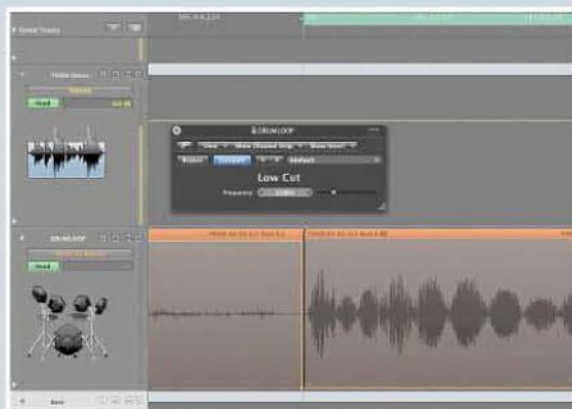
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Reverb 'White Outs'

Reverb 'white outs' are a classic technique in modern club tracks and can have a huge impact both on your build-up and your drop

White noise is a brilliant euphoric trigger. Timing a long burst of white noise with a climax or breakdown in the track makes that moment stand out and delivers an instant rush to your crowd. In this example, we are going to give the drums the 'white-out' treatment as they go into the eight-bar breakdown.



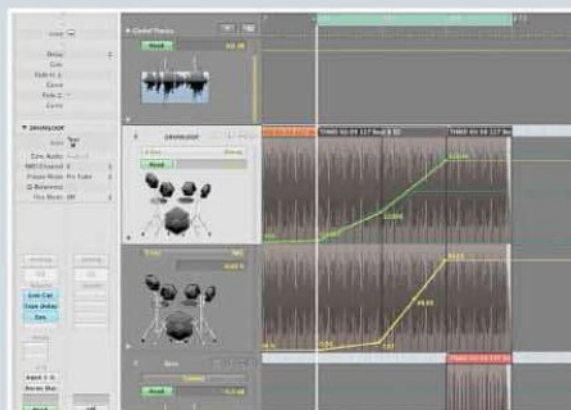
1 A nice little trick is to cut a little bit of bass out on the first beat of the break. Insert a hi-pass filter on the drum channel, you can also route all the drum elements to a group or buss channel. Set the frequency to 120Hz or higher, and automate it to switch on the first beat of the break.



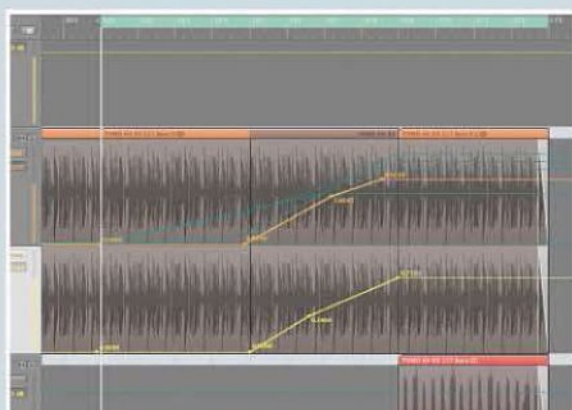
2 Insert a delay next, use tempo sync and set the delay time to 8th or 16th notes. Keep the feedback between 20-45%, as we don't want it to overload just yet. Use the high and low filters to thin out bottom and smooth out the top end to taste.



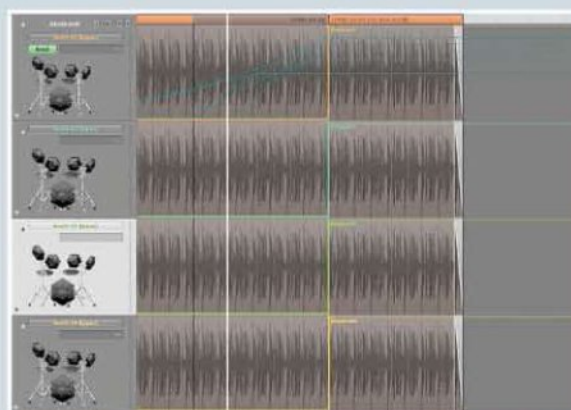
3 Start with the dry mix 100% and the wet at 0% and automate the levels using the mix parameter to keep a constant volume level. Slowly bring it up so that it hits the 50% mark for the last two bars. Increase the amount of feedback if you want to make it all blur into a nice texture.



4 Now on to the reverb – use a hall type algorithm, this will give it the right density. Draw in the automation for decay, start at a sensible amount e.g. one sec, and increase the amount to around 10 seconds. Automate the dry/wet mix in the same way as we did with the delay effect.



5 Add a high-pass filter after the reverb and automate the cutoff point so that it starts to rise in the last four bars. I like to automate the resonance parameter so it increases steeply in the last two bars. Use your ears to draw in both curves so that you get the most from the rise.



6 We don't want any reverb or delay to spill over into the drop. Use track automation to mute the delay, reverb and both filter effects at the moment of the drop. For maximum tightness, bounce down the whole breakdown to a new audio file, drop it in and edit the ending.

The Perfect Drop

Think of your favourite club tracks and you remember the drop – it's vital that you get it right for big room success

After the build has reached its peak – it's time for the drop. This is the moment when you hit the dancefloor with the sonic money shot. A track can have more than one drop, the first could be just the kick and bassline, while the

second drop could come crashing in with more drums, the lead line and a whopping blast of noise.

The essential requirement is that it has as much impact as possible, so it's vital that the drop is louder than the breakdown.

Adding a crash fills out the frequency range and adds buckets of atmosphere. If the breakdown has used the reverb white-out trick and is very open, try and maximise on contrast by strapping a sidechain compressor

to pump the white noise crash to make the drop feel tight.



ON THE DVD

> The Drop: You can hear the difference between the two styles

of white noise crashes. The first crash has the sidechain compressor pumping it on the insert. The second time you hear it the sidechain is on the FX buss. After the beats you can hear both crashes in isolation.



1 To create the initial blast, Select the white noise oscillator on the synth and program a note lasting two beats. Leave the filter wide open and set the amp ADSR as follows: attack minimum, decay and sustain max, and release somewhere between 50% and 75%.



2 Use a hi-pass EQ to scoop out the bottom end as its not needed. Select a 12dB or 24dB type and bring the frequency up to 300Hz. For a thinner crash, bring the cutoff higher. Add a reverb next and set the decay to around five seconds. Keep the wet mix high and bring up any hi-cut filters so the overall effect is wide and bright.



3 Add a compressor and use the sidechain input to make it pump aggressively on the kick. To get a balance of crash and pump, try routing the reverb and sidechain compressor to the FX buss, so that it doesn't affect original noise blast.

Expert Dynamics

The dynamic balance between sections of your track will make or break it on a club soundsystem

It's very important to create the right dynamics between the breakdown and drop so that you remain in control of the track's overall flow.

The key to making each part of the track have impact is to make

sure they come in at the right volume and that there is no huge variations between sections.

As a rule, the drop always needs to feel louder than the breakdown, but with dozens of tracks to fit in the mix, it's not

always so easy to pull off in practice. As little as a 2dB rise can make all the difference between a monstrous drop, so it's nice to know there are some failsafe techniques to guarantee the impact.



ON THE DVD

> Expert Dynamics: In this clip we hear the same break twice. The first time round its playing exactly as it is in the arrangement. The second time

round we have used volume automation over the whole track to bring the volume down by 3dB starting where the kick drops out, and then bringing it back up sharply to unity level, just as the drop kicks back in.



1 Automate the master track – from the moment the break starts, begin lowering the master volume down by 2-4dBs, slowly over the course of 8 or 16 bars – if it changes slow enough, the change should be practically unnoticeable on the dancefloor. At the end of the break, bring the volume back up to unity, just. The result is that it always kicks in stronger than the break.



2 Dynamics are reduced at the mastering stage, and heavy handed limiting can result in the volume of the breakdown being almost as loud as the drop back in to the track. Despite what dietitians tell you, you can have your cake and eat it. If your track comes back a bit flat, just edit the stereo master using the same technique as mentioned in the first step.



3 Starving the dancefloor of bass is the best way to get them whooping when you drop it back in again. Just use a hi-pass filter on individual elements such as the kick or bass, or even on the master channel, like a DJ would on the mixer. A nice trick is to filter it all up and finish on the fourth beat snare with a tight snappy sound.

Musical Drops

In the same way that a build up climax can provide drama and tension, a drop can unite the crowd in the same way by stripping things down. Like this:



EXAMPLE 1

Drops can be done in many ways including disappearing for a beat to pick up people's ears, or for several bars to create a moment

for people to catch their breath after a period of intense musical climax. An effective drop can be placed before or after a climax in a track or at any other point you wish to add tension or release.

Using complete silence is also a very effective tool as it throws your listener off, adding an element of surprise. To make silent drops effective, remember the parts need to drop out all at once, right on the beat, so cutting your audio super tightly is essential. More obvious devices that can be used include dropping out elements within a beat (such as hats, snares or kicks) while dropping down to just the bass is a very tribal and dancefloor unifying device that gets people hanging on a knife edge before the beat drops back in.

On the other end of the spectrum, as well as dropping down to a big bassline, you can similarly drop down to one sound such as a click, bass, chord or percussion sound. Finally, you could drop to something completely unrelated including a new sound, bass line or chord that hasn't happened

previously in your track, while using rising or diving sounds can further enhance the drop.

Example 1: Dropping down to silence

After a sustained period of music where lots of elements are happening at once, using silence is one of the most effective tools at your disposal. Here everything is chugging along nicely then suddenly we drop to nothing. This can be further enhanced by dropping for an uneven number of beats or bars to further provide tension. Make sure everything cuts off at exactly the same time before the drop, though it's sometimes nice to leave a little reverb tail hanging over.

Example 2: Dropping to a single element

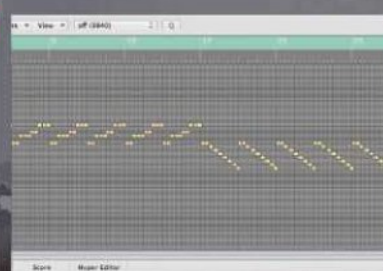
In this example, I've dropped down to just the bassline and used reverb to build tension in the drop, while keeping the bassline droning on a repeated and detuned note to drive people a bit nuts.

Also, not dropping the beat back on the first beat, but on the second bar, gives an added twist and element of surprise and false entry, plus the minor chord adds a moody atmosphere.



ON THE DVD

On the DVD you'll find each of these examples as audio files, so you can hear exactly how each of them work.



Example 3: Using chromatic/octave stepping to enhance a drop

While dropping to just the bassline is a dramatic tool, bringing in a completely new bassline that drops in chromatically in semitones can really bring something more exciting, particularly if coupled with a new rhythm and with filtering. Here, I'm using a chromatic downward bassline with increasing reverb and filtering for each note.



Example 4: Using spacey chords to enhance a drop

This example shows how long and lush strings/pads can really change the mood of a drop. Here I'm using a string synth sound to add further movement and airiness to the sound whilst adding a random arpeggiated pattern to add interest. While in the previous examples the drops have provided surprise, tension and dirt, this drop is very much a breather drop giving the listener or dancer time to chill for a few bars.

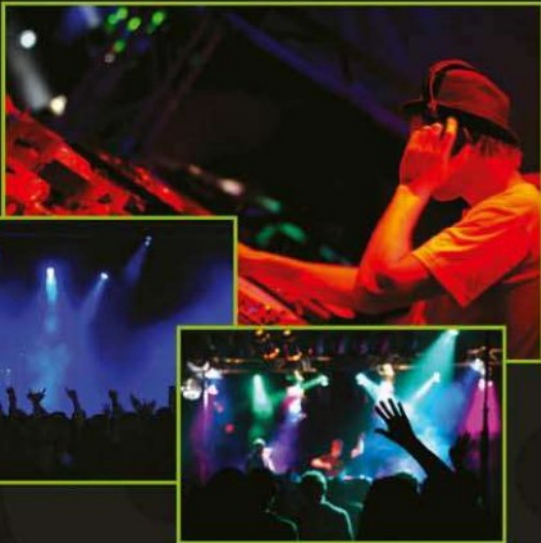
Using spacey chords such as minor or major 7ths will further add to the spacey mood. Also note the rhythm drops out on the last four bars to add a further drop, before the main bass comes back in. **FM**



EXAMPLE 2

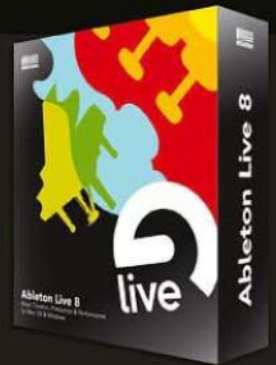
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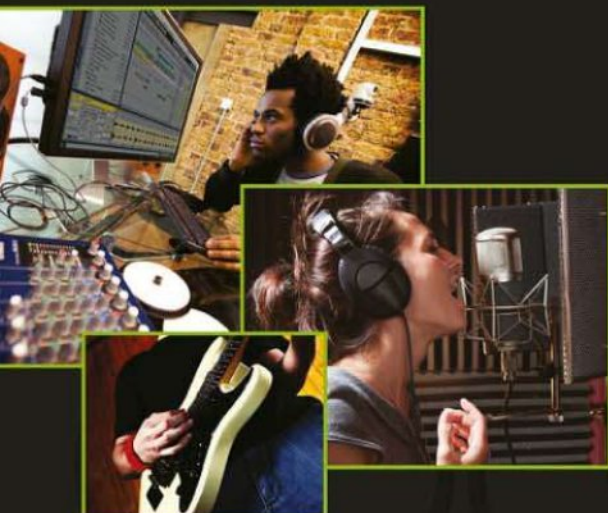


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IN THE STUDIO WITH...

Sean Tyas

Quickly becoming one of the biggest names in Trance, Sean Tyas is expecting major things from 2010, and so far so good. **Chris Barker** joins the Swiss family Tyas for a fondue party soundtracked by detuned saw waves...



Originally from New York, Sean Tyas got his biggest break after settling in Europe in 2004. Since then, he's climbed the DJ Top 100 into the top 50, remixed and produced some enormous dancefloor monsters for the biggest labels in clubland. His first major breakthrough release was on the Discover label owned by John Askew before winning a remix competition for Sander van Doorn with Tyas's take on van Doorn's *Punk'd*. He's currently a regular on Van Burren's Amada label and has a studio based out of a small town in Switzerland, where he's launching his new label Titanium Recordings and working on his debut album.

Tyas is possibly one of the most enthusiastic and warm people that we've ever interviewed. From the moment we stepped into his home and studio, his talk of music, gear and clubs was non-stop. It's evident that Tyas is a man who lives and breathes production and more specifically, Trance. His studio is located in a boxy, carpet-

coated basement room beneath his house with a few hardware synths, but generally it's an in-the-box affair with some surprisingly budget pieces of equipment used to create his huge main room anthems.

FM: How do you end up in Switzerland?

Sean Tyas: "At first I wanted to be an animator for Disney so that's what I was studying at college. But during this time, I decided to buy a few bits of equipment as I was really into Dance music as a clubber and really was interested in trying to learn how to make it. I wasn't interested in DJing but I did buy turntables, as vinyl was still the main format for getting your hands on Dance music back then. My first synth was the Yamaha AN1X and much to my dismay I found out that it could only do one part at a time. So I went back to the shop and got one of those totally unusable drum machines that was loaded with Rock sounds, it was something like an Alesis SR16 but maybe a Yamaha or Roland version, I don't remember what model. I became a total gear whore and the credit card companies must have loved me! It was a good

learning experience though as I got to try lots of different equipment. Sometimes I'd try to use something then take it back saying it wasn't really what I was looking for. My record was keeping a synth for three days then returning it and buying something else.

"There was a local radio station and they did a show every Monday night called In The Mix. In 2001 and 2002, the eyes were on the Dance music industry a lot more and this show had a regular spot called The Nine o'Clock Knock Out and my friend had sent in one of my tracks."

Was this a spot for unsigned acts?

"No, it was for any tracks and I was 'knocked out' by a Tiësto remix after winning the knock out for five weeks in a row. A guy at Arista got hold of my track and got in touch with me. He told me he had a Pink project that he was curious about me getting involved in. It was *Get The Party Started* and wasn't really the sort of music I was into, but I took the remix opportunity to get my foot in the door. After that I completed a few more Dance and Trance remixes and it went from there."

Suddenly you'd moved from hobbyist to professional, how did that feel?

"Well, it changes the entire game. I don't want to say it takes the fun out of it, but things are certainly different when you're waiting for a pay cheque. Most of the remixes were on spec so if it didn't get accepted, you didn't get paid. Luckily nearly all of mine were accepted and it worked out.

"The remixes are a bit embarrassing now but just to get the first remixes accepted and to feel them pressed up on vinyl was incredible."

Were you DJing at this point?

"No, not at all and I was still working in IT as a sort of side job, but the remix cheques were starting to be pretty decent and I thought if this carries on, maybe I can actually make a living from this remix stuff. But then, the music industry went really bad and there was very little money around and the remix fees fell from about \$5,000 to \$800.

"But, it was around that time when a guy from Germany who'd been commissioning me to do a few remixes asked if I would move to Germany to work in his studio.

"I agreed and about three months later, once I'd quit my job, broken off an engagement and finally got a passport, I was on my way. I was living in a one room bedsit and shared a bathroom with three other people, so it was pretty brutal.

"But, once I was home from working in the studio I would fire up Logic and start working on my own stuff."

So you were doing music 24/7?

"Yeah, pretty much. In the studio during the day, the music I was making was a bit more commercial and a bit cheesy to be honest. Then at night, I would work on my own stuff and really try to develop my sound.

"I would also keep flip-floppin' between Mac and PC platforms all the time, mainly just because I would get jealous of things like the amount of plug-ins available for PC and freedom of choice of components, then switch again for the overall stability of a Mac."



A simple notepad mixer completes Tyas' modest studio setup

There was a mix engineer who worked the desk while I 'produced', by telling him whether the levels were to my liking

When did you start on Logic?

"I started trying Logic 4 on a PC back in New York and it was when you had to really dig deep into the Environment to get things going."

And did the remixes for Arista stop when you moved to Germany?

"Yeah the remixes stopped from Arista and I wasn't releasing music in Germany that I actually stood behind. I lived in Germany for 10 months and was introduced to some guys from Switzerland called

Moonman Productions and began talking to them online every evening and getting advice about production and my tracks.

"It was a total fluke that I ended up in Europe really, but it worked out so well."

Do you wonder what might have happened if you had continued down the remix route with Arista? Maybe you'd have ended up producing Pop artists?

"I could see myself enjoying that actually, especially if I got to work more in the big commercial New

York SSL studios. I remember when I did the Christina Aguilera remix I was told to bring the parts to this big studio and there was a mix engineer who worked the desk while I 'produced', by telling him whether the levels were to my liking. It was a strange setup, but was a really cool experience."

Where are the hotspots in Trance today? It has a strange reputation as a genre, getting slated in the media but massively popular at the same time.

"The hotspot in Trance today have to be Argentina and in Buenos Aires – the lengths they go to on the dancefloor is unreal. When there's a breakdown in the track the whole dancefloor crouches down and slowly rises up with the build of the track, and the



Sean Tyas' Guide to Automated Master Channel Effects

One trick Tyas uses for build-ups and drops is DJ-style master channel effects

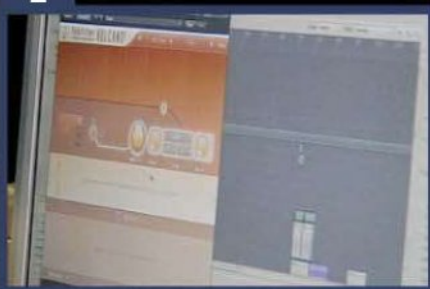
1



Filter Friendly

"Add your favourite filter and delay plugs to your master channel and make sure the automation is viewable at the top of your arrangement window, to avoid any accidents of leaving the effects turned on during the entire track."

2



DJ Effects

"Try using the filter in a DJ style to cut the low frequencies right before a drop or cut the high frequencies during a breakdown. Try assigning the filter to physical controls on your MIDI controller for extra playability."

3



Delay Designer

"Similarly to the filter technique, try increasing delays and feedback times to create everything from intense drawn-out builds to subtle delay fills."

lighting guys are always working with the crowd so when the track drops the place just goes crazy. I think Trance is back out of the cycle where it was getting slated though and we've seen from producers like Deadmau5, that clubbers are interested in melody again.

"I think there's always a strong will to be different and personally I think Minimal Techno and Electro got so big because people were getting sick of melody and looking for something new. It always comes back around and changes the music

that is being made. I'm influenced by all these styles but ultimately I guess I'm pitching my music at the raver style crowd."

And you're climbing in the DJ Top 100 now, does that make a difference?

"In some territories, yes. Asia and South America only seem to book DJs based on their place in the DJ Top 100 Poll. So, now I'm in the top 50 it should really help this year and then I guess we'll see what happens. I really hope I don't have to get to the

stage that I have to have a PR team, but maybe that's what it takes now. I think the whole voting base is only around 450,000 so if you consider the fact that Armin Van Buuren has 60 million listeners to his radio show, it's hard to imagine anyone else winning at the moment."

You were at a stage when you had a 32-channel Mackie and hardware synths and samplers etc, when and why did you scale down?

"Well the real reason I got rid of most of that stuff was because at the time I wasn't really that successful and couldn't justify keeping it all and not paying my bills. "Luckily it was around the same time when plug-in synths were finally becoming really good and you could move towards a more in-the-box studio. Now I'm really a fan of the less is more approach."

There's always a strong will to be different and Minimal Techno and Electro got so big because people were getting sick of melody

Tyas' Top Three Synths

Sean talks about his workhorse synths



Disco DSP Discovery

"It's one of the older plug-ins I use and it hasn't been updated that much, but it's essentially a Nord Lead 2 clone. They've gone a good distance to make it sound a lot like the Nord. It has a really satisfying mode where you can enable the chorus and the phaser together and it creates a really nice movement in the sound. I use this a lot on my mid bass sounds as it leaves a really cool liquid sounding finish that squirms around your kick drums in the mix."



Logic ES2

"This is without a doubt my favourite synth, even above the Access Virus. It's so simple to use and you don't have to go through pages and pages of settings to get it going."

"There's too many hardcore plug-in synths where you have to go through pages and pages of settings to get to certain features."



Virus TI

"Previously I got rid of a Virus B because you just had to dig so deep into menus to do such simple things. I remember you have to go something like four pages deep just to turn on oscillator three and when you make Trance music you really need that third oscillator!"

"They've improved this with the T.I. and being able to run it within Logic as a plug-in is amazing but you can choke the polyphony pretty quickly because every time you turn on an effect you half the polyphony so 88 voices can become 22 just by turning on two effects."



Would you ever go back to using a desk and get more outboard synths?

"I doubt it, unless the synths worked like the virus, where it runs within Logic. I used to hate doing the MIDI dumps and not being able to recall things on the mixer. It meant it was really difficult to be able to work on multiple projects at the same time. I had a 32-channel Mackie desk as you said, and because there was no automation or recall, you couldn't touch anything in downtime."

What are your career plans now?

"I never made plans until now because I didn't want to get knocked back down, risk everything and end up really depressed. Now I think I can risk taking stuff to the next level and not worry too much about it. I'm starting my own label called Tytanium Recordings which will hopefully become a sub-label of a bigger label."

"I don't think I'd be able to manage running the label totally on my own. The royalties are a nightmare to keep on top of in my experience. I've had situations where I've rung a label to ask where the royalty statements were and suddenly had cheques for a few thousand Euros appear. It makes you wonder whether the labels would even give you the royalties if you didn't chase them for it."

"So if I was running a label with multiple releases it could be pretty hard to keep track of them all. I'm also hoping to finish my album by the summer and get that out. I'm really looking forward to getting the label going and signing up new records. In fact, readers can send me demos at demos@seantyasmusic.com."

What can we expect your label to sound like? Is it going to be the same Tyas sound?

"It will probably have a decent amount of vocals on there, but not the cheesy over-the-top diva-style vocal. I really like male vocals on Trance actually and would like to have a bit more of a cooler vocal vibe like that on there."

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Where do you think Trance, as a genre, has left to go? It's kind of covered all its bases.

"I think Trance is heading away from the more formulaic approach and I have probably been guilty of following a formula in the past myself but it's an easy trap to fall into because people do want that formula."

"The strange thing is that the Trance genre is still one of the forms of Dance music that sells out 20,000 plus arenas and Van Buuren, Tiësto and many other Trance DJs are always in the Top 100. Yet, single sales for the Trance genre aren't actually that good."

You're using CDs when DJing at the moment, but would you ever consider Ableton Live and a live show with synths?

"I don't like the idea of Ableton for DJing but I use it for my radio show. If I was going to do a live PA type show then I'd use it. For a live show it would have to be a full show with my keyboards on stage so I can be tweaking all the time."

What are you looking to buy next for the studio?

"I need to check out those new Event monitors you guys recommended, but I was thinking of the KRKs if not. I'm definitely going to get a UAD-2 card also. I need to invest in a new interface too and I'd definitely go for an RME."

What is your advice to upcoming Trance producers trying to get their break?

"Use the internet as much as possible and really take advantage of it. Get yourself a proper FTP server and don't use things like Rapidshare or YouSendIt or anything where you have to wait before you hear the track. I can honestly say I don't have time to listen to promos that take any more effort than clicking a single link to hear it."

"Also really try to make tracks with crystal clear melodies and power. The production needs to stand out and have that big edge that helps deliver the hook. You have to get people walking away remembering the melodies and hook lines. Trance went through a phase where you had tracks at 150BPM and then when the Progressive thing started happening you were suddenly getting Trance tracks that were as slow as 132BPM. I personally don't think that Trance has enough power down at this tempo and I like it more at around the 140/145BPM area."

"Be really careful about how you use your master effects as plug-ins like the Waves L2 which isn't a very kick drum friendly limiter. You need to play with people's senses in the club and the lights and sound system all add to that."

So the only sense left to play with now is, the sense of smell?

"Oh there's definitely a Trance smell [laughs]..." **FM**

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

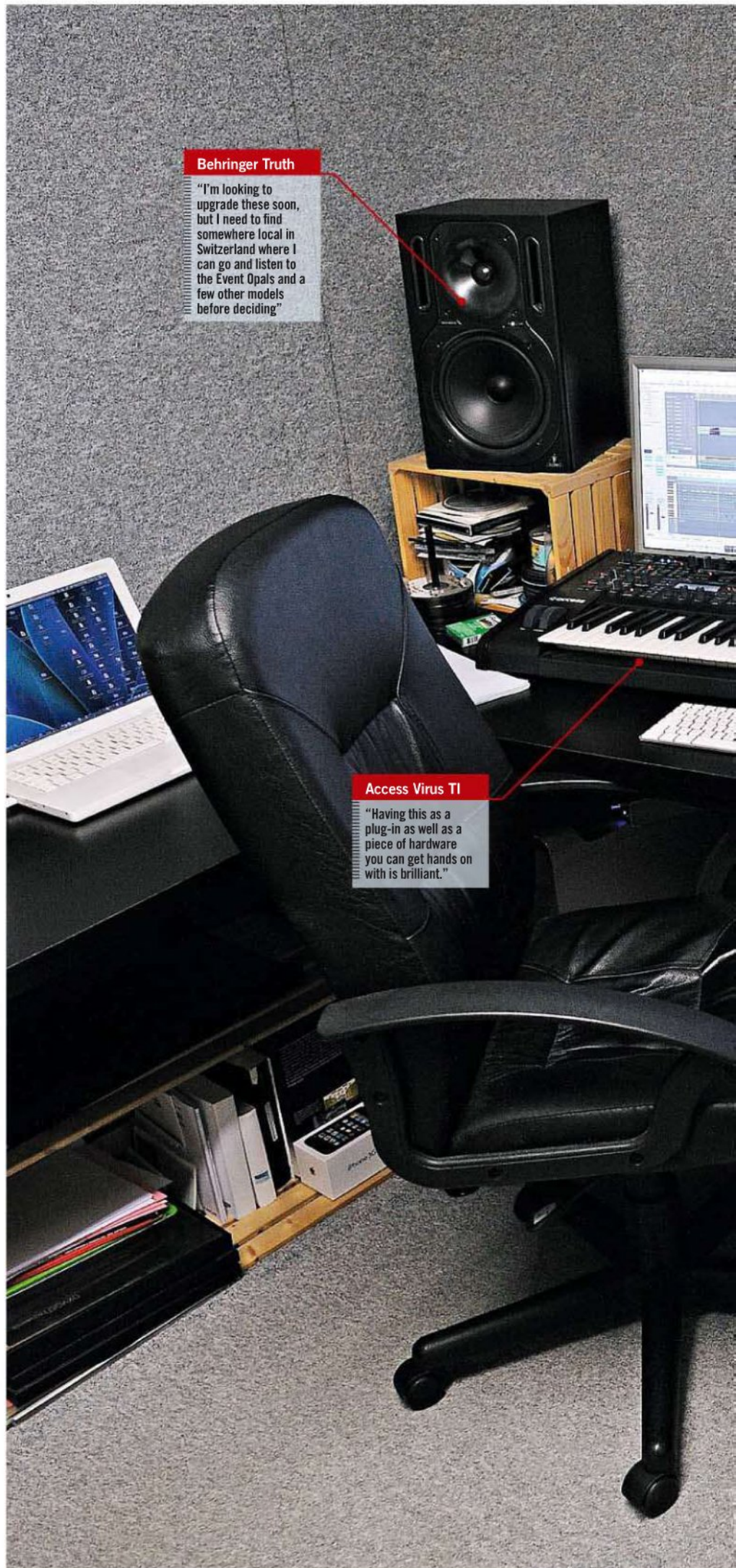
For more information on upcoming releases, tour dates and the latest news from Tyas camp, visit his official website at seantyasmusic.com.

Behringer Truth

"I'm looking to upgrade these soon, but I need to find somewhere local in Switzerland where I can go and listen to the Event Opals and a few other models before deciding"

Access Virus TI

"Having this as a plug-in as well as a piece of hardware you can get hands on with is brilliant."



Logic Pro 9

"This was really buggy until the recent update, but it's still my main tool. I love the ES2 synth, it's so simple to use."

E-mu Xboard 49

"This has been relegated to the other desk now that I have the Virus."



ON THE DVD: Sean Tyas Production Secrets

1



Remix Part 1

Sean creates a remix of the track *DNA* by W and W on camera, starting with ReCycling the drums and checking the original parts.

2



Remix Part 2

This remix continues with Sean adding his own elements to the remix using the Virus, ES2 and samples from his own library.

3



Bassline

Using layers of synths such as the ES2 and V-Station, Sean shows how he created the bassline from *Some Things Up*.

4



Lead Lines

Sean takes you through the elements that created the multi-layered lead line from his remix of Vascotia's *Verano*.

CUBASE ESSENTIALS



LoopMash & Processing

in Cubase 5

For successful artists and budding producers alike, loops and loop libraries are a big part of modern Dance production. This month, **Bruce Aisher** takes a look at using loops in Cubase, and spends some quality time with LoopMash...

This month we're going to take a look at audio loops – predominantly of the drum and percussion variety – and how they can be used and abused with originality in the context of your own tracks. A loop, by

it's very name, implies that what we're dealing with is a pre-recorded musical phrase (usually at a specific tempo).

It may be something from a third-party sample library or a phrase you have sampled or even created yourself, but

THE EXPERT

Bruce Aisher,
producer,
engineer



Bruce has been using Cubase since its arrival on the Atari ST in 1989. He's grown up alongside his favourite piece of software, sharing the ups (and downs) of the professional music world. They're now inseparable.

generally speaking, it will repeat in a useful way, often in 1-, 2-, 4- or 8-bar lengths.

Pre-made drum loops can be very useful for trying out ideas for tracks, and getting a 'vibe' going quickly, but can be problematic in terms of originality if used as the sole basis for a track's rhythm. While most professional producers won't admit to using specific loop libraries, it is clear that many do evident from both the rise and rise of the sample library market, and actually hearing particular samples that you recognise in specific tracks.

However, if you like the creative boost that loops might bring, but strive for originality, then customising loops through editing and processing is a good way to get the best of both worlds.

My favoured method for working with drum and percussion loops is to use the C5 Loop Browser to audition a large number of loops (see the *Loop Browsing* box on page 59) and import them into the Project. I then slice, edit them, and rearrange them to create new, and hopefully a little more interesting, material. Sometimes, what



Steinberg's LoopMash in all its segmented glory

remains might be a single hit from the source loop but, in the process, it is possible to avoid sounding like a collection of generic loop libraries.

One slightly weird, and sometimes wonderful tool available to users of Cubase 5 is the LoopMash plug-in. It provides an interesting way to combine loops in unexpected ways.

However, at first glance LoopMash doesn't appear to be particularly intuitive, and there are some options buried under the hood that are not immediately obvious in musical terms. Perhaps the main thing that puts some users off is the fact that LoopMash seems at times to have a mind of its own. So how do you tame the beast?

LoopMash

LoopMash is a VSTi that provides a way of combining a series of loops in interesting ways. After importing your loops (ideally four bars or less in length) and assigning one as the Master track, a collection of sliders allow you to replace slices of the Master loop with elements from the others.

This selection process isn't random though, as imported loops are analysed for similar slices that might replace significant points in the Master loop. Essentially what this means is that louder elements in the Master drum loop – a snare for example – might be replaced by a loud cowbell in one of the other loops.

The likelihood of an element in the Master loop being replaced is determined by the position of the Similarity Gain slider to the left of each loop slot. Move this further to the right, and more elements from that specific loop will be chosen. The LoopMash display represents the Slice that's playing at that time, with white bars above and below the waveform graphic.

By default, the plug-in is monophonic – meaning that slices from the original are replaced completely by one other slice – but it is also possible to enable up to four slices to play simultaneously by pressing the edit button at the bottom of the window and increasing the Number of Voices parameter. It is even possible to allow a track to contribute more than one slice by upping the Voices per Track.

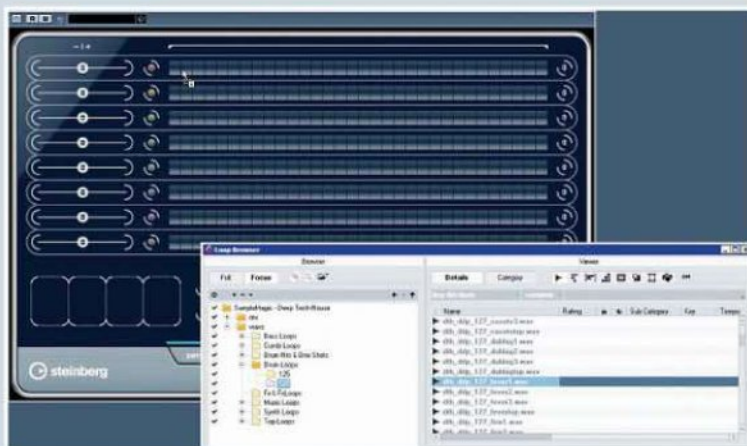
Take a look at the walkthroughs below for more detail, and also remember that it is possible to conjure up total sonic mayhem by feeding LoopMash with musical phrases as well as drum and percussion loops – the transpose buttons to the right of each track will help here. **FM**

CUBASE ESSENTIALS NEXT ISSUE

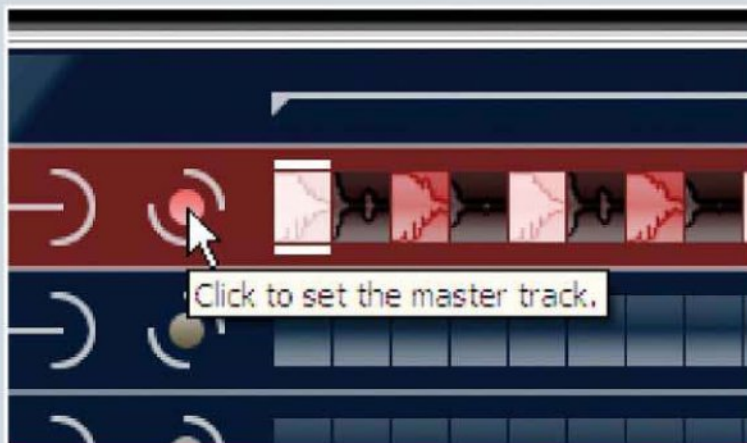
For more Cubase tips and techniques make sure you pick up the next issue of *Future Music*. **FM226 on sale 18th of May**

Getting Started With LoopMash

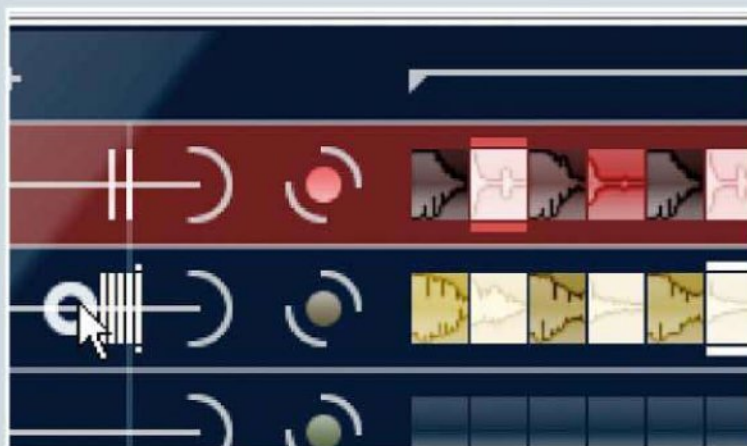
Let's take a look at how you can get up and running with LoopMash



1 The first step with LoopMash is to import your Master loop. Although you can switch the Master at anytime, it is worth considering what type of groove you want, and selecting you Master accordingly. Try auditioning a few in the Loop Browser, and then drag one into LoopMash.



2 After importing your loop, press the circle to the left of the waveform display until it turns red. This is now the Master track. Ensure that the Sync button (at the bottom of the plug-in window) is engaged so that any LoopMash activity is synchronised to the Project tempo



3 Now for the Similarity Gain sliders (to the left of each track) that determine to what extent slices from each track contribute to the overall output. Import a second loop (below the Master track), and then try pushing its slider to the right to hear more of its slices.

LoopMash in More Detail

To get the most out of LoopMash it's worth delving into the Edit page (at the bottom of the plug-in window) in more detail



1 First try dragging some more loops into LoopMash and then move to the Edit page. The Slice Selection Offset slider is useful for ensuring that loop slices that are dissimilar to those on the Master track have more chance of being selected. You should always give this a go if your imported loops are very different.



2 If you want to inject some unpredictable interest into the LoopMash proceedings then giving the Random Slice Selection slider a push to the right will introduce some randomisation to the slice selection process. If used subtly this allows you to create ever-changing grooves that can work well in the context of a full mix.



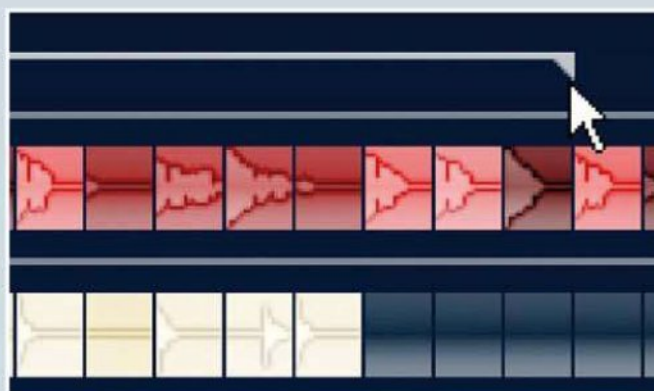
3 Under normal circumstances, the overall groove of the various LoopMash elements is taken from the loop on the Master track. However, if this doesn't fit with the track you can try adjusting the Slice Quantise slider, which pushes the slices closer to a straight 1/8th note grid for a less 'human' feel.



4 To shorten the length of each slice use the Staccato Amount slider. It is also worth noting the Slice Timestretch option button (which matches the length of slices from loops with different tempos). There will be a CPU hit and some quality issues when enabled, but it can be necessary to make loops fit well together



5 If you want to keep the Master loop playing alongside other newly sliced elements then you will need to adjust the Dry/Wet Mix. Don't forget that you can also enable multiple outputs for the plug-in, which allow you to route the output of each track through its own channel EQ, Inserts and Send FX.



6 To alter the loop length, and to a degree the variability of the groove, you can drag the white brackets above the top track in the main window. Combined with the various sliders in the edit page this allows you to customise the output of LoopMash considerably. Setting the loop length to an odd number can yield very interesting results.

Using Scene Pads in LoopMash

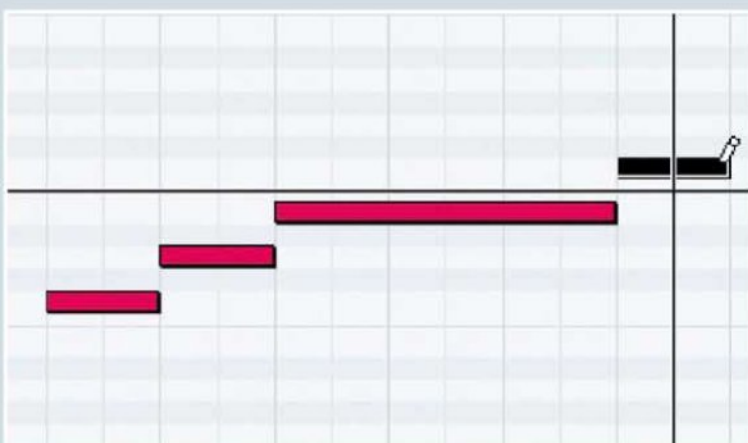
LoopMash allows you to save different LoopMash configurations via the Performance page



1 With so much going on, it is useful to be able to save sets of settings quickly, without having to resort to Presets, which reset and reload everything. For this we move to the Perform window, where you will find twelve rectangular pads.



2 The buttons between pads four and five allow you to Save and Empty each of the scene buttons. The Jump Interval button determines how quickly LoopMash recalls a saved scene when a pad is pressed.



3 The icing on the cake though is MIDI Control. Routing a MIDI controller or sequencer track to LoopMash allows you to trigger each pad from the 12 notes in each octave. These can be recorded to a MIDI track to capture the performance.



ON THE DVD

Check out some audio examples of LoopMash in action, with individual loops (kindly provided by SampleMagic) and then variations on the 'mashed' version.

Loop Browsing

A more predictable alternative to LoopMash is to get down and dirty and import and edit loops by hand. Loop Browser in the Media menu is a great way to listen to loops in context, whatever the tempo. I often turn to percussion loops for inspiration when a track requires something extra in the rhythm department. Prior to the introduction of the Cubase MediaBay functionality, this could be quite a long-winded process – particularly if different tempos were involved.

Let's assume you have the bare bones of a track and want to add some extra percussion loops to it. Open Loop Browser and navigate to the folder where your loops are stored and on the right-hand side of the window, you will get a list of audio files.

Below this is the waveform display where all the action happens. Besides the Transport controls and Preview level slider, you will see three small icons (at the top right of the window). Enable all three of these and press play on the main Project Transport bar.

Now, when you select loops (a single click), they will play at the right tempo and in the right place relative to the track. If you are happy with what you hear, just drag the loop into the main Project window, and it will be pre-configured to timestretch (in real time) to the correct tempo. It sometimes pays to drag a few loops over and then compare them, and see if they work well together. As I've said before, if originality is your game then chop, change and process the imported loops to make them your own.

Having been involved in sample loop creation myself, it is always interesting to hear my 'content' on commercial tracks with little in the way of alteration, and I try and carry this thought with me when I use loops myself. It's much more satisfying to stamp a sense of originality on your content, no matter what the source.

Preview Controls

The Loop Browser offers different types of previews



Quantisation Explained

Quantisation can fix your sloppy timing, but can it also cause problems of its own? **Greg Scarth** snaps to the grid...

For this month's *Knowledge Base* we're going to take an in-depth look at quantisation, a relatively simple subject that plays a major role in Electronic music. Quantisation can refer to a number of different processes depending on the context, and we already discussed one meaning when we looked at analogue-to-digital signal conversion.

However, nine times out of ten when someone mentions quantisation in the context of music production, they're referring to it as a tool that aligns notes or drum hits to the nearest beat.

Quantisation generally refers to MIDI data, and a MIDI piano roll is probably the easiest way to visualise the process so we've included some screenshots on the DVD that we'll refer to over the course of this article to give you some visual pointers.

How does it work?

The quantisation process works by moving each MIDI note so that it starts precisely on the nearest beat. But what do we mean by 'the nearest beat'? In order to quantise MIDI note data it's necessary to decide what resolution the notes will be quantised to.

This determines how many sub-divisions will be defined per bar. These sub-divisions are the beats that our notes will be aligned to. In screenshot number one on the DVD, you'll see some badly played note data in the piano roll. Screenshot two shows the effects of quantising to 1/8 note resolution and screenshot three shows 1/16 resolution.

In the basic quantisation process, the resolution is the key factor in determining which beats the notes are moved to. If we quantise to 1/8 note resolution, each note is moved to the nearest 1/8 note – if we

quantise to 1/16 note resolution, each note will be moved to the nearest 1/16 note, and so on. Comparison of screenshots two and three, also on the DVD, show how different resolutions quantise the same notes to different locations. Choosing too low a resolution will result in notes being moved drastically from their original positions and lose the detail of the sequence.

Too high a resolution will result in notes slipping through the net or not being moved far enough to come into line. Although it's most often used for MIDI, quantisation of note data also takes place in other types of sequencer. For instance, older drum machines with internal sequencers use a basic form of quantisation during recording to align notes to a grid.

Although you often don't know it's going on, any drum machine which tidies up your timing inaccuracies and shifts the drum hits onto the beat is quantising for you. Note that quantisation only really applies to recorded sequences rather than live performance, for obvious reasons.

Real-time quantisation of live performances is practically impossible since notes can only be delayed to the next step on the grid (moving them forwards in time would require them to play before you hit the key!).

Swing and feel

The main problem with quantisation is that it completely removes the human element from the timing of your notes. As a result, a quantised part often sounds robotic, with a relentless straight beat. Tiny timing inaccuracies are a very important part of the feel of your music, and quantisation unfortunately makes it all too easy to suck the life out of a part at the click of a button.

There may be occasions when perfectly straight rhythms are desirable, but the rest of the time we need to come up with some kind of solution for improving timing while also maintaining feel and groove. The most basic method is to apply quantisation using swung rhythms. Swing settings use a particular form of quantisation which still moves notes to pre-defined positions, but crucially in this case the pre-defined bar sub-divisions aren't perfectly evenly-spaced as they would be with straight 1/8 or 1/16 note quantisation. See the *What is Swing?* box for a more thorough explanation of swing and check out screenshot four on the DVD for the effects of applying a swung quantisation setting to a drum pattern.

You should be able to see in the piano roll how each even-numbered 1/8 note has been pushed back ever so slightly, with the resulting lazy sound giving a more interesting human feel to the beat. Swing quantisation also comes in very handy for



adding groove after entering notes directly into the piano roll. In practical terms, there's also an even easier option for maintaining feel when applying quantisation, and it's simply a case of not processing so many of your parts.

It can be tempting when writing and producing to listen to each part individually and tighten everything up, but the human element comes from the slight inaccuracies and deviations from straight timing. One effective method is just to quantise some of the notes, usually the ones which hit the 1/4 note or 1/8 note beats. This is particularly effective with drums.

Quantising the beats on the first and third quarter notes of a bar, or just quantising the kick drums, creates a rigid backbone that the other beats can groove around. This can either be done manually or using automatic features such as Ableton's Partial Quantize. In the screenshot on the previous page we've quantised just the red notes, giving a solid base for the yellow notes to groove around.

Groove templates

To add even more human feel and groove to quantised sequences, most MIDI software also now allows you to apply customisable groove templates to patterns.

The concept is exactly the same as regular quantisation, with notes being moved to the nearest of a pre-defined set of positions, but these positions are entirely at the user's discretion. Perhaps most interestingly, it's also possible to analyse the transients of an audio loop in order to determine the positions of its beats and convert this into a custom groove template

What is Swing?

In musical theory, swing refers to a playing style in which notes of theoretically equal length are played with variation, alternating between one slightly longer note and one slightly shorter in order to create a grooving syncopated rhythm. In Electronic music, swing is also sometimes referred to as shuffle (although this is technically incorrect in terms of musical theory). It's a very simple technique that is incredibly useful for adding groove and movement to a track, and it's been a

mainstay of Electronic music since its inclusion on classic 1980s drum machines.

In the context of quantisation, swing may be applied by shifting the starts of notes around rather than extending them. With percussive sounds especially, it's not a problem if the sounds overlap so we're less interested in the length of notes than their start points. The screenshot here demonstrates how swing quantisation works, with the MIDI notes on even-numbered 1/16 notes

being pushed to the right (i.e. delayed) further each time more swing is applied. The red notes are perfectly straight, with more swing being applied as we move upwards. Note how every other beat is delayed further and further as more swing is applied. Swing is also sometimes expressed as a percentage, with the figure referring to the length of the first note relative to the whole of the two notes. In this case, 50% would be no swing (the first note is 50% of the length of two notes) and 66.6% would mean that the first note was twice the length of the second, giving a more swung feel. The higher the percentage, the more the second beat of each pair is delayed. We've included a demo of a swung beat against the same beat played straight on the DVD so you can hear what it sounds like.



developments in audio processing over the last decade mean that it's now well within the reach of most home producers to quantise audio as well as MIDI data. Time stretching technology allows notes which are out of time to be pushed and pulled around until they hit the precise beat you want them to land on.

Effects such as Pro Tools' Beat Detective and Logic's Flex Time allow you to apply a quantisation effect to an audio recording just as you would for MIDI data, with the complex audio processing being handled for you behind the scenes. The software detects the transients of your recording and

automatically slides sections of the audio around to push them onto the beats. In theory it's pretty simple, but the reality is that audio quantisation isn't easy to get right with presets and a bit of manual tweaking is likely to be necessary for the best results.

It's also possible to use the same theory

behind MIDI groove templates to adjust the swing and groove of your audio tracks. Want to steal the groove of a particularly funky drum loop and apply it to your bassline? No problem. Analyse the audio drum loop, detect the transients, convert it to a groove template and then apply it to your original bass audio. Ableton Live probably offers you the most advanced options when it comes to handling complex audio groove adjustment, but similar effects are now possible in most DAWs.



ON THE DVD

Four audio examples of quantisation:

01 – we start with a sloppy hand-played drum pattern, with most of the beats falling out of time.

02 – 16th note quantisation locks all the beats to the grid markers but not all of the beats are in the right place because the resolution is inappropriate for the pattern.

03 – with 8th note quantisation, the beats all jump to the correct places, but the groove is very rigid.

04 – by quantising the MIDI events to a lightly swung groove, we can move away from the rigid, heavily quantised sound.

Pitch quantisation

Finally, there's one more form of quantisation which is worth considering here. So far we've looked exclusively at timing-based quantisation methods, which shift sounds to the nearest pre-defined value on a time scale, but it's also possible to quantise sounds by pitch, moving them up or down the frequency range to the nearest pre-defined value. In MIDI terms, this is a relatively easy process. Each note which doesn't fit into your selected scale simply needs to be transposed up or down to the nearest note which fits.

Many DAWs now include MIDI pitch quantisation effects in the form of preset scales. In Ableton Live, for example, pitch quantisation is easily achieved by dragging the Scale effect to a MIDI track and then selecting which notes you want to quantise the MIDI signal to. DAWs without a MIDI pitch quantisation feature can still achieve the same effect using MIDI note mapping or a plug-in such as Mucoder Tonespace (mucoder.net). Audio pitch quantisation is a little more involved but can be achieved using pitch correction tools such as Antares Auto-Tune. The correction process transposes sung notes to the nearest note on a pre-defined scale in order to achieve higher levels of pitch accuracy.

With all these tools at your disposal there are no longer any excuses for sloppy timing or inaccurate pitch! **FM**

KNOWLEDGE BASE NEXT ISSUE

Stay tuned to *Knowledge Base* for more studio facts and industry insight. Next issue, *FM227* on sale 18th May

The main problem is that quantisation completely removes the human elements

that can be applied to MIDI sequences. As such, quantisation templates can be used to apply the groove characteristics of one loop onto another, or to ensure that the groove of a MIDI part sits nicely with audio loops. It's an extremely powerful approach that has all kinds of uses regardless of what style of music you're making.

Audio quantisation

So far we've mainly been talking about quantising MIDI sequences, but



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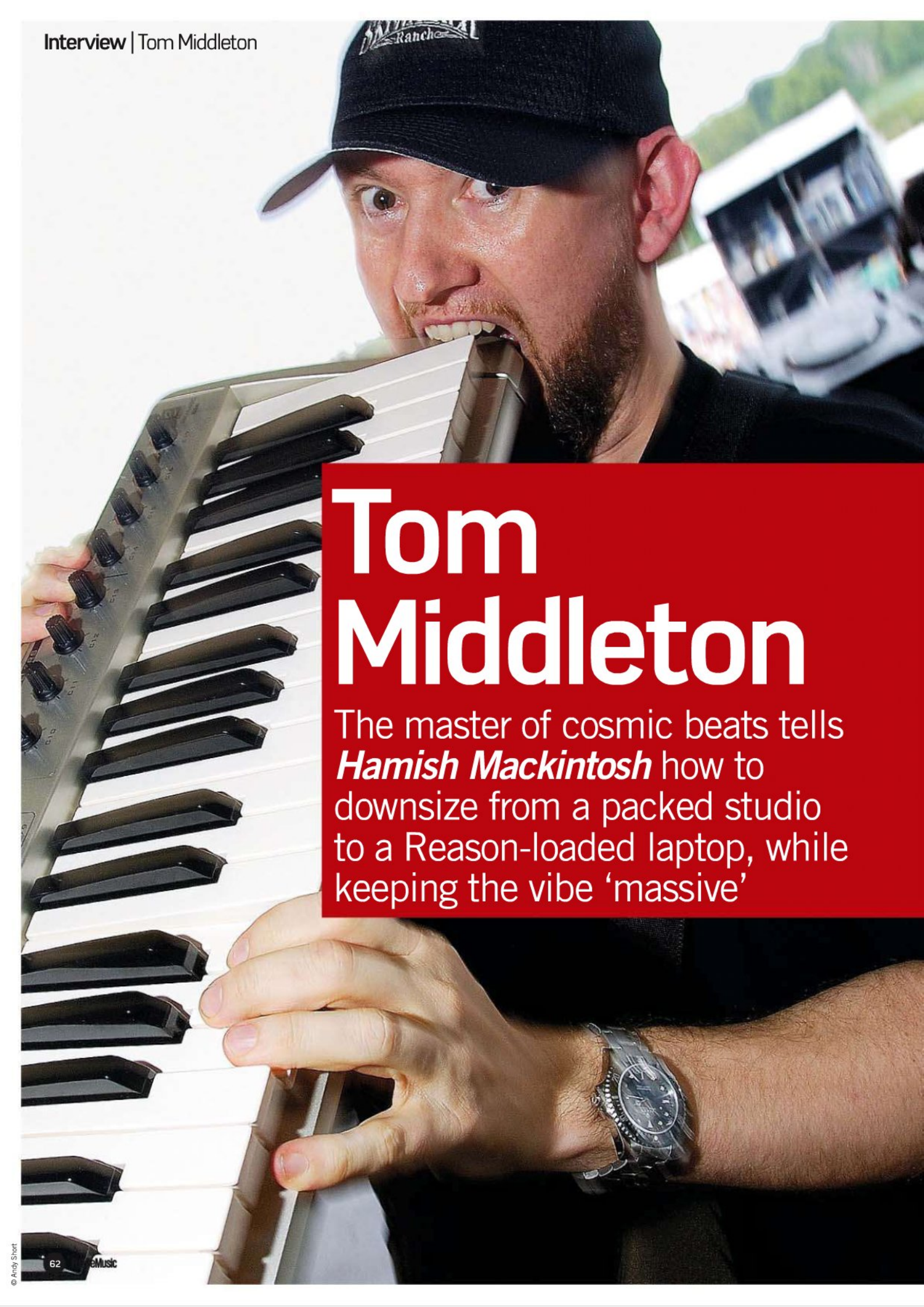
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FUTURE MUSIC 226

A close-up photograph of Tom Middleton, a man with a beard and a black baseball cap, looking intensely at the camera. He is holding a handgun in his mouth. His hands are positioned on a keyboard, with his left hand on the lower keys and his right hand on the upper keys. A red rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and introductory text.

Tom Middleton

The master of cosmic beats tells *Hamish Mackintosh* how to downsize from a packed studio to a Reason-loaded laptop, while keeping the vibe 'massive'

There's more than a touch of the Dance music renaissance man about Tom Middleton. Like many DJs, Middleton transcended the decks to encompass writing, production and remixing too. Now add to this CV record label creation and a burgeoning role as the 'go-to' consultant for technology companies researching and designing new products for the DJ booth/studio and you may begin to get the gist that this is a man who knows his musical onions.

From his early circuit-bending roots assisting and abetting Aphex Twin, Middleton forged a hugely successful musical partnership with Mark Pritchard, delivering glorious slabs of Techno to the happy masses under a slew of aliases such as Jedi Knights and Global Communications.

With a studio jam-packed with prize analogue synths and wondrous outboard, Middleton continued in the blissed-out Electronica vein with a variety of projects such as Cosmos and ModWheel, later harnessing his classical piano and cello training to joyous effect with the orchestral and choir AMBA project.

In 2007, Middleton released (under his own name for once) his most defining work to date with the beautiful Trance-scapes of his *Lifetracks* album. From the circling guitars of opener, *Prana*, and the dreamy, down-tempo sequences of *Yearning*, to the ethereal synths and sweeps of *Moonlight*, *Lifetracks* is a trippy triumph of an album. Word that Middleton has completed *Lifetracks 2* (more of which, later) is good news indeed to *FM* who caught up with the hugely in-demand Tom Middleton at his Minimalist home computer studio in Italy where he has recently undertaken remixes for such varied (and often downright unlikely) acts as Stereophonics,

Abandoning Analogue

Tom explains why he chose Reason over a studio of synths

For someone who grew up musically surrounded by analogue synths, does Tom think Reason offers an accurate alternative for the real thing?

"Totally! If I think of the very first kit that I trained on – as you know I was the Aphex Twin's Padawan, if you like and his studio comprised of a Casio FZ-20, which is a 10-bit, rack-mounted sampler with barely any memory. I remember learning all the skills such as speeding up records, sampling them, then slowing down the samples, which effectively gave you more sample time. Richard also had an SH-101, which he took the top off and started

messing around with the potentiometers inside and showed me how to change the frequency bandwidth, which was really naughty when you think that human aural perception is something like 20Hz to 20kHz. He wasn't content with that and reduced the low-end range down to nothing and flew the high-end away into supersonic territory.

"Starting with that as the skill-set I first learned from Richard, then watching Mark Pritchard in the studio with his Akai S950 and S3000, Juno-106 and Jupiter-6... Once you get your head around the concepts of those types of

analogue kit then the transition into working in Reason and Record is really straightforward. As far as I'm concerned a SubTractor is basically a virtual Roland synth. If you know you're way around an SH-101 then you know your way around a SubTractor. So anyone that understands analogue synthesis will be able to jump happily into Reason.

"That's why, for me, Reason is the most simple way of expressing myself because it's friendly, I recognise and understand it and looking at the virtual rack makes me feel at home. I hate being alienated by some freaky interface."



I fell in love with titanium G4 PowerBook when it was released in 2001. Since then it's been a gradual refinement of my set up

Maximo Park, Editors and the ubiquitous Florence and the Machine. Any listeners to last year's *Orbital 20* compilation would already have been privy to Middleton's classy re-working of *Halcyon* for the Hartnoll brothers, who are both confirmed Tom Middleton fans.

So, without further ado, let's talk shop to the one-time Jedi Knight about, laptops, loops and Logic(al) progressions.

FM: Can you talk FM through your current home studio setup, Tom?

Tom Middleton: "I've gone from a room full of valves and transistors, and many lovely classic analogue synths [*FM* visited Tom's studio many moons ago] to a compact, portable digital set up. I feel fully liberated from the previous creative

confines of a room in North London, and as I spend so much time travelling, it suits my current lifestyle perfectly.

"I now own a MacBook and two MacBook Pro's and I've been through about five to date! I fell in love with titanium G4 PowerBook when it was released in 2001. Since then it's been a gradual refinement of my set up. I have a full size MIDI controller for the home studio base and when I'm on the road, I have the lovely compact matt-black Korg nanoKey and nanoKontrol to help input and jam, which are the same width as the MacBook and are so handy to have.

"I'm running Record, Reason, Live and Logic with a few choice virtual outboard plug-in emulations on a UAD Solo 2 express card and that's about it really, with a few additions"

How does it differ from what you take out live?

"It doesn't really! I'd rather have the same set up wherever I am, as I know my software inside out, and I can create any set up I might need."

But not in the DJ booth too?

"I've found it tricky so far to really make the transition to software when DJing, as I prefer the spontaneity and chance factor that goes along with a bunch of freshly burnt CDs in a wallet. I'm confident and happy with the CDJ1000s and a DJM800 mixer. I can remix-re-edit live, change gear across any tempo and for an electrician like me that's all good.

"That said, I have Serato and Traktor and I'm tentatively dabbling but it's not for me just yet.

"I've been involved in the development of Pioneer's new CDJ[2000]s and [Rekordbox] software which I think will make such a difference to those of us who still haven't made the switch. I'll be quite happy for the time being to turn up to a gig with a couple of USB key drives and access any

of the tracks via the clear, easy to navigate screens on the new CDJs and just focus on performing the music which in the end is what DJing is all about."

CDJs aside, any other preferred bits of kit?

"Well, as you'll know from my first interview with FM, I've had my fair share of gorgeous analogue kit: SP-1200, EMS Custom Modded VCS3, Putney/Solina String Ensemble, Minimoog etc etc..

"But now, I spend most time inside Reason. Its friendly and familiar GUI suits my style of producing perfectly. I really know it inside out and that's important to allow you to create as quickly and intuitively as possible without getting stuck in screens full of software jargon.

"Having trained on analogue gear the transition to software was instant, easy and fun.

And Propellerheads Record takes it to the next level of instant creative fun too. As for Ableton Live, it gets more and more powerful with every release. Can't wait to try Max for Live, but I haven't gotten around to it yet."

Does it surprise you that Propellerheads took so long to bring out Record to compliment Reason?

"Considering where Propellerheads come from, in that they came up with the ReBirth software and ReCycle, they've been very important in terms of the shaping of the industry as it is now...unsung heroes in many ways. So it's just nice that they've listened to a bunch of impatient, want-it-now musicians and producers and given us audio but still kept it nice and simple. Adding to that, they've given us one of the best-sounding emulations of an

SSL console that you're ever going to hear...I'm flabbergasted by the sound quality of it."

Any equipment you feel like you're missing in your present set-up?

"Well, here's my big idea for the kit I'm missing! And as you're printing it, this is an open proposal to any company interested in developing it, get in touch and I'll help design and endorse it!

"Someone needs to make an all in one solution 1U 16-channel analogue summing mixer with built in Digital-to-Analogue-to-Digital convertors up to 24-bit/96kHz and a USB and/or FireWire connector. Basically this is the missing link in the Digital Laptop based portable studio set up.

"There are some outstanding summing mixers, but you need to buy separate convertors or they occupy more than 1U of rack space. Any takers, please contact my manager Ben Turner ben@graphitemedia.net or get in touch via FM! Let's make it happen!"

Is it beats, samples or sequences first when you're putting a new track together?

"I'm a frustrated drummer and bass player so I tend to initiate grooves in the rhythm section as these are always a lot of fun, but sometimes you need a starting point, be that a concept, an idea, a loop, a sound, a hook, a melody, a lyrical phrase, a sample, a texture so these starting points can inspire rhythmic directions and harmonic content. So I guess the music does come first, but I tend to jump in and get the beats rolling ASAP!"

Can FM come over all fan-boy for a moment and inquire what gear you and Mark Pritchard were working on New School Science?

"It was mostly Mark's home studio set up with a few choice bits of gear I contributed. The backbone was an Akai S3000 as we really got into the art of sampling. There was also a Casio FZ10, and an Akai S950. We sequenced using an Atari and Cubase, mixed on a Studiomaster 16 channel console. We had various authentic analogue synths and Jazz Funk essentials – like the analog of a Herbie Hancock sleeve: Fender Rhodes, Clavinet, ARP Odyssey, ARP Solina, Juno-106, Yamaha TX81Z and a Korg Wavestation.

"Some pretty basic outboard, nothing expensive. Graphic EQ, low-cost parametric EQ, bargain compressors, Boss SE-50 and SE-70 and Alesis Quadraverb for effects. Plus a guitar or two with a portable DAT and mic for field recordings. That was about it really! Oh and a trusty set of Yamaha NS10s for monitoring!"

Cutting back to the here and now, You mentioned that you have a growing love of Ableton Live.

"I hate to say it but I haven't touched Logic for a long time now. I jump in and out of Logic for pitch-shifting, vocal-transformation, vocoding and those plug-ins, which I think are very good. In

They've given us one of the best-sounding emulations of an SSL console that you'll ever...I'm flabbergasted by the quality of it



Research & Development

Developing the new CDJ2000s with Pioneer

With Tim Middleton's opinion being very highly valued by research and development teams, is that an area he could envisage getting progressively more involved with?

"It's a very interesting question. The Pioneer thing has been really interesting over the last few years mainly from the point of developing a relationship with them and how to find what I believe is the right solution, design-wise and aesthetically. Giving them the kind of creative and constructive input that they need as a company – I think they get lots of feedback from DJs but I think the fact I can speak a bit of Japanese really helps and in the meetings I've had with their

research and development teams. I've found a really good rapport with those guys and I like what they're trying to do for us. Anything I can do to give them helpful feedback or suggestions...if you're talking about productivity and workflow, as a DJ, I know what I need to achieve the right level of performance.

"If certain things are missing it's a case of articulating it in a way that makes sense to the very specific business protocol and Japanese way.

"An example is that, every time they release a product, there has to be something novel and new in it. If it's a refinement of an old feature then they're not really interested. That to me is

ridiculous as if you look at what you've got and think 'yes it's good but we could make it better'. I'm always saying 'for the next version just to this and this and this', especially change the algorithm for the filters as it will really benefit us when we're out there on the floor. If you're familiar with the Pioneer DJM800 mixer, there's a sweepable low- and high-pass filter on it and everyone grumbles about it as, the minute you start adding in resonance, you get a ridiculous amount of level.

"The obvious thing to do would be to build a compressor/limiter into the circuit so you would still get the sweeping filter sound but not the stupid level jump. It's little things like that."

THE LITTLE VILLAIN GROWS UP

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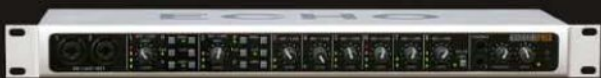


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terms of arrangements now, I just feel Live is much simpler and quicker in terms of work-flow and creativity. There are still some things with Live that annoy me but it's very, very minimal in comparison to other DAWs I've used in the past. I went from analogue hardware outboard and Cubase on Atari through Mac with Logic then on to a really expensive Pro Tools system and from there I've now been really liberated using a laptop, Reason and Live. It does make you almost cry when you think of the amount you've spent on gear to get to this point though!"

How close are we to hearing *Lifetracks 2*?

"Most of it's done, actually, and has been for a while. What we're looking at just now is how to get it out there and we're come up with quite an interesting angle on packaging, marketing and getting music into the consumer's hands but not in the conventional way. I've tried to utilise the product-design experience I've gained from a number of things I'm involved with looking at how we consume music technology, which is on the up, whereas consumption of music is on the wane."

What direction does *Lifetracks 2* take, musically?

"I'm feeling an Ambient revival is on the cards as, so far we've been re-inventing the early '90s in other areas of Dance music. It's the next in line for some real fresh perspectives. I can't wait for this! Already I'm hearing some incredible productions on the underground, but they're still rooted in 4/4 Techno and House formats. I want to hear more 6/8, Waltz time, 5 and 7 time – much more interesting time signatures to be explored. Come on you lot, don't be lazy!"

So, how do you Tom Middleton-ify some of the Rock bands you're currently giving the remix treatment to?

"Well I have to say that, thankfully, at the moment record company A&Rs like my style and my sound. For some reason it tends to get played right across the board by a variety of different DJs. For Tiësto and that fraternity to be playing my tracks alongside DJs who play Deep House or Techno Minimal, means I've kind of achieved my goal which was to make accessible for anyone."

"I think there's a handful of producers who really get it right – Deadmau5, Eric Prydz – I really love their stuff because it's not only got one finger on the underground, but also two hands firmly in the air of the overground too."

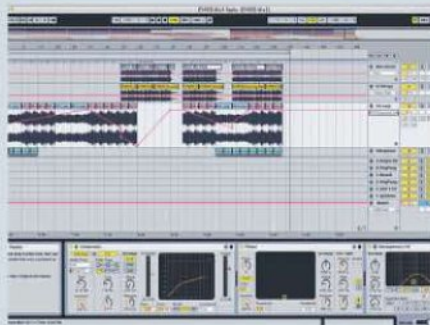
"I think that's really important to connect with the widest possible audience. I do get dissed sometimes on my Reloadonline.com forums for making samey mixes, but the nuts of what I do is wanting to make tunes sound as if they're the last tune of the night, really epic and uplifting. [laughs] I'm just a raver at heart!" **FM**

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

You can visit Tom online at tommiddleton.com or for the lowdown on his latest tracks and performances, login to myspace.com/tommiddleton

Remixing Stereophonics

Tom talks us through remixing the Stereophonics' *Could You Be The One* using Ableton Live and a selection of UAD plugs



1 "Here I'm arranging in Ableton Live showing an effects chain on the main guitar looped section with the filter frequency automation lane highlighted. It's all about the sidechain from the kick to make the whole part bounce and pump."



3 "This is the Propellerheads Record session for the remix, showing the mixer channels and one of the Thor synth patches I built to create a monster pad for big and wide '80s Van-Halen-*Jump*-sized chords."



2 "Some of my favourite UAD effects in action. I've got Roland RE-201 and EMT Plate 140 on returns for authentic vintage-sounding delay and spring reverb and the EMT's glorious creamy verb. I've owned both as hardware and these emulations are amazingly accurate."



4 "Here's the recycled Stereophonics guitar part dropped into a Dr REX player then into a delay. I work with effects in Record for vibe then mute to bounce dry stems, which I load into Ableton Live to arrange."



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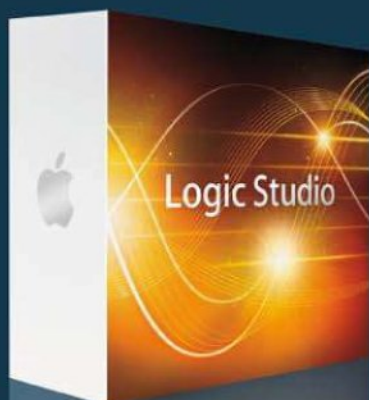
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Mastering MainStage in Logic 9 Pt 2

If last month's tips didn't entice you, these videos just might. **Jono Buchanan's** here to guide you through some more complex MainStage features and show you how to set up controllers, build instruments and plenty more besides

Creating multilayered instruments

1 One basic but powerful MainStage function is the capacity to instantly layer a number of sounds to the same MIDI channel to create powerful multi-instruments. In the first video on the DVD,

I've loaded a Concert entitled 'Keyboard Starter' which, by default, provides a single Electric Piano patch.

However, this is easily changed to any other native Logic or third-party plug-in instrument. If you want to layer this first instrument with another, all you need to do

THE EXPERT

Jono Buchanan
composer,
producer



Jono is a songwriter who uses the Logic Studio bundle through all stages of his various creative endeavours.

is click the '+' button at the top of the channel strips section and a drop-down box will appear to ask you to select what track type you want. Simply select a second instrument and either load a preset or program the sound you want.

Play the keyboard now and both instruments will play, leaving you to make level adjustments between instruments and add effects via auxiliaries. You can easily resize the window between the main area and the channel strips, while the Channel Strip Inspector below lets you browse patches from within the library of presets for whichever instrument you've selected.



ON THE DVD

> Control several instruments by setting up several Channel Strips.

Keyboard splits

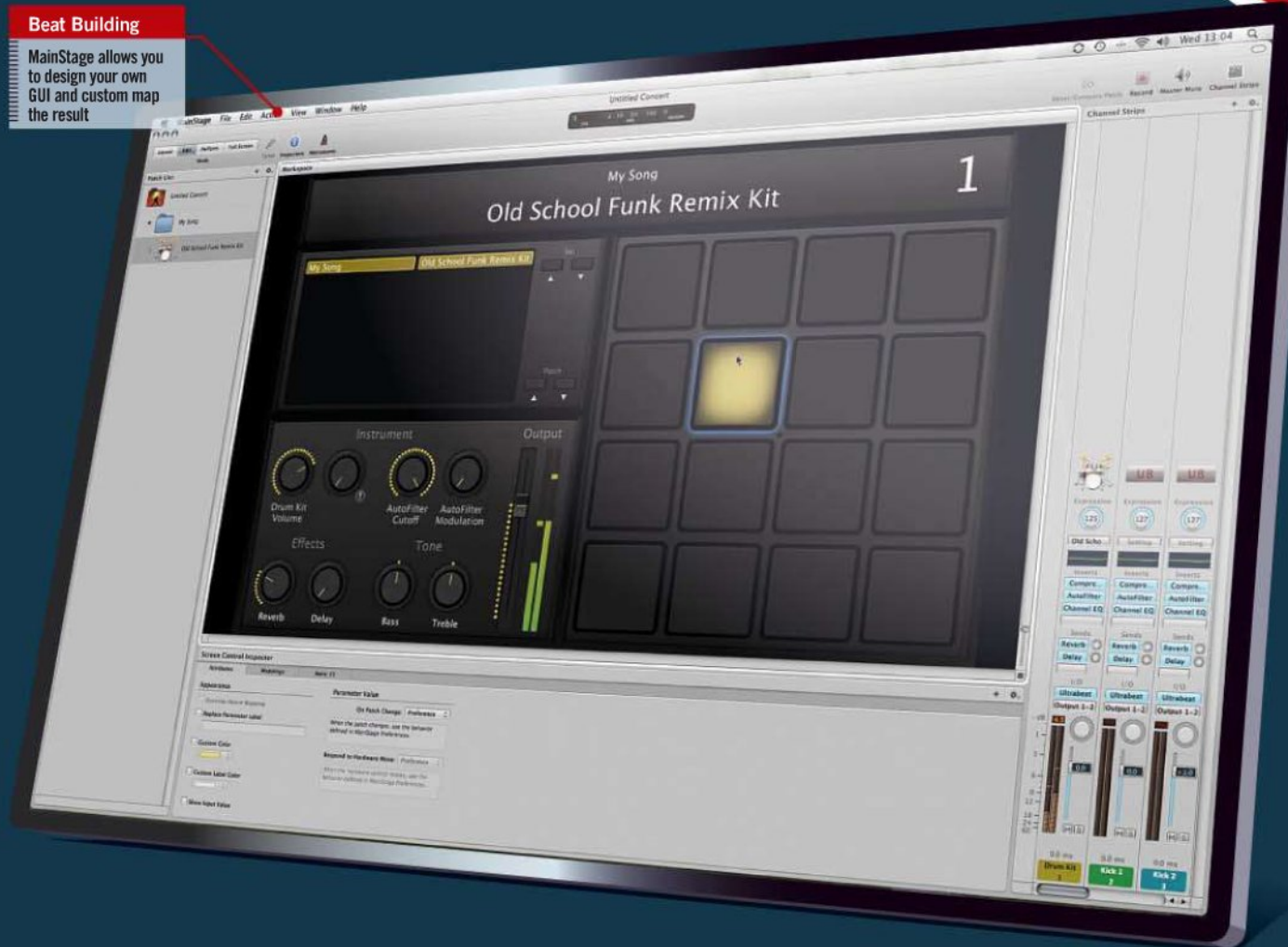
2 It's all well and good having a number of instruments set up to play back whenever any key is pressed, but as a performance tool, it wouldn't make sense to have every



One of MainStage's most appealing features is its ability to map several sounds on a single MIDI channel

Beat Building

MainStage allows you to design your own GUI and custom map the result



Setting Up Drum Pads

3

If you're using MainStage to control drums and have a controller with pads, you're ready for your first trip into the Layout page, which is where knobs, sliders and controllers can be added

to the main screen, ready to let you trigger sounds and controls.

In Layout, simply drag the Drum Pad icon from the Screen Controls palette into the main area and, by default, you'll have set up a pad to trigger key C1. You can then drag the same icon in again and use

MainStage's neat auto-alignment grid to make sure each pad sits flush next to the previous one. If you happen to create a drum pad matrix with conflicting 'overlaps', you'll be warned so that you can make necessary adjustments and decide whether to include labelling for each

pad or not. Back in edit and perform modes, you can then trigger your pads and they'll go to work on the sound you choose.



> Set up your own drum pads to control any sounds you like.

instrument in a Concert play from top to bottom of the keyboard, particularly if you're including a bass sound among your instruments. Keyboard splits are easily assigned in the Channel Strip Inspector below the main area of the GUI in the fourth tab – Layer Editor.

By clicking here, you'll see the layers you have set up for your instruments and you can then assign these, either by dragging the 'blocks' for each instrument between the keys you want to assign, editing them in the 'Low Key' and 'High Key' tabs, or by 'Learning' assignments over MIDI, simply by pressing the relevant 'Learn' button and then hitting the keys on

your keyboard. Obviously, sounds can overlap too, so you can set up dynamic splits, allowing you to play combinations of instruments in key areas.



> Learn how to 'zone' performances via keyboard splits here.

Controller Assignments

Assigning controllers to the parameters of your choice is easy in MainStage. Again, dive into the Layout page and simply drag relevant controller types into the main screen. Ignore their text for the moment, as this will



Choose the parameters that matter for your performance and build your own interface

disappear once you get back into Edit mode. Once you've imported the controls you want, click Edit and assign the relevant ones. On the DVD, my controls are for the EVP88 and I've added one vertical slider, three rotary dials, a MIDI Indicator, a keyboard and a Sustain pedal. The keyboard can be triggered directly from the screen but will also respond graphically once you play your controller keyboard and the same's true for the sustain pedal. The dials can be assigned in the Screen Controls Inspector in the third tab. Simply use the arrows from one column to the next to set up the function you'd like to assign.

The text below each dial will name the function and also show you its current value. In the Attributes tab, you can assign colours and additional or replacement text, while the Mappings tab allows you to limit

the range of an assigned control or invert its functionality altogether.



ON THE DVD

> Take control of your dial and slider assignments here.

Playback

5 Playback is a dedicated MainStage plug-in which lets you load an audio file which will then play back as you sing or jam over the top. Load the Vocal+Playback Concert (one of MainStage's template presets) and you'll see how it works. By opening the Playback module, you can load an audio file that will then display as a waveform. You can choose its playback mode, with options for playing from the start, from the current position or from a marker. Similarly, you can set it up



MainStage's dedicated file playback system, with timing and marker options

to play with a click intro and select a fade out time, so that you can manually trigger a fade from any point in the song.

Back in the concert, you'll find the main area is split between providing controls for triggering the audio file and setting its output, among other functions at the bottom, while the top of the screen is set up to control a vocal part over the top. The channel strip for the vocal features a full set of vocal-friendly plug-ins, with an auxiliary send to a reverb, which you can enhance with your own extras.

You can even type lyrics or performance notes into the main part of the GUI as a prompt for your singer, or add extra channel strips for instruments so that a backing can have live keys or bass playing on top too.



ON THE DVD

> Learn how to use MainStage's Playback plug-in in this video.

Loopback: part two

7 Setting up looped performances is the tip of the iceberg for the creativity that Loopback provides as, once your loop is made, you can then run it through a whole series of plug-ins and effects to turn even a two-bar loop into a 'track'. On the DVD, I've taken the loop I made in the previous example and treated it to an insert EQ set to a 'telephone' treatment, which kick-starts the loop when I first trigger it. Then, I've set up a delay feeding Logic's Ringshifter plug-in to provide a clanging 'groove shadow' and I've also inserted the freeware plug-in Supatrigga into the channel so that I can have some reverses and rearrangement effects happening in real time.

These tempo-sync'd effects wouldn't work without the Concert having its tempo set to the speed of my loop – while Loopback detects the tempo of my imported drum loop, this isn't applied to the whole Concert. So, I've clicked the Concert icon at the top of the Patch list and then in the Concert Inspector, I've selected my tempo: 96bpm. The result is a loop I can really jam with and, of course, there'd be nothing to stop me feeding extra sounds into the loop, or setting up my controller to trigger effects

Loopback: Part One

6 Loopback is MainStage's Looper tool, which works a bit like the old Lexicon JamMan units – you can either record or import an audio loop and then add consecutive audio takes on top of it to create a compiled loop of many different instruments and takes.

On the DVD, I've loaded a basic two-bar loop to act as my template rhythm, though I could just dive

into record mode without a 'click track' if I preferred. Once my loop is imported, I've then recorded takes for piano, bass, guitar and a Hip Hop lead sound over the top to build a basic arrangement for my performance.

In this way, I can try ideas out, see whether they work or even use Loopback as a practice tool to work on my timing! I can feed Loopback a signal of any type, so even though I'm using the EXS24 to feed performances Loopback's way,

as it's a series of audio signals which are being sent to the plug-in, I could just as easily set up a series of other Logic or third-party plug-ins on consecutive channel strips and feed those in, or plug in a microphone and record overlapping vocal takes, Jamie Lidell-style. Nice.



ON THE DVD

> Compile several audio takes over a loop to create a comped performance with Loopback.



MainStage For PA Use

8 MainStage is known principally for its ability to layer a series of plug-in instruments ready for playback

onstage but its audio capacities are just as impressive, particularly if you have a multi-channel audio interface and a need to set up a series of live microphones for PA use. The Concert entitled '8-Channel Mixer & One Backing Track' is a ready-made live mixer. Using it, you can set up individual

channel strip settings for as many microphones as your interface can handle, as well as setting up shared auxiliary effects such as reverb and delay across the board. You can also set up Monitor levels so you could, for instance, route headphone or monitor speaker levels from each channel to unused audio outputs on your interface so that these could be fed to the singers. Playback is waiting to run whichever backing track you want to use, while the main interface provides a set of controls you could

map to any device to control EQ, compression amounts, output levels, global EQ settings to suit the venue and controls for playback from the main window.

You might consider it a risk to run all of this from your laptop but, if you're brave enough, here's a complete live mixer in a box. Not bad, eh?



ON THE DVD

> If you're brave enough to run a whole PA mix from your laptop, this video's for you.

control dials are set to move parameters within the EXS24. As we've already seen, switching these to grab parameters for the ES2 is easily done within the Edit screen using the Screen Control Inspector. But what if I want to assign hardware controls to the parameters I've set up? MainStage makes this easy too but I do need to switch into Layout mode to set it up.

Once I'm there, I can click on the dial I want to assign and then manually set it up using the various MIDI parameters over on the left hand side. Or, I can cut to the chase, simply by pressing the MIDI 'Learn' button at the top of the Screen Control Inspector and turning the hardware dial I want to assign to the chosen parameter.

Instantly, this is picked up over MIDI and is assigned. On the DVD, I've repeated this process for 3 other dials too and pretty soon I've got hardware control over cutoff, release, reverb and delay.



ON THE DVD

> Watch this to learn how to assign hardware controls to the MainStage parameters of your choice.

Build instrument editors

10 A less obvious but highly effective use of MainStage is to build instrument editors for plug-ins whose interfaces present sound design 'challenges'. On the DVD, I've built a basic editor for Sculpture, simply by dragging eight unassigned knobs and eight sliders into the Edit area and setting these up to control a total of 16 chosen parameters. Using the techniques from the previous video, I've then assigned the dials and sliders to the hardware controllers on my keyboard so that I can 'play' these parameters in real time. Sculpture is a tough instrument to crack, so in this way, I can let a useful degree of randomness take over and pretty soon I've got sounds I like.

The great thing is that if I stumble across a setting that works, I can then save it within Sculpture, so that it's ready to use as a preset within Logic. It's great fun not having to think too hard about sound designing via the usual process of moving parameters within the Sculpture GUI and the more parameters I map, the greater the variety of sonic results.



ON THE DVD

> Build instrument editors in MainStage and get the most out of sound designing for your instruments.

NEXT ISSUE

Next month, Jono returns to whet your Logic-based appetite with more vital tips and techniques. **FM227 on sale 18th May**

Signal Routing

MainStage's comprehensive mixer window let's you create a virtual PA



on and off, or dial in the amount of auxiliary send to or from the Loopback plug-in.



ON THE DVD

> In this video, I've taken my Loopback creation and played around with various effects to turn it into more of a off-the-cuff performance. Check it out.

Hardware assignments

9 Loading a default Concert that is 'close' to the areas of control you want is a great starting point but it needn't limit you. In this video, I've switched the default instrument for a keyboard control Concert from the EXS24 to the ES2. No problem, except that the

A History of Sampling: Part Two

Last month we learned about the history of sampling, now it's time to get creative. **Greg Scarth** looks at some sampling techniques

Having examined the roots of sampling technology in last month's *Knowledge Base*, this month we're going to look at the more advanced sampling features available on modern samplers and some clever methods for getting the most from your use of samples. A lot of users don't realise the potential to use the sampler as an instrument in its own right, so we'll examine some of the features that make this possible. We'll also see how the advanced functions can be used to take even more control of your sample-based music and

along the way, we'll look at some useful tips and tricks for getting creative with the way you use sampled material. The tips here should apply to most software and the majority of hardware, so whatever you're using to sample your audio you should be able to put our advice to good use.

What should a modern sampler include?

The basic standards for samplers these days are higher than they've ever been before. Although the hardware sampler has seriously fallen out of favour, the different options for

software sampling are too numerous to mention in full here.

The most successful (and arguably most powerful) software sampler is probably Native Instruments' all-conquering Kontakt package, but most DAWs include some kind of sampler plug-in as part of the package so you can get started without shelling out extra money for another plug-in. Logic's EXS24 and Cubase's HALion are particularly good places to start. These days, even the most basic software sampler will almost certainly offer advanced features including independent pitchshift and timestretch functions, filters, velocity layers, amplitude envelopes, dedicated filter envelopes, waveform editing, built-in effects, sample layering options and a whole range of MIDI mapping features. The potential is huge.

Although some of these bread and butter features might initially seem uninteresting, they're often incredibly useful for taking control of the sampler as an instrument rather than just a sample playback device. Take, for example, filtering. From the first samplers of the 1970s and '80s, filters have been included as a basic part of the sound-shaping arsenal. Many of the earliest machines included analogue circuits but the market later moved to digital filters in order to reduce costs. As with filters in synths, analogue circuitry is usually considered more desirable here. The filters in your software sampler are likely to offer flexibility which could only have been dreamed of two decades ago, and the filter section is a seriously powerful and often underused tool.

Think of the sample itself as the basic building block of a more complex synthesis process and the filter can be used to shape the sound to fit your track just as you'd use a filter in a synth to create a sound. Most samplers will allow the filter to be controlled via an envelope, so it can even be manipulated over the course of your sample, allowing an even greater flexibility when it comes to tone shaping. These basic features shouldn't be overlooked when it comes to their ability to tweak your samples.

Timestretching

With modern samplers, timestretching without affecting pitch is almost taken for granted. However, the earliest samplers offered no way to separate the process of pitch-shifting from time-stretching. Samples were simply played back faster to pitch them up and slower to pitch them down. As a result, it was impossible to adjust the pitch of rhythmic samples without affecting their speed, or match the tempo of a loop to your track without affecting its pitch. It was mainly thanks to Akai's research and development of digital audio processing techniques in the late 1980s that



timestretch features were brought to the mass market. With the ability to adjust pitch and time independently, it's simple to make sure that your samples fit your track rhythmically and harmonically, whereas previously, it could be fiddly to ensure that both were correct. Luckily, it's easily achieved with any modern sampler.

With contemporary timestretch technology, not only can you adjust pitch and speed independently, but the two can even be adjusted in opposite directions simultaneously. Interesting effects can be achieved, for example, by pitching drum samples down while also speeding them up. The resulting deep but snappy sounds can be used to create unusual percussion tracks.

Ironically, these days it's probably easiest to get a unique sound by going back to the old methods, with pitch and speed being manipulated together. For instance, a classic ravey sound can be achieved by pitching a vocal up from, say, 100bpm to fit a 130bpm track, giving it the chipmunk effect. It's a surprisingly effective technique which is easy to achieve in just about any sampler.

Resampling

Resampling refers to a number of related processes which can be used to manipulate sounds. In essence, resampling is the process of making a new sample from an existing one. The most basic example would be to take a sample, let's say of a drum loop,

“Interesting effects can be achieved by pitching down while speeding up samples”

and re-record it at a different sample rate in order to achieve a different sound. There are many reasons why resampling can be useful, whether for creating unique sounds or simply for practical purposes such as using your computer efficiently. For example, if have a loop which you're processing with EQ, effects or other plug-ins, it's possible to resample it so that all of this processing is included as part of the audio recording rather than added each time the sample is triggered. If carried out correctly, the resulting resampled loop has exactly the same sound but takes up much less of your computer's processing power.

Clever use of resampling can also be used to create radically different sounds to the original sample. Let's say we run a synth bass note through a low-pass filter and

Sampling and the Law: Part 2

Though we talked about sampling laws last month, it's worth reiterating the point that sampling other artists' work still has the potential to get you into seriously hot legal water. Perhaps understandably, the precedent for legal action against unauthorised samplers currently leans heavily in the original copyright holder's favour.

Unfortunately, common sense is rarely applied, even in borderline cases. In a 2004 judgement, the US Court of Appeals dramatically ruled that any use of previously copyrighted recordings must be cleared by the original sample holder, regardless of how manipulated or unrecognisable it may be in its new home.

UK law is similar to the US precedent (if slightly less strict) but there is an glimmer of hope on the horizon, with lawyers considering the potential for a radical shake up of

European sampling law. In late 2005, Gordon Brown commissioned an independent review of intellectual property rights to be carried out by the former editor of the Financial Times, Andrew Gowers. The 143-page report makes heavy reading



New laws are being considered after a commissioned review from Gordon Brown

but includes recommendations which would change the legal situation massively for electronic artists.

The Gowers Review recommended that the UK government should lobby the EU to allow artists exemption from copyright laws for “creative, transformative or derivative works”, i.e. those in which the artist “rework[s] material for a new purpose or with a new meaning... [creating] new value.” Under Gowers' recommendations, the risk of facing legal action for unauthorised sample use would depend on how creative the artist had been when using it in their work. As Gowers put it in the report: “Transforming works can create huge value and spur on innovation. ‘Good artists borrow; great artists steal.’ So said Pablo Picasso, borrowing from Igor Stravinsky, or perhaps from T. S. Eliot...”

resample the filtered sound. If we then trigger the note at different pitches, the cutoff frequency of the filter will appear to be pitched up and down with the note itself. The result is a seriously easy method of creating a key-tracking filter effect.

Similar effects can be achieved with filter envelopes, giving resampled notes some of the characteristics of tempo-synced

filters. The potential of resampling is huge, with the results often sounding quite unlike any other way of working.

What about sample packs?

In the early days of sampling, it was a huge chore to create your own sampler patches from scratch. Recording audio into a hardware

sampler and editing waveforms on a tiny LCD screen made it time-consuming and fiddly to create complex setups. As a result, a number of companies spotted the gap in the market for ready-made sample packages supplied on CD. The sample library industry was born and thrives to this day.

If you're just trying to sample effects, occasional drum hits or even vocals, it's unlikely you'll need to exploit the full range of sample playback features on offer. However, recreating instruments is a much more complex task. If you have the patience to sample every single key of a grand piano (along with a number of variations of expression for each note), edit each sample and create a custom sampler patch of your own then we salute your tenacity. For the

ON THE DVD

Demo clips showing a sample chopping technique in Logic.

01 – the original, unprocessed drum loop file.

02 – the drum loop after being chopped and converted to a sampler patch. The sound is identical.

03 – the loop can now be slowed down by adjusting the track's tempo.

04 – excessive tempo shifting using this method can sound unpleasant.

05 – the individual beats of the original audio loop can now be rearranged to create new rhythms.

rest of us, buying a ready-made sampler instrument is a much easier option.

Chop and change

When dealing with loop-based samples, there's a great temptation to grab a simple loop and repeat it. However, things get much more interesting when you step out of this comfort zone and start to chop and edit your loops. Check out our *In The Studio* video interview with Alan Braxe back in FM219 for a great example of loop chopping with the classic E-mu SP-1200.

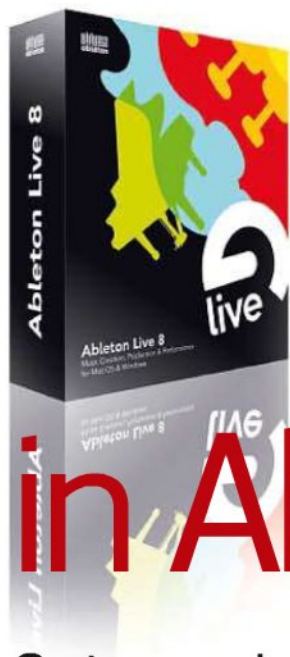
Sampling workstations like the Akai MPC range make loop chopping easy with automatic editing functions, but the same principles apply with any hardware or software sampler, either by manually editing each slice of the loop or through an automated function such as Logic 9's new Convert Region to Sampler Track feature. This is a great example of an automatic sample slicing tool. The audio is analysed for transients and then split into sections wherever a beat is detected.

These slices are sent to a new sampler instrument, with each slice assigned to a note and a MIDI region created to play back the original loop using the samples. It's an easy tool to use but it's also one of the most powerful ways of manipulating samples. Check out our example on the DVD to see how you can use it to quickly and easily chop a drum break into sections. **FM**

KNOWLEDGE BASE NEXT ISSUE

Stay tuned to *Knowledge Base* – next month we'll investigate the complex world of Psychoacoustics. **FM227 on sale 18th May**

ABLETON LIVE ESSENTIALS



Advanced MIDI Velocity in Ableton Live

Get your keyboards and drum pads out – and hey, you might even want to plug them into your computer – **Martin Delaney** explains why understanding velocity gives you maximum responsiveness and sound design potential

Velocity is the MIDI way of recreating the way an instrument's tone or volume changes depending on how hard/fast you trigger notes from your MIDI keyboard or drum pads. On 'real' instruments this is a critical way of adding dynamics to your performance – if you've ever played guitar or piano, you'll know how much difference there is between a note played very gently, and a note that you bash.

For people making music with computers, velocity is another tool we can use to add sonic variety and dynamics.

Some other time we might talk about aftertouch, or pressure as it's sometimes called, which is a different MIDI message that's sent based on how much pressure you apply to the key or pad after you've initially hit it to trigger a note. You'll even see that some manufacturers will say their keyboard is 'pressure sensitive' when they mean

THE EXPERT

Martin Delaney
performer,
educator,
producer



Martin, aka mindlobster, has produced Live training material for MacProVideo and PC Publishing, and has personally taught Live to musicians, DJs, kids, and prisoners. He also designed the Kenton Killamix Mini MIDI controller and is one of the UK's first certified Ableton Live trainers.

'velocity sensitive'...fools! If you're a synth person – we're talking about Live here, so let's choose Operator as an example – you can make velocity assignments to give you an incredibly expressive instrument setup, affecting oscillator frequency, filter envelopes, LFO amount, plus two other freely assignable parameters of your choice.

Controls like this make the difference between a totally robotic machine vibe, and an organic performance – although both of these are good, it's about having choices.

Terminal velocity

You're probably most familiar with the basic velocity response you get when you route a MIDI keyboard into one of Live's instrument devices, or when you're editing velocity in a MIDI clip – click on the small triangle to view the MIDI Velocity Editor, and edit the velocity markers for each note in your clip.

The Velocity device will let you effectively 'edit' every MIDI clip in a track at the same time, either flattening them out completely, by setting the low and high values to 127, or by narrowing the range, without changing



Live's add-on Operator synth is loaded with velocity-based controls that'll add new layers to your sound



the 'raw' MIDI velocities in each clip, in case you want to change your mind later.

This is a good parallel to working with compression and limiting with audio material. Even Live's pseudo-MIDI keyboard, the virtual keyboard that uses your computer's keyboard to generate MIDI notes (just hit shift-command-K), can be set to a given velocity. The keys on your computer aren't velocity-sensitive (wouldn't that be fun?), but just like the Z and X keys transpose the keyboard up and down in octaves, the C and V keys change transposition values in steps of ± 20 .

The M-Audio Trigger Finger is just one of the pad-based controllers that lets you choose velocity curves

Sensitive style

Your keyboard or pads might have some velocity options too – a lot of them let you specify a particular velocity curve – this might be useful to simulate the behaviour of a particular instrument.

M-Audio's Trigger Finger pads are an example of this – you can choose the curve from onboard the TF, or via the Enigma software editor. Instrument racks in Live have key zones, where a certain range of notes, chosen by you, trigger a certain chain in the rack, but they also have velocity zones, where a certain velocity range, say 0-32, triggers a certain chain – which might contain an instance of Simplr, with some audio effects, if you wish.

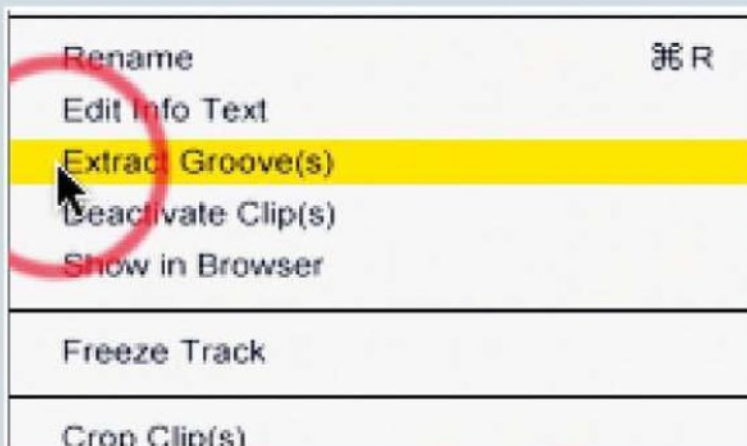
This is also available in Sampler, Live's bolt-on multi-sampler, and is a classic multi-sampling tool. It's used to create more realistic instrument samples, with different samples triggering for different velocities. Like I said before, it's all about choice. Velocity's another tool you should understand, so that whether you want robot or human, you know what to do to get it. **FM**

LIVE ESSENTIALS NEXT ISSUE

Make sure you pick up *Future Music* next month for more unmissable Live 8 insight and knowledge. **FM227** on sale 18th May

Groove Pool Velocity

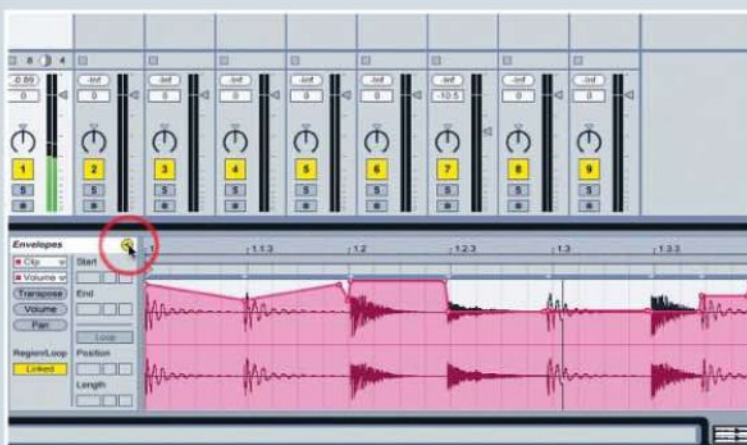
The Groove Pool Velocity control makes a big difference to the impact of your beats and loops



1 We've covered Live 8's Grooves recently, but here's a quick reminder. Grooves let you apply the timing and velocity variations from one clip to another clip. You can use the grooves from Live's Library, or you can extract your own from any Live clip.



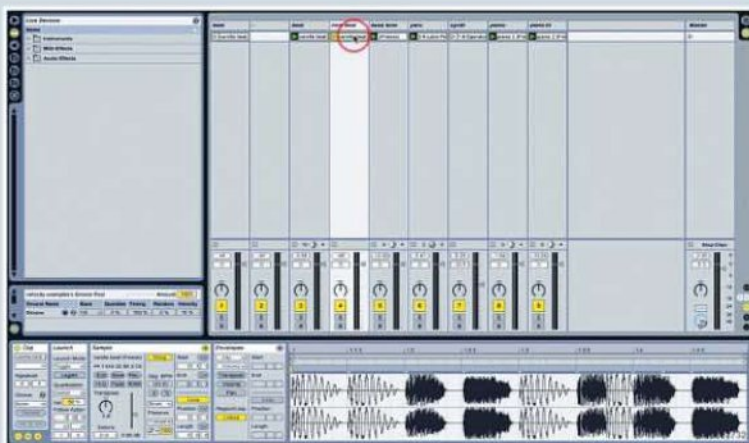
2 Load our example Live set, then open the Groove pool, and drop the groove called 'Groove' (clever name, huh?) onto the clip called 'vanilla beat'. Now you can use the Groove Pool controls to edit the groove parameters – they're begging you to treat 'em rough.



3 Grab the Velocity control at the top right – bring it up to anything over 10%. Velocity has a big effect on the Groove – timing's only half the story. If you hit the 'Commit' button, you can view the new velocities in the Velocity Editor.

Clip Launch Velocity

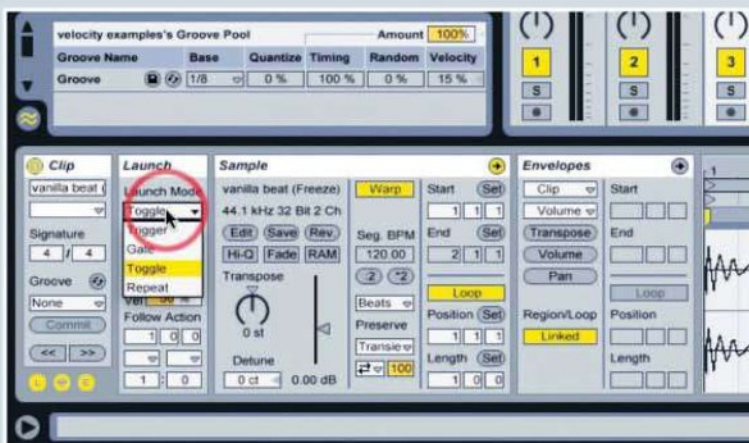
Attain more organic loop launching pleasure with the Velocity Amount control



- 1 Launch our example Live set, and check out the audio clips in tracks 5-11 (in Session View). These clips are mapped to MIDI notes C2-B2, and are in Toggle mode. Play those notes on your keyboard first to hear the original clips.



- 2 There's a Launch box near the bottom left of the screen, with a box that says Vel 0.0%. Select all the clips together, then change this value to 50%. Now play the same notes on your keyboard and check how the velocity's affecting clip volume.



- 3 Experiment with the velocity, and all the other clip launch settings, until you get a setup you dig. This is a cool way to get more of an 'instrument' vibe if you're playing in notes from keyboards or pads, and works with MIDI or audio clips.



ON THE DVD

An Ableton Live project (Live 8 required – if you haven't got it, you can download the demo from ableton.com – it'll run alongside any other version you have) containing material used in the tutorial, including audio and MIDI clips to play around with, and a QuickTime movie showing the techniques in action.

Velocity MIDI Device

The Groove Pool was new in Live 8, but if you're on an earlier version, or you just want to try doing things a different way, Live has the Velocity MIDI effect device. This is a fast way of applying velocity changes to an entire track in Session or Arrangement View, without having to do any editing at clip level.

As usual, the best way to start is by messing with the presets. The preset names are actually pretty sensible – they give you a good clue about what to expect and how they work.

The example Live set that we've used for the tutorials this month is good to work with, as we've already setup the Impulse kit in track three, and left a convenient beat in one of the Session View clip slots for the same track.

Start that clip running, then navigate to the Velocity Effect through the Browser, unfold it, and drag the 'Fix 127' preset into track three, in front of the Impulse kit. You'll hear those eperc samples change pitch immediately. Cool! Well, I thought so anyway.

Smooth Operator

But we can't leave it at that, that would be too easy, so grab that 'Out Hi' knob and move it around a bit, setting a new limit for the highest velocity values that it'll allow. Personally, I like these eperc sounds with some distortion and a little Ping Pong Delay thrown in.

You should also try a Random value of around 32 to add a controlled amount of diversity to the velocity-driven pitch changes.

If you change from Fixed to Gate or Clip mode, you can use the Drive and Comp knobs to tweak the sound in a more personal way. Try Drive 0.80, and Comp -1.00. This is also a great performance tool for MIDI drums – if you map Out Hi, Drive, Comp, and Random, as a Macro and then on to knobs on a controller, you can have a lot of fun tweaking through your live set with relative ease.

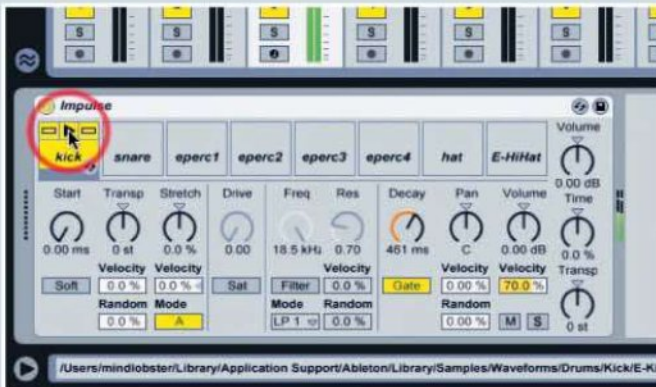
Velocity Device

Live's Velocity MIDI device can modify incoming MIDI to suit



Velocity in Impulse

Live's basic drum sampler has insane amounts of velocity control – get creative with velocity triggering or go au naturale



1 Every version of Live includes Simpler and Impulse. Simpler has a couple of its own velocity-based controls, but Impulse has 40 – five for each of its eight sample slots. When you click on each sample slot, all of the visible controls relate to just that slot (apart from the three knobs on the right).



2 Load the example set and look at the Impulse kit in track three. Click the eperc1 slot and raise the velocity values for transposition and stretch to – let's go crazy – 100%. Now when you play the white keys on your keyboard from C3, you'll hear the sounds change as you play harder or softer.



3 Make the same settings for eperc2, 3, and 4. If you don't like the way it sounds, change the settings around until you do. This is a pretty rough and ready example, but it gives us a more expressive 'pitched' percussion feel than the plain old drum hits that we started with.



4 You could do something with the Filter too, but let's skip that for now, and move on to panning, because I like it. Impulse has a stereo output, so we can use velocities to set where in the stereo field each hit comes. Set a different value for each eperc: try 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%.



5 Volume is the only Impulse velocity setting that defaults to something apart from 0.0% – 70.0% – this is done on the assumption that you want some feedback from how hard you trigger a drum sound. You could try increasing the sensitivity to 100% if you want to, though, just to hear it working to the extreme



6 Impulse is one of Live's oldest but most effective devices – you should make the most of it before you move on to working with Drum Racks and Instrument Racks. It's easy to understand, and it can do a lot. The velocity controls make it very expressive, and blur the lines between percussive and pitched instruments.

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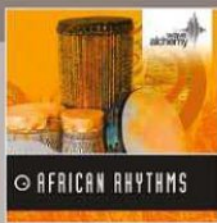
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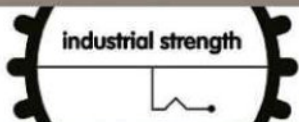
Audio Boutique 2



Secret House



Ultimate Beats

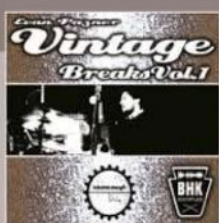


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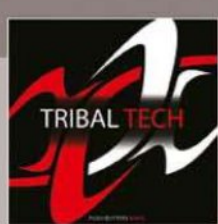


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84 Yamaha launch a plug-only, cheaper Tenori. Will it be the studio version we've been waiting for?



Analogue Solutions Europa
88 An easy-to-use hardware sequencer from AS.



Softube Tube-Tech CL 1B
92 Acclaimed software company Softube take on a classic compressor.



Arturia Hip Hop Producer
102 Analogue recreators Arturia aim to fill your hard drive with all your Hip Hop needs.



Pro Audio DSP DSM
104 A magical plug-in that aims to analyse and capture dynamics and EQ information.

Highlights this issue...

Moog Taurus 3

£2,042

The Moog Taurus 1 is the stuff of legend, due to its powerful bass. Now, Moog have brought it into 2010. **Dan 'JD73' Goldman** grabs the bull by the horns

WHAT IS IT?

New version of the Moog Taurus 1 bass pedals, based entirely on the original Taurus 1 sound engine, but with a new contemporary design/modern interfacing

CONTACT

Who: Source Distribution
Tel: +44 (0)20 8962 5080
Web: moogmusic.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Nails the original Taurus 1 sound and mojo
- 2 Plenty of hands-free foot control
- 3 New MIDI/USB/CV inputs

We think it's fair to say, if there is one machine in Moog's rich history that has become something

of legend then it's the Taurus 1. Launched in 1976, produced until 1981 and designed in the main by Dave Luce (the Polymoog designer) the Taurus 1 became synonymous with Prog

Rock bands such as Genesis and Rush among others. Its appeal was (and still is) largely due to its earth shattering subsonic bass sounds, coupled with the fact that guitarists, bassists and sit-down keys players can all play/program it with just their feet.

The Taurus 1 was originally conceived as part of the Moog

Constellation rig comprising a Bob Moog designed monosynth called the Lyra (used by Keith Emerson in prototype form and described by him as a "Minimoog on steroids") the Apollo (which later became the Polymoog) and the Taurus bass pedals.

With a still healthy demand for Taurus 1s second-hand, with many requests to resurrect its sound in a new version and with customers enthusiastically paying upfront to fund the project, it's fantastic that Moog have brought back the Taurus.

At its heart, The T1s (and the new T3s) sound engine is comprised of two sawtooth wave VCOs running through an (A)ttack (D)ecay (S)ustain amp envelope, then through a classic Moog 904a low-pass filter and routed through an (A)ttack (D)ecay filter envelope with variable contour.

Third time's a charm

Yet, there is one major difference between the Taurus and other Moog designs that make it sound unique. The VCOs are coupled to the filter circuit in a unique way, creating a feedback-type



effect that enriches the signal and induces harmonics, while reinforcing the sub-sonic frequencies and slightly compressing the sound, enabling the bass to remain huge but under control.

Straight out of the box the Taurus 3 looks stunning – a cross between a Little Phatty and a Taurus 1. Instilling an immediate feel of quality, the main case and chassis are tough metal topped off with solid wood end panels. It's a weighty beast too, at over 20kgs and should stand up well to road use, though there's a road case available too.

The T3's sound engine is entirely based on the original T1 circuit and it nails both its sound and mojo

Thankfully, the pedal contacts are no longer exposed to the elements like the Taurus 1's, so should hold up much better and the one octave pedal board feels sturdy and is easy to play, though it would perhaps have been nice to have

a longer range available. However, it's likely that anything larger would have likely made the T3 unwieldy for gigging and even more expensive, plus you can always attach a longer set of MIDI pedals or keyboard.

Modulation and Arpeggiator

The T3 has a MIDI-syncable LFO with Square, Triangle, Ramp and Saw waves, plus a foot-controllable rate control and LFO amount to filter/pitch buttons, whose functions can be controlled simultaneously from the control wheel. This turns the wheel into

a dual function mod wheel that also sends mod wheel MIDI CC data.

The arpeggiator is MIDI-syncable and has foot controllable BPM with up, down and 'order' modes ('order' allows arpeggiation in the order the notes are played). It also has loop mode

(cyclic) B/F (forward then reverse) and once (like a one shot, plays then stops). There's also an octave range parameter, a latch parameter (for sustained arpeggiation via one pedal press) and note latch adds each newly played notes into the pattern. All very useful.

The panel

The front panel is divided into an Upper and Lower level using dual-function Little Phatty style rubber buttons.

Upper functions include the main sound shaping controls for oscillators and filter (Osc Beat, Beat Freq, Glide, Octave, Osc Mix and Amp Envelope, plus Filter Envelope Amount, Cutoff, Resonance and Envelope) while the Lower level deals with LFO waves (Square, Tri, Ramp, Saw) plus LFO Rate/LFO Sync, and Pitch/Filter Mod, which can be controlled simultaneously from the right hand programmable foot control wheel.

This wheel is one of two oversized yellow-backlit, rubberised foot wheels (the left one being a main volume control). These feel super-sturdy and are nicely balanced for accurate foot control. Visual feedback from both the wheels and large backlit display (which is easy to read even when standing up) is great, and in particular each wheel has a lit position marker which is handy in the dark, plus the control wheel (used for programming and for main sound shaping duties) is augmented by a 15-segment yellow bar display.

The lights in the wheels can be on permanently, flash with the LFO speed, or be turned off.

À la modes

There are two operational modes in the T3: Master and Preset. Master mode deals with most global parameters while Preset mode is for performing and selecting sounds. In the Master mode menu you'll find MIDI settings (for using the Taurus over its standard MIDI ports or MIDI-over-USB function) utility functions, plus settings for arpeggiator rate, tuning, note triggering (legato, reset etc) plus 'note latch' mode that

SPECS

Performance Interface:

13-note velocity sensitive pedals, 1 Volume Foot wheel Controller, 1 Programmable Foot wheel Controller, 9 Footswitches for selecting Bank and Presets, Transpose, Glide On/Off, Decay On/Off, and Octave Up/Down

Sound Engine:

100% Analogue Audio signal path based entirely on the highly acclaimed Taurus 1 circuits, 2x VCO's (Sawtooth Waveforms only), 1x VCF, Classic Moog 24dB/Octave Low pass Filter, 1x VCA

Synthesiser Modifiers:

1 ASD (Attack-Sustain-Decay) VCA Envelope, 1 AD (Attack-Decay) VCF Envelope with variable contour

Programming Interface:

52 Presets in non-volatile memory consisting of one bank of four factory presets, and 12 banks of 4 user-programmable presets, 15-segment LED bar graph displays the value of the currently selected parameter

LFO: 1x LFO with Triangle, Square, Sawtooth, and Ramp waveforms, syncable to MIDI Clock or Tap Tempo

Arpeggiator: Modes: up, down, once and forward/reverse, Pattern: sets the pattern of the arpeggiator, Order: sets the order of the arpeggiator pattern, Octave: sets the number of octaves for the arpeggiator pattern

Connections: Hi-Z output: For use with amplifier instrument inputs, Lo-Z Output: For use with line-level inputs, CV Inputs: Pitch, Filter, Volume, Gate; MIDI In, MIDI Out, USB: bi-directional USB MIDI port

Dimensions:

635 x 609 x 215mm

Weight:

20.4kg



ON THE DVD

Actually, you'll find the audio examples of the Taurus 3 in action at our Soundcloud site at: soundcloud.com/futuremusic/sets/moog-taurus-audio-examples



The Good and Great

We uncover the best bits of the new bass monster from Moog



> Having a pedal unit is refreshing and inspires a new approach to playing. Guitarists and bassists can still play their instrument as normal but knock out drones, basslines or arpeggiated patterns at the same time.



> For keyboard players that are already nifty on organ pedals, the Taurus 3 will be a breeze to play along with another couple of keyboards, bringing Moog bass to your rig without you having to grow another pair of hands. Bassists watch out!



> All the main parameters such as filter, LFO, volume, glide, decay, note latch (drone) plus arpeggiator controls are available under foot control. Plus, with the extra CV inputs on the side, you can connect other CV gear to further augment the Taurus 3's sound.

allows the main envelope to remain open for droning sounds. There's also analogue mode for choosing how the control wheel reacts to the current/stored preset values, ensuring smooth-sounding parameter changes.

Other functions include note priority (low, high and last are available) and pitch bend settings with independent up/down values currently for controlling pitch bends via a MIDI keyboard only, though it would be cool if Moog added the ability to do pitch bends from the control wheel too.

Foot loose

The bottom section of the T3 features nine unlatching metal foot stomp switches, each with its own yellow selector light, with the first four switches accessing the four presets in each bank while the fifth footswitch works in combination with the foot pedals to select a bank of sounds from each of the 13 pedals. This makes sound selection by foot a doddle.

Footswitch six acts either as a global transpose or, if held down, enters PGM mode that accesses further functions via the Glide, Decay and Octave controls (the last three foot switches on the front of the T3).

Normally the Glide switch switches on or off the glide function (which sounds fantastic) while Decay adds release to the sound so that it trails off slowly instead of cutting abruptly and the Octave switch jumps octaves.



However, in PGM mode, Glide becomes a tap tempo control for the LFO, Decay becomes a tap tempo for the arpeggiator and the Octave switch selects Note Latch on or off (drone).

Bass hunter

The T3's sound engine circuitry is entirely based on the original T1's circuitry, so I'm happy to report it really nails the original Taurus 1 nicely. It has the moody lows, the rumbling subs, the growl and all the essential T1 character. The VCOs are stable after just five minutes warm up, sound chunky and punchy with plenty of life. Though it would have been great to have more wave shapes onboard, it's amazing just how versatile these two sawtooth oscillators are, in combination with the juicy Moog filter – not just for basses



The T3 really does have something unique about its sound that's hard to nail, even on other Moog synths

but for leads too. The T3 really does have something very unique about its sound that's hard to nail, even on other Moog synths and the way the oscillators phase and bubble but never cancel is lovely, while the lows are smooth and musical and the filter opens up nicely in the highs too. with a wicked sizzle.

There's nothing to complain about then, either in terms of sound quality or authenticity to the T1.

Also note that Moog Voyager users can control the T3 over MIDI, with its major controls such as filter cutoff mapping to the T3's equivalents – a very nice touch.

the T3's design is more elegant, built to a very high standard and adds welcome functionality, thus bringing the Taurus into the now. Moog have done themselves proud with the T3 and though bass pedals are perhaps something of a niche product, the unique Taurus sound most certainly has universal appeal and I'm excited to see how they might package this sound engine in the future.

I'd also love to see a cheaper Stage Edition and a Taurus rack for those that want the Taurus sound without the pedals. If you've been hunting for the T1, and are tempted by the modern connectivity, the T3 represents a sensible price point for the lush tones and gigantic sub of that unique Moog sound. A classic reinvented. **FM**

Connectivity

The T3's connections are all neatly housed within the left-hand side panel.

Included are two mono jack outs (one Hi-Z for connecting to amps, and one Lo-Z for connecting to line level inputs) CV inputs (for controlling the

filter, pitch, volume and gate from other CV equipped gear such as other analogue synths, Moog/CV pedals or expression pedals), MIDI In and Out and USB which can send/receive MIDI, plus connect to a

computer for future software updates.

It's worth noting that there is no filter input or headphone output and it'd also be great to see a software editor for the T3, but rest assured there's plenty here.

T1 lives

Above all else, the T3 is a faithful reproduction of the T1's sound and captures the overall vibe admirably, plus

ALTERNATIVES



Moog Taurus 1

£1,000+

The original Taurus as used by Prog Rock gods. Grab one if you can find one!

eBay.co.uk



Moog Taurus 2

£500+

Based on the Moog Rogue, this Taurus has a separate pedal board and pole mounted controller.

eBay.co.uk



Roland PK5 MIDI
pedals

£379 (plus any MIDI analogue synth)

Alternative system comprising MIDI pedals/analogue synth of your choice

Roland.co.uk

FutureMusic **VERDICT**

BUILD

VALUE

EASE OF USE

VERSATILITY

RESULTS

A very worthy successor to the original Taurus. A modern interface on a classic and powerful sound.

Tenori-on Orange | £599

Can the new Tenori-on Orange model capture a wider audience? **Jono Buchanan** ponders...



WHAT IS IT?

A cheaper Tenori-on aimed at studio use providing classic Tenori-on sequence control

CONTACT

Who: Yamaha UK
Tel: +44 (0)870 444 5595
Web: tenori-on.yamaha-europe.com/uk

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 A unique approach to sequencing and track creation
- 2 A cheaper way to get onboard with the Tenori-on concept
- 3 Brighter, clearer LEDs

Premiered back in 2005, Yamaha's Tenori-on, designed in collaboration with Toshio Iwai, represented a breakthrough in its approach to sound production and sequencing.

Its 16x16 matrix of playable LEDs let users create intricate, multi-timbral performances for its internal sounds, or over MIDI to any sound source desired via 'buttons of light'. A simple press of any LED triggered a note and the internal sequencer did the rest, playing single notes or chords as the step sequencer cycled round. The concept

has proved popular, particularly for performers keen to draw attention to the unit. Bill Bailey famously featured a Tenori-on on his comedy tour and the unit also features prominently in Little Boots' live sets and her *Remedy* video.

Fast-forward five years and Tenori-on Orange now greets us. With most of the original's functions carried over, this represents a more economical way to get your hands and fingers on Yamaha's concept, but there are some crucial differences between the two models, so it's well worth a second and closer look.

What's new?

The principal differences between Tenori-on Orange and its big brother (which remains available) are physical. Whereas the original Tenori-on features a brushed aluminum construction, its sibling uses a tough white plastic surround instead. Perhaps more significantly, the new unit features no battery power option, with mains power instead supplied via a bundled wall-wart that connects, somewhat inconveniently, via the front bottom left hand corner. Also, as a cost-cutting measure, the rear LEDs which feature on the back are removed, leaving a blank white panel in their place.

While these LEDs aren't 'active' on the original Tenori-on and simply reflect the pattern playing to the rear, they do represent an eye-catching performance tool that is lost on the new unit. On the upside, Tenori-on Orange gets its name from the new LEDs that ditch the original 'white' lights in favour of orange ones instead, which are really pleasing on the eye and show up nicely.

The sound engine at the heart of Tenori-on remains the same – 253 AWM2 generated tones (including 14 drum kits), capable of producing 32 notes of polyphony, with the option to



Akai MPK 88 | £600

Akai's MPK range has proven very popular with those looking for fully spec'd controllers. **Dan 'JD73' Goldman** checks out the latest family member

Akai's latest MPK MIDI controller keyboard now with weighted piano action

Who: Akai Professional
Tel: +44 (0)1252 341 400
Web: akaipro.com

- 1** Very playable and nicely weighted keyboard with aftertouch
- 2** Lots of control DAW templates available
- 3** Easy to use on the whole

General: 16 x 4 banks of drum pads, 3x banks of 8 rotaries, sliders and switches, MIDI-syncable arpeggiator, pitch and mod wheels, backlit screen, fully weighted hammer action with aftertouch

Computer Interface: USB/MIDI

MIDI Ins/Outs: 1

Dimensions: 1313 x 378 x 132mm

Weight: 30kg

(30kg) so make sure there are two of you around to unbox it and set it up.

However, the sliders feel a bit flimsy with lots of sideward play and I'm not sure how well these would stand up, particularly on the road. Disappointing at this price point.

Fortunately the weighted hammer keybed is impressive. In fact, it's one of the best I've played. It's not too light or heavy, has none of the sponginess and slow key return that plagues some

A quick scout around the panel shows a large number of controls. First up there are the obligatory pitch wheels backlit in yellow. To the right are controls for splitting the keyboard, for selecting the 16x4 MPC pad banks and below are controls for switching the MIDI-syncable arpeggiator on and off, a latch switch and the note repeat function lifted from the MPC range for playing rolls and inputting notes (you hold the note repeat button and hold a pad and hey presto instant 16ths or 8ths etc).

The pads feel OK, but they could definitely be a little thicker like those

In the middle of the board is a clear and informative blue backlit screen. Presets (which contains all the front panel assignments) are displayed at the top with MIDI channel and controller assignments/other info displayed underneath. Below are the transport controls for your DAW's sequencer. It's very easy to navigate the menus on the whole, plus there's an included PC/Mac editor (and a Lite version of Ableton too) that makes things even easier if required.

All in all, this is a well-built, user-friendly and pretty versatile controller board with a great keyboard. There are a good number of controls available and all are generally easy to map, plus the MPK comes with several presets to get you started with most types of DAW software. But why no preset mapping template for Logic Pro? Right now it all has to be set up manually. I'll be watching that website for updates.

In fact I spent a good while head scratching, trying to map and sync the transport controls to Logic's (though mapping the rotaries was easier). And why can this massive keyboard only be zoned into two areas? If these negatives don't affect your mode of working, I'd highly recommend it. **FM**

BUILD

VALUE

EASE OF USE

VERSATILITY

RESULTS

A few issues here and there considering the price but a fine board with a great keybed.





ONE WORD ABOVE ALL OTHER

KMR believe that quality comes first. We only supply the most reliable and best sounding products – from tried and tested studio classics to the latest technology for today's digital studio.

Our experienced staff can provide informed advice to help you make the best decision when purchasing new equipment, and KMR's lifetime technical support helps to ensure our customers keep working when it matters most. We stock a huge range of professional audio equipment - available to try in either our dedicated listening room or in your own studio. Whether you are a home enthusiast or run a commercial facility, if you want quality studio equipment and personal service from your supplier, we look forward to discussing your needs.



Analogue Solutions Europa | £586

The Europa aims to prove sequencers aren't obsolete just yet. **Greg Scarth** steps in the right direction



WHAT IS IT?

A hardware step-sequencer with a focus on ease-of-use

CONTACT

Who: Analogue Solutions
Tel: +44 (0)1384 35 36 94
Web: analogue-solutions.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 17-track MIDI step sequencer and drum computer
- 2 TR-808/606-style programming
- 3 Clock and trigger outputs for interfacing with analogue gear

Over the last decade or so, Analogue Solutions have built themselves a well-deserved reputation as one of the most consistently innovative synth companies around. This year sees the introduction of the West Midlands company's much anticipated Europa, a TR-style MIDI step sequencer and drum computer with support for up to 17 tracks and a number of clever features for live editing and syncing with other equipment. Analogue Solutions already make a 16-step sequencer, the Oberkorn, but the Europa shouldn't be mistaken for a replacement, as it focuses very heavily on MIDI control rather than sending CV and gate signals.

RTFM

The Europa is much simpler to operate than most of its rivals, and a quick scan

of the very comprehensive manual is all it takes to get started. Analogue Solutions' claim that the device operates on a 'one function per key' basis is ever so slightly misleading given that a number of keys have different

functions depending on what mode you're in. Some also change function depending on whether the machine is playing or stopped.

Nevertheless, operation is still simple. To start sequencing, just select a pattern, set its length, choose a MIDI channel and you're ready to go. I started with the Europa's note mode, designed for sending a monophonic signal to synths. In note edit mode, each step of the sequence is selected before entering a note using the one-octave vertical keyboard on the left side of the Europa.

Once the notes are programmed, the edit button can be used to adjust velocity and legato for each step. Polyphonic patterns aren't possible via note tracks, but it is possible to assign multiple tracks to the same MIDI channel, allowing polyphonic sequences to be created.

Software Step Sequencing?

Working with the Europa really makes me wonder why there aren't more good examples of step sequencing software.

Step sequencers lend themselves particularly well to slowly evolving loop-based music, which directly led to early House and Techno producers adopting devices like the

Roland TB-303 and TR-909. A number of soft synths such as AudioRealism BassLine, D16 Nephtron and Logic's Ultrabeat include sequencers inspired by these Roland classics but the demand for virtual MIDI step sequencers appears to be almost non-existent.

The tiny handful of step sequencer plug-ins on the market offer nowhere near the features of the Europa. Admittedly, even the most basic DAW piano roll will allow greater flexibility than any hardware step sequencer, but it's the restrictions that make step sequencers so attractive.





In drum mode, the Europa sends polyphonic MIDI or trigger signals for control of drum machines, controlling a maximum of 12 drums. Each drum is assigned to one of the keys on the mini keyboard and the MIDI note transmitted by each key can be customised globally to match your drum machine. Accent and flam for each step may also be programmed. Overall, it's a simple but effective system and it didn't take long at all before I was comfortable with programming the Europa.

Stepping out of edit mode and with the sequence playing, it's easy to adjust your sequences on the fly, shifting patterns by whole octaves, transposing by a selected number of notes, or muting individual notes and drums. With the sequencer stopped, it's also possible to adjust swing in twelve increments from 50% (i.e. totally straight) to a whopping 97.5%. In practice I found the higher settings too extreme for most uses, but it's great to have such a wide range to choose from.

trigger outputs ensure that it will also play nicely with analogue gear. Triggers can be programmed in order to control drum modules, act as gate signals or even trigger other sequencers.

The possibilities here are huge, especially if you hook it up to a modular synth setup. To keep the timing rock solid, the Europa can sync to an external MIDI clock, a trigger signal or its own internal clock generator. The clock sync signal can also be sent back out of the device to other equipment for

timing purposes or as a synced square wave LFO. It's a flexible setup which ensures analogue fans don't need to fear the Europa's MIDI bias.

The possibilities of the Europa are huge, especially if you hook it up to a modular synth setup

Piecing it together

The Europa really starts to show off its power when you begin piecing together song arrangements from your patterns. The basic functions are supplemented by a number of more advanced features which make it even more versatile.

The way you use the Europa will depend to a large extent on what type of gear you need to control. While the Oberkorn is intended to trigger synths via CV and gate signals, the Europa is clearly aimed primarily at MIDI users, with no CV outputs, but the seven



Europa, europa

The market for dedicated hardware sequencers is small but hotly contested by a handful of specialist manufacturers. Triggering mono synths, drum machines and even poly synths from the Europa makes you appreciate the step-based approach. Programming 808-style drum loops, acid patterns, Moroder-esque basslines and Techno riffs really shows off the immediacy of the workflow. If you're in the market for a hardware MIDI sequencer, the Europa simply must be on your list of options. Its flexible approach and its advanced MIDI capabilities make it a great choice and the fact that it's cheaper than most rivals only makes it more appealing. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT

Category	Score (out of 10)
BUILD	9
VALUE	8
EASE OF USE	7
VERSATILITY	6
RESULTS	9

The ideal hardware sequencing solution for your MIDI-equipped drum machines and synths.

SPECS

MIDI In, Out and Thru.
External clock in and out.
Internal clock out.

Dimensions:

365 x 195 x 80mm

Weight:

1.8kg

ALTERNATIVES



genoQs Octopus
2.599 Euros

The almighty Octopus is the reigning champion of the hardware MIDI sequencer market. It's not cheap or simple but it's a seriously flexible sequencing tool.

genods.com



Infection Music ZEIT
£1 299

The ZEIT is probably a bit more powerful than the Europa but well over twice the price. A new version's due out very soon.

infectionmusic.com



Sequentix Cirklon
£1,000

Due for release any day now, Sequentix's Cirklon is a follow-up to the discontinued P3. 16 tracks, 5 independent MIDI In/Outs and built-in CV/gate support.

sequentix.com

Zoom R16 | £350



Multi-track recorders have dwindled in favour of the laptop. **Greg Scarth** checks Zoom's alternative

WHAT IS IT?

16-track digital recorder, 8-in/2-out USB audio interface and control surface

CONTACT

Who: Zoom UK
Tel: +44 (0)1462 791100
Web: zoom.co.jp

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 16-track digital recorder
- 2 USB audio interface and control surface
- 3 Bundled with Cubase LE 4

With the arrival of cheap multi-track recording software and widespread laptop

ownership, the portable hardware recording market was one of the major casualties of the DAW revolution. The only problem is that a laptop is rarely the best solution for making recordings on the go. Most users would be better served by a dedicated portable recorder, but the market has been somewhat lacking in recent years.

With the R16, Zoom offer a modern alternative to the classic hardware multi-tracker, using an SD card for storage rather than the built-in hard drive we'd have seen in similar products fifteen years ago. As we saw with the launch of Cakewalk's Sonar V-Studio 100 last year, manufacturers are now looking to add value to the

basic recording unit, and Zoom have followed suit by designing the R16 to double up as a USB audio interface and control surface.

Initially launched at an RRP of £430 last year, the R16 has recently been reduced to £350 in the UK, making it a genuine bargain.

Overview

The R16's plastic construction gives it a surprisingly light feel, but the case is still tough and will stand up to any reasonable use and abuse. At just under 38 x 24cm from above and weighing in at 1.3kg there's no questioning the unit's portability. For battery operation, you'll find a slot for six AAs underneath. The unit can also be powered by a DC adaptor or run via USB bus-power when connected to a computer. In addition to a basic

package of nine digital effects, the unit also hides a couple of handy extra tools that should make the recording process run more smoothly. The onboard metronome can be routed to all outputs or sent to the headphones only, which could come in handy as a click.

Meanwhile, the built-in tuner features a huge number of guitar tunings and can also be set to tune to any frequency. The darker grey handles on the ends of the R16 not only act as protection for the exposed controls on the top of the unit, but also house a pair of microphones which can be used to make quick and easy stereo recordings. A 1GB SD card is provided to get you started, but the R16 can handle anything up to 32GB in order to increase recording time.

Channel hopper

The R16 features eight mic/line inputs on combo XLR/TRS sockets, with switchable 48V phantom power on two channels and a high-impedance option on one input to allow a guitar or bass to be hooked up directly. In use, recording is pleasingly straightforward, with eight very basic channel strips, a master fader and a dedicated transport section. The push buttons above each channel fader toggle the track between play, mute and record.

Up to eight tracks can be recorded simultaneously, but it's also possible to link another R16 up using a standard USB cable, allowing 16 tracks of simultaneous recording. Once you've recorded to the first bank of eight





tracks, you can switch the unit to tracks 9-16 at the push of a button. If you already have audio on some tracks and want to record a full eight channels at a time, moving recordings from one track to another is a little more fiddly, requiring you to dive into the R16's menus.

In the box

The R16's talents extend beyond recording, acting as an 8-in/2-out interface (at up to 96kHz sample rate) and basic control surface for your DAW when connected to your computer via USB. I applaud Zoom's thinking here.

All-in-one hardware recording units may offer a neat solution for multi-tracking and location recording, but when it comes to the mixing process, a small LCD screen simply can't compete with the easy workflow of a DAW, not to mention the fact that DAWs open up a number of more

Striking the Right Balance

The stripped down nature of a simple portable unit such as this inevitably means compromises have to be made with its design. It would be easy for Zoom to add dedicated buttons for every function but that would result in a much bulkier unit. Unfortunately, the downside of this is that things can get a bit fiddly when you start carrying

out more advanced tasks such as adding effects, panning tracks and mixing your recordings with just a few buttons to play with. Panning tracks on the R16, for example, requires you to select an individual channel and then use the jog wheel to adjust its pan setting. If I were to be picky, I'd say it would be nice to have another soft rotary pot for

each channel strip. This could be assigned to the variable you were editing and would make it a lot quicker to carry out some of the R16's more complex tasks.

On the whole, though, Zoom have got the balance between size and features just about right. The design of the R16 ensures that it's both portable and functional.

advanced processing options. The R16 offers very little in the way of editing functionality and focuses more on mixing, which I think is a wise decision. Recordings made with the R16 are stored as 16- or 24-bit 44.1kHz WAV files and the results offer

channel faders. It would be nice to have more assignable rotary controllers.

Zoomed in

With the ability to record eight tracks simultaneously and the option of using the onboard mics for quick results, the

R16 is versatile enough to suit most people's recording needs. The thing I like most about the R16 is that it takes me back to the days before

DAWs, when cassette Portastudios ruled the bedroom. The simplicity of a standalone recorder is one of its strengths, and the R16 manages to combine simplicity with a number of more advanced features which make it a great portable recording solution as well as a handy addition to your computer setup. **FM**

very good sound quality. The preamps are nothing to write home about but acceptably clean and quiet for a unit at this price level.

Although the onboard mics could never be described as high-fidelity, they're good for quickly jotting down ideas without going to the trouble of setting up mics or signal routing.

The R16 comes bundled with a copy of Cubase LE 4 for Mac or PC, now slightly outdated but still a worthwhile introduction to working with a DAW and easily capable of carrying out the editing tasks the R16 omits. Templates are supplied for Cubase that make it even easier to drag and drop your recordings into a new project. When connected to your computer, the R16 works well as a controller and interface, although the lack of physical controls on the unit is slightly limiting in terms of DAW control, essentially restricting you to transport control and

FutureMusic **VERDICT**

Category	Score
BUILD	8
VALUE	10
EASE OF USE	9
VERSATILITY	8
RESULTS	10

An easy-to-use portable recorder with plenty of channels and acceptable quality at a good price.

SPECS

8-track simultaneous recording, 16-track playback

Sample rates: Audio recordings stored as 16- or 24-bit 44.1 kHz WAV files

Ins/Outs: 8-in/2-out USB audio interface at up to 24-bit 96 kHz

OS: Mac OS X 10.4 or later
or Windows XP/Vista

Dimensions:
376 x 237 x 52mm
Weight:
1.3kg

Although the onboard mics could never be described as high-fidelity, they're good for jotting down ideas



ALTERNATIVES



Cakewalk V-Studio
100

£639

The only real competitor in this market is Cakewalk's compact V-Studio, which offers a similar set of features but at a higher price. Unfortunately, the V-Studio can only record two channels as a standalone unit, limiting its potential significantly.

y-studio.info



Softube TubeTech CL 1B Compressor

£319

Want the sound of a stalwart for your productions?
Jono Buchanan unwraps a cloned beauty...



WHAT IS IT?

A native emulation of the classic CL 1B hardware compressor that adds the compression sound of a thousand hits to your productions

CONTACT

Who: Softube
Tel: +46 (0)1321 1623
Web: softube.se

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Classic sound for a fraction of the cost
- 2 Warm, smooth and undeniably musical
- 3 Magical results on vocals, single instruments

SPECS

Minimum requirements:
Windows XP or higher,
PIII or higher
Mac OS X (10.4 or higher),
Intel or PowerPC processor
(G3 or higher)
512MB RAM
Any VST, AudioUnits or RTAS
compatible host application
iLok USB key and the latest
Pace Interlok drivers

Softube is a name with an increasingly solid reputation in the music tech industry as the company is now

presiding over a growing collection of fresh sounding plug-ins. Among these are clones of the FET compressor and the Trident A-Range EQ, but the subject of this review is the TubeTech CL1B.

Replicating the sound of classic gear is never easy but choosing to take on the recreation of a hardware unit which has made its presence felt on hit records for the likes of Madonna, Elton John and U2 and thousands more besides makes the job that much harder. Hitherto available for TDM and PowerCore platforms alone, the compressor's now available natively for AU, VST and RTAS hosts and has been developed in conjunction with Lydkraft/TubeTech, designers of the original.

Ground control

The sumptuously rendered GUI gives you access to a single panel of controls. These are Gain, Ratio, Threshold, a meter monitor switch, Attack and Release dials, a selection dial for their

operation and an option to toggle between the internal signal or a sidechained trigger.

Ratio is continually adjustable between 2:1 and 10:1, while the threshold dips to levels of -40dB and up to 30dB of gain can be added, while a VU meter keeps you in touch with your choice of input or output levels. What's so impressive is how much of this gain can be added before the sound breaks up or sounds unmusical. The twin tube configuration of the original unit made for ultra smooth results and this is wonderfully replicated here.

The unit shines on vocals and single instruments such as bass and guitar, bringing dynamics under control with the bare minimum of fuss and adding wonderful clarity and warmth to anything you shove its way.

Attack and release

The Attack and Release dials are worthy of note too, in that they can be adjusted manually as normal, or 'Fixed' to provide one millisecond of Attack time and Release of 50ms. As you might expect, this mode represents a fantastic

opportunity to get more extreme bite and crunch into your mixes and really shows off CL 1B's nasty side. Even the tamest of drum loops or electric guitar signals can go wild, with the results providing a pleasingly different personality to an already powerful plug-in. Another key addition is the option to switch in an external signal as a sidechain trigger for the compressor, meaning that it has the capability to be strapped across a master output for pumping results. Again, anything from subtle to ball-busting can be achieved here, so producers of all musical types should sit up and take note.

To conclude

The cost of the hardware version of the mono-only TubeTech CL 1B, at over £2,000, means that it's available to industry professionals alone. While Softube's clone is by no means cheap, its wonderfully accurate sonics mean the access doors have been busted open and many more of us have the option to add that classic sound.

What separates this compressor from so many is its musical response. You can add gain aplenty without the results becoming silly, though crunch, bite and drive are all here too. While this plug-in is pricier than some others, it's well worth your attention. **FM**

FutureMusic	VERDICT
STABILITY	████████████████████
VALUE	████████████████████
EASE OF USE	████████████████████
VERSATILITY	████████████████████
RESULTS	████████████████████
One of warmest, natural and most musical compressors I've ever heard. Buy it.	

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Word Clock In

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Class-leading jitter performance and JetPLL technology

Word Clock In and Out

A/D Dynamic Range = 110dB 'A-weighted'; Clock Accuracy = +/- 10PPM; Jitter < 250 pico seconds. Mic THD+N: 0.001%; Noise: EIN -> 128dB

www.focusrite.com/ADAT
Compare all the specs and the detail, and see the units in action.


Focusrite
THE MIC-PRE COMPANY

PreSonus StudioLive 16.4.2 | £2,149

An appropriate name and amazing feature set.
Trevor Curwen is let loose on the StudioLive



WHAT IS IT?

Mixing desk with a FireWire connection for audio transfer

CONTACT

Who: Source Distribution
Tel: +44 (0)20 8962 5080
Web: PreSonus.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Great ergonomic, easy to use design
- 2 FireWire I/O
- 3 Ability to function in several different scenarios

HIGHLIGHTS

24:4:2 version
£3,199

The name says it all really... the new StudioLive digital mixer from PreSonus is intended for use both in studio

environment and for mixing front of house (and monitors) at a live show. The company's intention was to pack this new product with a set of features that would allow it to straddle the boundaries – so does it succeed? Let's take a look.

What you get is a 16:4:2 mixer – that's 16 input channels feeding four subgroups and the main stereo output. There are eight auxiliary sends – two permanently assigned to a pair of onboard stereo effects processors, the others available to access external

effects or to be used for cue/foldback – plus a pair of stereo aux inputs to bring external sounds back into the mixer and a stereo two-track I/O.

Besides these mixing capabilities, the StudioLive functions as a 32 x 18 FireWire audio interface. Each input channel can send audio to your computer, as can another eight stereo pairs selected from subgroups, aux sends and other mixer sources.

16 FireWire channels return single audio tracks to the input channels simply by pressing the 'FireWire' button on each channel, while you can also route a stereo mix via FireWire to the two-track input or monitoring buss. The StudioLive is certainly a nice looking

mixer – colour coordinated with a large number of illuminated rubber buttons that turn bright to show their active status. It's also very practical in its layout – all the connections, bar the necessary front-surface headphone socket, are all tucked away round the back and the compact sloping front panel surface lets you see all the controls very clearly and keeps them close enough that you don't have to stretch to reach them.

Signal paths

Most of the central part of the upper sloping surface is taken up by the 'Fat Channel'. It is here that EQ and dynamics processing for every audio stream on the StudioLive is carried out – a Select button on each input channel, auxiliary send and subgroup plus the main output gives access to the Fat channel's controls – a small LED window at its bottom right hand corner letting you see exactly which channel etc it is processing. The Fat channel has a bunch of clearly-labelled knobs each coupled to a 16-ladder LED display showing its parameter value. There's a high-pass filter plus dynamic control in the form of a gate/expander with threshold and release controls, a compressor with adjustable threshold,





ratio, attack, release and gain plus a basic limiter. EQ is four-band with low, low-mid, high-mid and high bands each with frequency and gain controls. Panning plus routing to subgroups or the main output is also carried out in the Fat channel section.

Aux sends are selected one aux at a time for all channels – selecting the Control button for a particular aux assigns the 16 Fat channel knobs as the sends (one per input channel) for that aux with the consequent send levels displayed on the associated LED ladder. The two auxes that access the internal effects are known as FX A and FX B and each addresses a stereo DSP effects engine with 50 factory reverb or delay effects presets and 50 user memory slots. All the effects have several adjustable parameters with a dedicated display window for editing as well as tap tempo where appropriate.

The desk's compact master section has the necessary controls for the monitoring options plus a handy

Store and Recall

One big advantage that digital mixers can have over analogue is the total recall of parameters – something that should happen at a flick of a switch if you want to go back to a mix that you were working on previously or null the controls for a fresh session. With the StudioLive you can create and store a library of scenes that include six different categories of

parameters – assignments and routing, EQ and dynamics settings, aux mixes, fader, knob positions, mutes and internal effects parameters. Some of these categories can be disabled if you do not wish to recall them. Unlike some digital mixers, the StudioLive does not have motorised faders. However, on recall, the StudioLive enters 'Fader Locate'

mode whereby you can quickly reset the faders to their stored value as shown on the Fat Channel's LED ladders. Unfortunately, there's no similar procedure for the knobs, so if you need to move one after a recall it will jump from the stored value to the WYSIWYG value determined by its physical position – not exactly elegant. Time to get out the recall sheet and a Sharpie then...

straightforward – you can choose to send a pristine signal from directly after the mic preamp without any Fat channel processing, in which case you only have to set the mic gain and, if you are using a condenser, select phantom power for the individual channel. If you

Likewise, the EQ is fine for both gentle boosts and a bit of sculpting. Fully variable Q rather than two switchable options would have been nice on the two mid bands – something that PreSonus has implemented in the new 24-channel version. StudioLive is pretty

much designed for multitasking so there are several scenarios in which it could be used. As a pure studio desk, there are enough options for recording the

sound that you want – if you want to use dynamics and EQ other than the Fat channel, each of the input channels is equipped with an insert point.

The auxiliaries are all switchable between post and pre, and with six available there's plenty of scope for setting up several different cue mixes and bringing outboard effects units into the picture. Similarly this would work for live sound too – with the option for several different foldback sends.

With that in mind, StudioLive may be ideal for a small venue or a gigging

The StudioLive uses the PreSonus XMAX class A pres which provide a nice transparent quality sound

talkback button although there's no built-in mic so you'll have to plug one into the rear panel for that.

Studio simplicity

There really is nothing difficult about operating the StudioLive, PreSonus seem to have gone out of their way to keep things simple with dedicated knobs for just about everything and very little dipping into menus – the whole experience is tactile and hands-on.

Recording an ensemble or band with up to 16 input channels is very

want to adjust dynamics and EQ on the way to your computer it's a simple matter to select the Fat channel for your input, engage the Digital Output Post button and dial in your processing.

The StudioLive uses the PreSonus XMAX class A preamplifiers which provide a nice transparent quality sound that coupled with pretty decent A/D conversion will give you quality recordings. The dynamics control is pretty comprehensive with the compressor having enough adjustment for gently keeping things in check.

SPECS

Sampling Frequency: 44.1, 48 kHz

ADC/DAC Dynamic Range: 118dB

Connections: 16x XLR balanced mic inputs, 16x 1/4" jack balanced line input, 16x 1/4" TRS jack insert points, 6x 1/4" aux outputs, 4x 1/4" subgroup outputs, 2x aux inputs L (mono)/R, 1/4" main output L/R, XLR main output L/R, XLR mono output, 1/4" control room output L/R, RCA phono jack Tape in L/R, RCA phono jack Tape out L/R, FireWire sockets x 2, XLR talkback mic input, 1/4" stereo headphone jack, S/PDIF digital out, 2 x DB25 balanced direct outputs (1-8, 9-16)

Dimensions:

437 x 568 x 175mm

Weight:

10.4kg

ALTERNATIVES



Yamaha n12

£1,300

12-channel digital mixer,
FireWire I/O and
comprehensive DAW control

yamaha-europe.com



Mackie Onyx 1640i

£1,649

16-channel analogue mixer
with integrated
24-bit/96kHz FireWire I/O

mackie.com



Allen & Heath ZED
R16

£2,001

16-channel Analogue mixer
with a FireWire I/O and
DAW control

allen-heath.com

band where recording the show is important – the front of house sound and monitors being taken care of while 16 channels of audio (and a stereo mix) is simultaneously painlessly recorded onto a laptop.

The various combinations of reverb and delay solely provided by the onboard effects ought to be adequate for most live sound mixing scenarios and their sound is not too shabby for

use if you are mixing down a recorded track on the StudioLive. Although most live engineers, given the option, would prefer an analogue-style scenario of a dedicated knob for each and every function, the StudioLive offers a hands-on interface that is easy to get around and that would be practical enough to use at a gig.

Other useful functions for live use are an onboard stereo 31-band graphic

equaliser on the main outputs so you can compensate for room acoustics and a socket for adding a gooseneck lamp.

For overdubbing in the studio, you get the option of routing individual recorded tracks or a stereo mix back into the StudioLive via FireWire for monitoring purposes, and the mixer can also be used either to take care of the whole mixdown or as extra processing power with certain tracks sent to the StudioLive for processing and effects before returning to the computer.

Verdict

PreSonus weren't the first to combine a mixer and audio interface in a single unit but they have certainly done it in a seamless and stylish way to create an extremely versatile feature-packed piece of gear that can slot into a host of situations – studio and live. **FM**

Capture Record

Created exclusively for use with the StudioLive and bundled with it, Capture is a basic audio recording application that is set up to record 16 channels of audio directly from the mixer's input channels and/or a single stereo track from the StudioLive's main output,

one pair of subgroup outputs or a pair of aux sends – this gives you the option, if the mixer is being used for a live show, of recording a different stereo mix than that being heard through the PA.

PreSonus has made simplicity the key to Capture's operation –16

tracks can be armed ready to record with the click of a single button and recording starts with another single click. Basic editing facilities (copy, cut, paste, splice, resize) are available should you need them, but file export is available in WAV and Open TL formats so that any captured audio can be easily transferred to all of the major mainstream DAWs for further editing.

Recorded tracks can also be sent back through the StudioLive's FireWire playback inputs, taking advantage of the dynamics, EQ and onboard effects to create a full mix that can be printed back into Capture.

**FutureMusic** **VERDICT**

BUILD



VALUE



EASE OF USE



VERSATILITY



RESULTS



A comprehensive, well laid-out mixer that suitably feels at home in the studio or front of house.

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MASCHINE is the next episode in professional beat production. It combines the hands-on feel and sequencing of classic grooveboxes with advanced sampling, effects, and seamless DAW integration. New features include 6GB of production-ready sounds, MPC library import, 16 Levels, and vintage MPC60/SP 1200* character – over 50 enhancements in all. MASCHINE continues to evolve so you can focus on creating the perfect beat.

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NI NATIVE INSTRUMENTS

THE FUTURE OF SOUND



WHAT IS IT?

A virtual sampler focussing on Hip Hop style sounds and samples

CONTACT

Who: Beat Kangz
Web: beatkangz.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Hip Hop virtual sampler with built-in sampling capabilities
- 2 All-in-one MPC-style production environment
- 3 Software version of the forthcoming Beat Machine hardware



Beat Kangz Beat Thang Virtual | \$149

This sampler promises to make you sound like a pro in minutes. **Greg Scarth** checks out the bold claims

The first release from Nashville's Beat Kangz Electronics, *Beat Thang Virtual* is a software sampler marketed towards Hip Hop 'beat' production. Beat Kangz do things a little differently to other software and

hardware developers, and their innovative ethos has played a major role in shaping their products. *Beat Thang* might be aimed primarily at the Hip Hop market, but it promises to offer plenty of features, which will appeal to producers of a variety of

genres. With so many grand statements of intent being made, we decided to put a copy through its paces.

What is it?

Undoubtedly inspired by Akai's all-conquering MPC range, the *Beat Thang* interface is similar to a number of other soft samplers on the market, making it easy to get started. Samples load almost instantly and are spread across thirteen pads, each of which may be triggered via MIDI messages sent from a controller keyboard or pad device. For quick and easy functionality, pads may also be triggered by letter keys on your computer keyboard, making the *Beat Thang* usable straight out of the box.

The factory presets offer excellent quality samples, kits and instruments designed for all styles of Hip Hop, plus a handful of sounds suitable for other genres including R&B, House, Drum 'n' Bass and Dubstep. Putting patterns together is straightforward using the 16-track sequencer, which operates in real time. Live performance is enhanced by mute and solo features on tracks as well as pads.

Swing settings allow you to tweak the quantisation to add groove to your tracks and loops, and one very nice touch is that the sequencer can be shifted from its default 960 parts per quarter note resolution to 96ppq in order to help emulate the timing of the Akai MPC range.

Sampling

On the sampling front, the Beat Thang really delivers. You can record external audio, edit waveforms and create custom samples inside the program without requiring any separate recording or editing software. Just hook a turntable, microphone or other sound source up to your computer and you can sample beats, breaks and loops to your heart's desire.

I also like the fact that the manuals and tutorials explain how to capture audio from other programs on your computer, which is ideal for quickly sampling from your MP3 collection or more difficult sources such as YouTube

The Beat Machine

Beat Thang are currently hard at work developing the hardware version of their sampling workstation, known as the Beat Machine, which was actually announced before the plug-in. It will operate in almost exactly the same way as the software. The advantages of this approach are clear, with the software offering a cheap introduction to the Beat

Machine's workflow and potentially operating as a powerful editor for the hardware. The Hip Hop production market has been crying out for a

software version of the MPC, but it looks like NI's Maschine and now Beat Kangz may have beaten previous rulers Akai to the knockout punch.



bugs still loitering in the boxed, on sale version 1.1.0 code, leading to crashes and unpredictable behaviour. The good news is that the Beat Thang licence entitles the buyer to free updates for life. Even so, it's a shame that Beat Thang occasionally feels like it should

A VST plug-in version is apparently in the pipeline, but for now a number of features are unnecessarily difficult to work with. MIDI functionality could be improved by increasing the level of support for external controllers. A number of functions require virtual

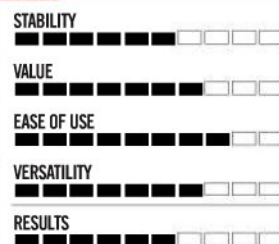
on-screen knobs to be turned and only support mouse clicks rather than responding to MIDI controllers.

Conclusion

Despite the shortcomings of this early version, the software already shows real promise. I must admit that I was a little underwhelmed when I first heard about the Beat Thang with so many soft samplers on the market.

Thankfully, after using the software and seeing what was on offer, my initial doubts proved to be unfounded and I'm impressed with the potential on display. It might not be as great as it could be but Beat Kangz is already offering something significantly different to anything else on the market. Keep an eye on it. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT



Beat Thang's software debut is an innovative approach and whets the appetite for the hardware version.

You can record external audio, edit waveforms and create custom samples without any other software

videos. Switching to Edit Mode shows a waveform view of the recording, trimming and chopping functions are handled in a similar way to the MPC.

Downsides

Unfortunately, Beat Thang isn't without its minor faults. There's no avoiding the fact that there are a handful of

have been subjected to more rigorous testing before it hit the shelves.

It's commendable though, that Beat Thang aims to keep everything in one package, but the software is actually hampered slightly by the fact that it follows such an individual path. Most importantly, the software currently runs in standalone mode only.



Beat Thang's instant sample and playback functions make it intuitive to use

SPECS

PC: Intel P4 or AMD with 64-bit architecture. 2GHz processor. Windows 7, XP, Vista 32 or 64. 1GB RAM.

Mac: Intel Mac. 2GHz processor. OS X 10.4 or higher. 1GB RAM.

ALTERNATIVES



Sonivox Sampla
\$149

The Beat Thang's closest rival is probably Sampla, another virtual MPC-style sampler aimed at Hip Hop producers.

sonivoxmi.com



Native Instruments Maschine

599 Euros

A much more expensive option, but NI's mighty Maschine sets the standard for hardware/software hybrid samplers.

native-instruments.com



Native Instruments Battery

179 Euros

Alternatively, Battery offers a simple but extremely powerful approach to drum and percussion sampling.

native-instruments.com

SPECS

Type: Pressure gradient tube condenser mic
Diaphragm: 6 micron gold-sputtered
Capsule Size: 32mm
Polar Pattern: Cardioid
Low Cut Filter: None
Attenuation: None
Frequency Response: 20Hz - 20kHz
S/N Ratio: 72 dB (Ref. 1 Pa A-weighted)
Max SPL (0.5% THD): 140dB
Dimensions: 47 x 218mm
Weight: 499g



MXL V69 Mogami Edition | £249

A valve mic complete with high-quality cabling.
Trevor Curwen makes the connection

WHAT IS IT?

A large diaphragm, cardioid pattern, valve condenser microphone ideal for vocals

CONTACT

Who: Musictrack
Tel: +44 (0)1767 313447
Web: mxlmics.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Airy top end
- 2 Solid suspension mount
- 3 Keen price

There are plenty of affordable valve microphones around these days, both from well-established and less

well-known companies. The MXL brand probably falls into the latter category in the UK but MXL is no Johnny-come-lately as it is the pro audio division of US parent company Marshall Electronics who have been active in audio for almost 30 years. The Mogami brand of high-quality cable also comes under the Marshall umbrella, hence the tie-in with MXL to give us the V69 Mogami Edition – a version of the V69 valve mic complete with Mogami cabling, both externally and internally.

The V69 comes in a fairly solid attaché case with all its associated accessories, which include a power

supply with IEC mains lead and a 15-foot, seven-pin connecting cable to the mic, a 15-foot Mogami XLR cable, a suspension cradle and a grey windshield. The mic itself seems nicely put together, although the gold grille is made of a quite fine mesh which looks like it could easily get dented if handled too roughly.

What you get is a side-entry cardioid pattern only mic with no switching options – i.e. no pad and no low frequency filter. It features a 25mm diaphragm capsule and comes with a frequency plot that shows a response that remains pretty flat throughout the range but exhibits a distinct rise from 5kHz up to about 12kHz before the response gently starts to drop off.

Mogami ways

Designed well and made from metal, the suspension cradle holds the mic securely and is easily set at any angle via a T-shaped adjusting screw that takes very little effort to get finger-tight. After making all the connections, switching on the power and waiting a few minutes to give the valve a chance to get up to operating temperature, we used the mic initially on a session recording acoustic guitar and ukelele. The resulting sound was clean and crisp in the top end while retaining plenty of body in the mid range. Overall impression was that the rise in the frequency response enhanced the sound somewhat with a nice sparkle – no bad thing on acoustic guitar.

The expectation was that the mic's top end response could be a boon when recording vocals and this was borne out in practice with the achieved result being a detailed, naturally warm vocal recording, exhibiting plenty of presence without sounding at all harsh and with an airy top end sheen – the voice sat well in the mix without resorting to any extra EQ.

Final thoughts...

The lack of a pad switch or filter may make the MXL V69 Mogami Edition appear less versatile than some of its rivals but in practice neither of these is of great concern. A max SPL handling of 140dB is more than adequate for the type of tasks it is most likely to be used on and low end can always be filtered out elsewhere in the signal chain if desired. Overall, it has to be said that the V69 sounds really good and compares very favourably with more expensive rivals.

If you are looking for a large diaphragm condenser, primarily for vocal recording but capable of more, particularly where top end is important, the V69 will give you quality results that belie its asking price. **FM**

FutureMusic VERDICT

BUILD	☐
VALUE	☐
EASE OF USE	☐
VERSATILITY	☐
RESULTS	☐

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Predator

SubBoomBass

"RG really inspires creativity." - Shawn Patterson - Composer, Ren & Stimpy Show, Cheap Date

VIRTUAL INSTRUMENTS / SOFTWARE

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SDX: The Lost New York Studios
Recorded at Hit Factory NY and Allaire Studios. (requires Superior Drummer 2.0).
£119.00

Synthogy
Ivory 1.7
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IVORY II COMING SOON
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Acoustic Toy Museum
Hundreds of musical toys in a magical and unique sound library.
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Morphestra
Epic collection of 1100+ instruments and multis pre-installed on a 160GB Glyph hard drive.
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Sonivox
Eighty Eight: Grand Piano
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Multiformat

Sample Magic
Tribal Tech House
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Multiformat

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Vocal Factory
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Arturia Hip Hop Producer | £99

Analogue aficionados Arturia take on Hip Hop. **Greg Scarth** hopes they're not two-thousand-and-late...



WHAT IS IT?

All-in-one Hip Hop production bundle

CONTACT

Who: 2tenty2
Tel: +44 (0)845 299 4222
Web: arturia.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Everything you need to get started producing Hip Hop
- 2 Based around Arturia's excellent Analog Factory
- 3 Bundled with Ableton Live 8 Lite, Modern Beats samples and Lounge Lizard

SPECS

44.1kHz, 16-bit resolution. More than 1200 samples in Ableton Live Pack format and WAV format.

System Requirements:

PC: 2GHz CPU, 1GB RAM, Windows XP/Vista

Mac: 2GHz CPU, 1GB RAM, Max OS X 10.4 or higher and Universal Binary

For all the budding Kanyes and Pharrells out there, production software may seem like a minefield. Arturia aim to offer a neat solution to this problem with Hip Hop Producer, a collection of software that contains a DAW, a synth specially designed for Hip Hop, an electric piano and a bundle of samples too.

We'll take a look at the other components of the package later, but for now let's concentrate on the centrepiece, the Analog Factory Hip Hop plug-in. As the name suggests, this is a version of Arturia's successful Analog Factory soft synth, originally released in 2006. The Hip Hop version follows the same preset-based formula, with the options restricted to 250 patches generated using the synthesis engines behind Arturia's virtual ARP 2600, Yamaha CS-80, Moog Modular and Minimoog clones. Although the setup might seem slightly restrictive,

Analog Factory isn't just a preset machine. Every one of the patches allows you to take control of filter cutoff and tweak the ADSR controls of the amplitude envelope.

In addition to these basic settings, each patch also assigns four more variables to the central bank of Key Parameter knobs. These knobs are patch-dependent, allowing you to take control of more advanced variables such as filter envelopes, oscillator tuning and portamento. The results are excellent, offering a bite-sized chunk of Arturia's analogue emulation power.

Added value

The Hip Hop bundle includes a basic DAW in the form of Ableton Live 8 Lite Arturia Edition. As you'd expect from a Lite version, the Arturia Edition strips away many of the features of the full version, but still includes more than enough for beginners. For instance,

you're limited to a maximum of eight audio and MIDI tracks, which might become restrictive before too long but should be enough for a beginner, and Live Lite can be upgraded to a full version once cash allows.

Once Ableton is installed, it's easy to get started making beats, loops and tracks with Analog Factory and the other elements of the bundle. Ableton's sample abilities are demonstrated by a sample pack drawn from Modern Beats' extensive product range, featuring 1,200 samples and 30 MIDI patterns for use in your own productions. As you'd expect, the quality is excellent and these beats and loops should have you rocking in no time. For me, the real jewel in the crown is Lounge Lizard Session, a slightly stripped down version of Applied Acoustics' Lounge Lizard EP-3 electric piano plug-in. Although the Session version restricts you to four Rhodes and Wuritzer presets rather than offering full control of the tone, you're still able to adjust tremolo, drive and a handful of basic effects.

Conclusion

This product's main selling point is that it offers a little of everything, from a DAW all the way through to samples and synths. Overall, it's a quality package which includes everything a beginner needs and would even offer good value to producers looking to add to an existing software collection. Of course, if you don't need all the extras, you may find better options elsewhere.

The full version of Analog Factory, for example, costs a little more than this bundle but offers a whopping 3,500 presets in comparison to the Hip Hop version's 250. Even so, if you're a newcomer to Hip Hop production, or are a finger-in-all-pies kind of producer, there's no doubt that the Hip Hop Producer bundle contains everything you need to get started and offers great value for money. **FM**



FutureMusic VERDICT

STABILITY



VALUE



EASE OF USE



VERSATILITY



RESULTS



A great all-in-one solution for Hip Hop beginners with synths, samples and sequencer covered.

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**WHAT IS IT?**

A multi-dimensional equalisation and dynamics processor plug-in

CONTACT

Who: Pro Audio DSP
Web: proaudiodsp.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Allows you to apply the EQ and dynamic curve of one track to another
- 2 Simplifies many complex production tasks
- 3 Can turn a badly recorded sound into something more than usable



Pro Audio DSP Dynamic Spectrum Mapper | £200

A plug that learns frequency and dynamic content?
Stuart Bruce grins like the Cheshire cat

More often than not it's the quiet ones that are the ones to watch. Take the Pro Audio DSM for example. It

first appeared on VST / AU and RTAS in July 2009 and has built itself a solid reputation among audio professionals. And the latest version cements that reputation perfectly. With its separate dynamics and EQ sections, you might

be mistaken at first glance into thinking the Dynamic Spectrum Mapper is a multi-band compressor, and in some ways, it's potentially the simplest multi-band you have ever used. But, how it processes goes way beyond how most multi-bands work.

The big difference between the DSM and everything else is the magic Capture button. Press this with audio

playing through and the DSM analyses the frequency and dynamic spectrum of the source. It then processes the sound dynamically in relation to the audio spectrum you captured.

As it's working with lots of compression bands and a map of the material, you can use really extreme settings without pumping effects, and then make radical changes to the overall sound without losing its inherent character. For sound sources that have problems like sibilance or bass boom you just capture a good passage and then apply it to the whole thing.

As you work more with the DSM you build up a library of your own presets that you can then call up when you have a similar need. On the DVD, you will find a set of before-and-after examples of material I processed while writing this review. It's probably a good idea to listen to them as I talk you through how they were done.

DSM treatment

First up is sibilance. De-essing can be time consuming and pretty tedious. With the DSM, it's a simple matter of inserting the plug, loading a preset and curing the problem. The spoken word example provided on the DVD sounds pretty nasty but all I did to correct it was exactly that. When you have a complete vocal take which contains some nasty sibilant moments all you do is hit the Capture button during a non-sibilant passage.

When you apply this to the vocal any frequency that goes above the captured curve is compressed by the DSM removing any sibilant peaks, but retaining the basic character of the vocal sound because it was created from it. As you can see from the device itself, you have all the standard compressor controls in front of you so it's quick and easy to change the threshold or attack and decay times to further suit the particular sound you are dealing with.

What I got was a far more cohesive frequency spectrum and no loss of spatial information

Fix up, look sharp

Another pain is the badly recorded instrument. The acoustic guitar on the DVD, that appears next is dull and lifeless. Because there is no great sounding section I loaded an acoustic guitar preset from the DSM library. It immediately sounded better but I wanted to take it further. Using the parametric threshold controls I pulled out some of the lumpy low middle and bass frequencies. Although these look like EQ controls, they don't work directly on the sound. Instead, they adjust the shape of the captured curve either

allowing more or less of certain frequencies through. By setting the threshold to -24dB the whole sound was seriously under control, but I still wanted some zing. Using a high setting for HF release in the timing profile section, the DSM let lots of lovely clear controlled top end through and gave the finished sound you hear. Considering how much compression I am using the

end result is unbelievably clean and free from pumping. Try doing that with a conventional compressor and EQ chain.

Getting different drum loops to sit together can be hard work. With the DSM it's easy. The untreated loops have really different sonic characteristics. I pumped up the first loop using one of the DSM loudness presets then I inserted another instance on the same track. I captured the curve of the first loop, saved it as a preset and then applied it to the other loops. The results you hear on the DVD took just two minutes to achieve. Using conventional

techniques would have been far more complex and taken a lot longer.

Dynamics

Finally, I tried a mastering job on a complex track containing some extreme dynamic, spatial and frequency changes. I captured the curve of the end section and then applied it to the whole track. Higher settings of LF

attack slow the attack time of the lower bands allowing the bottom end to breathe. Higher settings of HF release lengthen the decay times in

the higher bands, opening out the top and adding brightness. What I got was a great increase in loudness, a far more cohesive frequency spectrum, no apparent compression artifacts and no loss of spatial information.

I've had the DSM for a while now and I really do use it constantly. Whether I'm fixing a problem, pumping up the drums, radically altering a loop or maximising a whole mix it is my first port of call and more often than not, my last. It saves time, massively improves workflow and sounds bloody great. Thoroughly recommended. **FM**

DSM Details

Paul Frindle, creator of the DSM, is no stranger to the world of pro audio. He designed the signal path for the SSL G Series console, was principal designer on the Sony Oxford, and then the Sonnox range of plug-ins. We caught up with him to pose some important questions about the DSM.

FM: How does it work?

PF: "It works by splitting the program into a large number of bands, controlling the level data within those bands and then decoding it." **Why do it that way?** "Because the compression is aiming at a valid spectrum of the original and therefore produces a

believable audio rendition of the program whatever it's doing, the DSM can achieve far more successful compression of challenging program, such as complex percussion and music covering a wide dynamic range, without many of the artifacts that conventional compression methods exhibit."

SPECS

System requirements
PC: XP SP1 or later and Vista, VST and RTAS Authorisation on iLok
Mac: OS X 10.4 or higher. VST, RTAS and AU



DSM comes with lots of ready-made presets

FutureMusic VERDICT

STABILITY	■■■■■■■■■■
VALUE	■■■■■■■■■■
EASE OF USE	■■■■■■■■■■
VERSATILITY	■■■■■■■■■■
RESULTS	■■■■■■■■■■

A unique and highly impressive plug at a great price. Prepare to make things easier on yourself.

ALTERNATIVES



Waves Q-Clone
\$1,035

Not a dynamics processor or even something that captures the spectrum of a particular piece of audio, but rather a way of digitally cloning an EQ by analysing its responses. If you own one great sounding EQ, this lets you use it on every channel. Very expensive, but it does exactly what it says on the tin.

waves.com

WHAT IS IT?

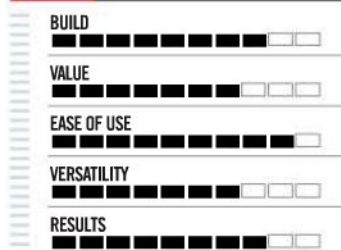
CONTACT

HIGHLIGHTS

- ## PRICING

SPECS

Dimensions:
370 x 230 x 60mm
Weight:
1.4Kg

FutureMusic **VERDICT**

Not cheap, and a tad niche, but as an all-in-one, portable practice solution, JamHub delivers.





PRIME LOOPS

WE'RE IN THE MIX

Prime Loops provide award-winning sound libraries, fresh in-tune with the evolving music scene. We are an extremely passionate team of engineers. See below some of our most recent, state-of-the-art sample pack releases, all 100% royalty free and designed to inspire.



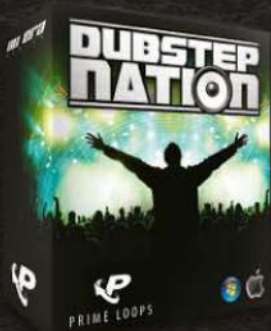
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Prime Loops are proud to announce the arrival of one of their most inspiring, genre-spanning sound suites to date. Inside this royalty free songwriting pack you will find over 200 expertly recorded Grand & Upright Piano Loops, each and every one truly inspired by the bustling streets of the city that never sleeps!

As you have come to expect with all Prime Loops releases, "NYC Piano Sessions" has been formatted to ultimate perfection. Just drag and drop these files into your favourite production platform - it couldn't be easier to use.

All of the sounds within this collection are clearly labeled with tempo and key info, and you can choose from Wav, Rex2 Loops, Apple Loops, MPC, Ableton Live Pack, Acid Loops, or whichever you prefer, all presented in crystal clear 24-bit audio.

£19.95



DUBSTEP NATION

Ready for the ultimate Dubstep experience? "Dubstep Nation" features over 200 heavyweight Dubstep Drum Loops, Basslines and Synth Hooks, complemented with over 200 pounding One-Shots and 130+ mind-blowing multi-patches for Kontakt, EXS24, NN-XT, Sonar & Halion.

£29.95



R&B PROGRESSIONS

Silky grooves, official jams & soulful flavours? "R&B Progressions" boasts over 600Mb of inspiring piano loops, string arrangements, synth hooks and more! Expect a jam-packed collection with over 180 royalty free R&B Loops, all professionally recorded and produced to ultimate perfection.

£16.95



FIDGET vs ELECTRO

Shake the foundation! This full-throttle Sample Pack contains over 150 perfectly cut Fidget Vs Electro House Loops, arranged into 11 comprehensive groove kits, broken down into separate Beat Stems, SFX Loops, Synth Hooks, Basslines and Percussion Elements.

£12.95



ORCHESTRAL SCORES

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£16.95



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15% discount off ALL sample packs

Use discount code FM15

www.primeloops.com

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated



AQ Amigo Laptop Speaker | £25

aqamigolaptopspeaker.com.com

This slimline speaker easily perches on top of your laptop screen and connects via a single USB

connection. The first test was a little

disappointing when listening to music – even though it was much better than the speakers on most laptops, it had a very awkward and present sound. This is probably due

to the 'exciter' technology in the NXT system. But for movies or anything spoken word, the speaker sounded really full and the NXT technology really spread the sound around the room. If you're looking for something as an entertainment speaker then this is an absolute bargain, but listening to or making music on the road with this isn't so pleasant. *Chris Barker*

7/10



Sonuus B2M Bass-to-MIDI Converter | £82

sonuus.com

The B2M from Sonuus promises to convert a standard bass guitar input into a MIDI signal that can be used to plug into your DAW or any MIDI hardware. It follows on from their G2M guitar version,

which we found had issues tracking anything other than the most straightforward guitar parts.

The B2M is a compact plastic box with LEDs on the top showing tuning

(basses up to seven strings), battery status, clipping and MIDI input. One end has a classic 1/4" bass input, a switch for chromatic mode (filters out any pitch bend info), and a 'useful' wrist-strap attachment.

At the other end is a five-pin MIDI connector, and a 1/4" bass through, for blending synth sounds with regular bass amp tones. The B2M needs a 9V battery (not included), and claims a battery life of 60 hours. Latency and tracking were passable, though a well set-up bass and clean technique make a big difference. Use this for synth sounds, or real-time notation of bass parts, or even triggering scenes and loops in Ableton Live.

I'd prefer USB-out, to simplify computer use, but either way, the B2M is an affordable and totally fun way to use your bass with your MIDI software.

Martin Delaney

8/10

Etymotic HF2 Custom | £180

etymotic.com

After enjoying the regular HF2's but finding them a little tough to get in the ear, a set of custom fitted versions really brought out the full quality of these headphones. Not only does the outside world get blocked out much more, but the bottom end is tightened up significantly with the mids also seeming much clearer and less muddled by the lows. The other obvious benefit is that they bring the earpiece much nearer your eardrum much more comfortably, making lower listening levels possible. You buy the phones for £100, then use the card inside to organise your fitting for a further £80. Your custom moulds are then sent to you two weeks later. Easy! Ish...

It's bringing custom moulds to the masses and without a doubt this fairly simple system and partnership with ACS mouldings makes a great pair of headphones even better. *Chris Barker*

8/10



Alex Blanco and Jon Carter – Block Party Essentials | £25

loopmasters.com



This 650+MB download collection comes from a couple of high pedigree Dance stalwarts. Between them they have racked up an impressive CV of DJing, remixing and production (U2, the Stone Roses, The Prodigy and the Beach Boys, to name but a few). What you get is over 200 loops and 268 single hits across a range of tempos from 105 to 130BPM as well as sample patches for all the usual suspects (HALion, Kontakt et al).

If you want old school breaks, heavy basslines and 'tweaked Electro Sound bytes' then you can't go wrong with this weighty package. **Greg Scarth**

7/10**Elektrik5 – Samplestar 1 | £29**

soundstosample.com



700+ 24-bit samples from ex-Sample Magic Producer Colin Flynn covers a wide spectrum of genres – Progressive, Electro and Indie-Dance as well as a few odd spaces in between. One of the major selling points for this lot is the use of an analogue studio 'packed with vintage rarities', although, unfortunately it doesn't tell you what these are.

Instead, feast on a wealth of material, all at 127BPM. Beats come kickless and kicked, basslines come with plenty of 'I wanna hear it on a big rig' and even some tasty hiss in places. Throw in 20 construction kits, a smattering of bitcrushed vocal loops, some hands in the air lead lines and a tub full of one shots and frankly I'm sold. Impressive stuff.

Daniel Griffiths**8/10****Ray Keith - Original Jungle Drum & Bass Vol. 1 | £25**

loopmasters.com



What can you say about Ray Keith? Drum and Bass frontier pusher, DJ, ubiquitous remixer and the man behind such classics as *The Chopper*, a true D'n'B heavyweight. This is his first foray into sample packs and I very much doubt if it will be his last. 375+MB of dark menace in the form of basslines, beats and 'inspirational music loops' will have you winding up the tempo to 175 and putting some tech into your step.

This has classic D'n'B stamped all over it and even comes with 21 Ray Keith'd examples of the 'must have' breaks that are the building blocks of the genre, each prepped and ready to drop on the dancefloor, to great effect. Nice.

Roger Watson**8/10****Kick Free Revolution 2 – Sounds Of Revolution | £35**

soundstosample.com



Reviewers favourite Olli Schmitt and his Sounds Of Revolution label return with volume two of *Kick Free Revolution*, 600+ loops of tight tops all at 127BPM.

For your buck you get '140 definitive big-room bangers' as well as some really sweet click and glitch loops which although geared towards the House world, can be thrown anywhere with a bit of tweakage. Add some hats, percussion, tonal offerings and 24-bit WAV formats and it looks like Mr. Schmitt has produced another gem.

Oh and in case you lack the bottom end to make full use of this top heavy package, Mr. Schmitt gives you 70 kick drums covering all the bases. Bonus!

Roger Watson**9/10****Mad Professor – Reel to Reel Reggae | £25**

loopmasters.com



Trawling the Ariwa studios Reggae vaults, one the leading lights of Reggae production has let 665MB of loops, hits and sample patches grace your download bar for an enticingly reasonable price. This really hits the nail on the speaker wobbling head, your neighbours may not like it but your tunes will. Ripping horns, tweaked out drumloops and dubtastic basslines are the name of the game here. Just dipping into them made the recent cold weather disappear. It's the Mad Professor and that's all you need to know. Awesome.

Will Seelig**9/10****Twisted Vocals Of Odissi – Sounds To Sample | £19**

soundstosample.com



Vocal samples: They're a bit like good brass samples and blue moons. Only occasionally do you find one that's any good.

Sticking her neck out into the 'credible Dance vocals' arena and deserving some kudos comes Lot 49 vocalist Odissi with 13 fresh BPM labelled kits, all sitting between 127 and 130BPM.

Leaning heavily towards the sordid/dirtier end of the lyrical spectrum ('Make the headboard bang like a kick drum'), these loops are mostly dry for easy of use and feature complete lines/verses as opposed to the endless wailing and vocal histrionics that you normally get. You even get a bit of spoken word. 304MB and 24-bit is the technical stuff. File under Electro Punk and be as pleasantly surprised as I was.

Chris Barker**8/10**

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Q&A

Our panel of experts answer your music-making questions, from hardware issues to software ideas, with tips and tricks along the way

Software Tenori-on

Michael Osbourne asks:

Q One of my mates has bought a Yamaha Tenori-on, so I went round to his house recently and gave it a go. My verdict? It's a good laugh, but not something I could justify spending £700 on, especially as I make all my music on a computer and don't plan performing live any time soon.

What I did find, though, was that its interface was encouraging me to compose in a different way to normal, so I was creating a different sort of music. So, I was wondering if anyone had released a VST plug-in for PC that emulates this, but allows you to use your own sounds?

That's definitely something I'd be interested in. I think lots of other people would be interested too.

Mark Gyver replies:

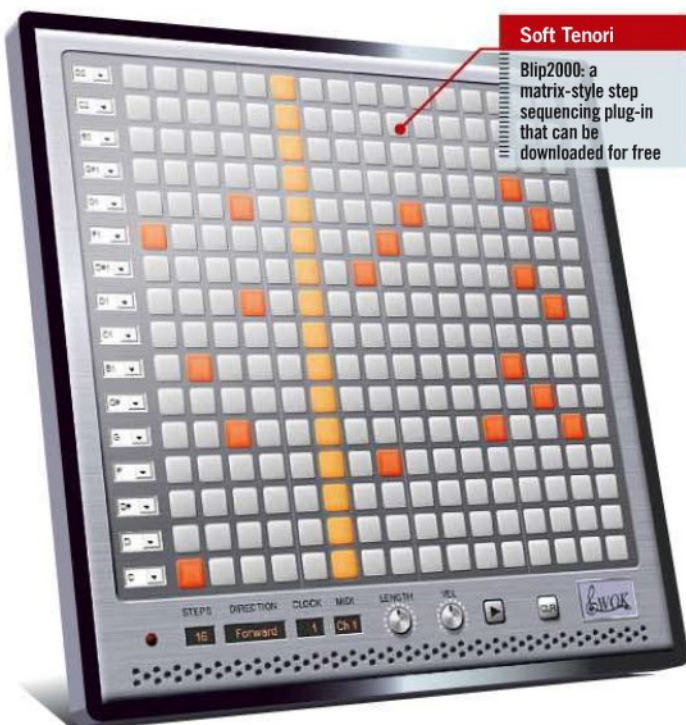
A It's no secret that matrix-based interfaces have become very popular over the past 18 months or so – the likes of the Tenori-on and monome have been attracting attention at the top end, and the \$49 Bliptronic 5000 has provided an affordable route into the hardware world of grid-based sequencing.

On the software side, I'd suggest that you go and download Blip2000, a matrix-based step sequencer that has Tenori-on-like operation (columns represent steps, lines represent notes). It doesn't have all the note input modes of Yamaha's hardware, but the basics are there.

You can have up to 16 steps in a sequence, and because this is a VST plug-in with MIDI output, you can use it to trigger any other software

Soft Tenori

Blip2000: a matrix-style step sequencing plug-in that can be downloaded for free



THE EXPERTS

Mark Gyver computer music expert



With 15 years of music production experience, Mark knows everything (and more) about the current and classic software market.

Doug Kraul technology author



Doug Kraul is an electronics and computer industry innovator, who has designed analogue modular synthesizers and MIDI devices.

Dan Goldman artist/producer



Aka JD73, Dan is a session keyboardist, producer and remixer, specialising in vintage gear, mixing and production techniques.

To send in your queries you can email us at futuremusic@futurenet.co.uk and we'll pass them on to the relevant expert. Or write to **Future Music Q&A, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW**

instrument you have installed. The MIDI channel, note length and velocity can all be adjusted, you can change the musical scale, and a random mode might help to inspire some new ideas.

Best of all, Blip2000 can be downloaded and used for free, though a screen will pop up asking you to make a donation to the developer. If you like what you see, throw a few quid his way and he might make something even better in the future.

Smoother fades

Henry Oliver asks:

Q This might seem like a minor issue, but it's really bugging me so I thought I'd ask for your help.

When I've finished a track, like most people I like to create a fade-out at the end. I've tried using volume automation to do this, but when I do, the fade sounds a bit abrupt, and not as smooth as the ones I hear in professional records.

I've tried making the fade longer, but this doesn't seem to help. Do you have any suggestions?

Mark Gyver replies:

A Fade-outs are part and parcel of the production process – you'll use them all the time, so it pays to work out a method of getting them right. Obviously, volume automation is the key, but the trick is to think carefully about the start and end points of your fade and the shape of the automation curve.

I suspect that you may have been fading out using a 'straight-line' fade, but this won't sound very natural. Try putting a curve in your automation, so that the fade is stronger as it starts and then flattens out towards the end. Also, try and introduce your fade just before the start of a new bar, so listeners know that they're reaching the end of the track, and don't end it at the end of a bar. Above everything else, you want your listeners' brains to be fooled into believing that the track is continuing to play, even though they can't hear it.

These tips should help, but don't write-off the idea of actually coming up with a proper ending for your track(s). Yes, you'll use fade-outs a lot, but there are times when you want a sense of finality, and because it's so rare these days, listeners are likely to be irrationally impressed when they hear that you've actually

A dedicated monitor control may seem like a luxury but it is an important part of your monitoring system



Separate Monitor Control?

Kevin Oliver asks:

Q I upgraded my budget soundcard to a more suitable FireWire model. My previous soundcard did not have a volume control so I relied on my sequencer master fader to adjust monitoring level.

Would it be best to use the new soundcard's volume knob, or continue using software?

Doug Kraul answers:

A Software-only monitor control suffers numerous pitfalls. The most serious, and why I do not recommend it, is that the software must be running reliably. If the

software or computer malfunctions the soundcard may spew maximum level noise that could damage your monitors or even your ears!

Another potential problem is sound degradation. Suppose you set your monitor gain so that your normal listening level is outputting -12dBFS peak. You might set it up this way so that you can 'play it loud' from time to time. If your soundcard is 24-bit your monitors will receive what is effectively 22-bit audio, so you are not using the full potential of the soundcard. Incidentally, digital volume controls on soundcards cause the same degradation.

This does not affect the quality of your projects in any way, and most personal studio monitoring setups have other more impactful limitations – so you may never even notice. However if this sort of thing gives you pause then avoid using a software master volume control. It is for this reason that you should be cautious of soundcard master volume controls unless you know it uses an analogue method to affect level.

A dedicated monitor controller is a compelling addition that avoids these limitations and also improves studio workflow. Good monitoring practice means using consistent, referenced

listening levels. This is of course possible with software but you will have to set it up properly in each application. A monitor control is essential if you like to reference your mixes against two or more sets of speakers. Finally, do not overlook the value of convenient features like a dedicated physical mute button or a dim button that lets you lower level in a simple, repeatable fashion.

Headphones also benefit from a dedicated monitor controller. Some soundcards use the same gain control to affect both the monitor and headphone outputs. Sometimes you can mute the monitors and still use the headphones. Finally, achieving consistent listening levels on both the monitors and headphones requires remembering and setting two different volume settings.

been bothered to think about how a piece of music should end.

Laptop or desktop?

Steve Savoy asks:

Q I'm considering getting a new Apple computer for my studio. The dilemma I have is whether I should run my studio off a laptop or from a desktop computer.

I know there are advantages to both setups but would really like your thoughts on which might be best. I've heard that it's not wise to run your studio off a laptop as they can't cope with the amount of processing very well and often overheat.

Dan Goldman replies:

A The desktop vs laptop debate is a very interesting one, especially as many laptops are now approaching the power of some of the desktop models. There are many points to consider. First off, do you need a setup that's portable (i.e. do you need to have your songs and computer able to travel with you for work in different studios)? If you do then the laptop is the obvious and only choice. The current MacBook Pros are very capable computers with

plenty of processing power, up to 17" screens, plus FireWire 800, two USBs, and optical audio in out and more, though for some reason Apple have done away with the PCI Express ¼ card slot on the latest models, stopping users from installing UAD laptop cards and related peripherals so this maybe a deal breaker.

However, even though they are still powerful machines, laptops are more susceptible to overheating due to the nature of their small cases and the heat generated by their processors, so if you choose the laptop route, do make sure you have plenty of air circulating your laptop. There are several stands available that lift your laptop off flat surfaces to enable air to cool and circulate around your laptop adequately.

Another important consideration is connectivity. Desktop computers such as the Mac Pro have many more connections for external peripherals, plus extra hard drive bays (up to four) and the ability to take more RAM (up to 32GB). They also house full-length PCI Express cards for installing UAD cards and other PCI Express based card systems. So, the desktop computers are a whole lot more powerful and should be current for a



Best of both worlds

A big monitor can give you laptop portability with desktop screen size

Courtesy of Apple

lot longer than laptops. I run my studio from a MacBook Pro and have very few issues, though I thoroughly recommend maxing out your RAM plus buying two external FireWire hard drives, one for audio and one for backups. Also, it's worth buying a large external screen too as even a 15" or 17" screen can be quite restrictive for in depth sessions. Which is best is hard to answer

definitely, but the bottom line is do you need a portable system? If you do, the laptop is the only way to go and will do a great job.

Safe listening levels

Leo Salenti asks:

Q I'm worried about my hearing and listening volumes. I often work late at night on headphones

Projects in Motion

Geno Gorgon asks:

Q I recently replaced my aged iMac G5 with a two-year-old Intel-based iMac. I use Logic 8 and need help moving my projects and settings. I have

many unfinished projects, a large personal EXS24 sample library, and some personal channel strip and plug-in presets. How would I go about getting everything reliably moved?

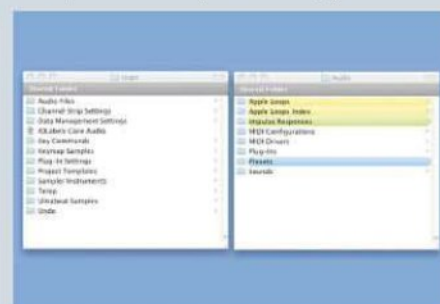
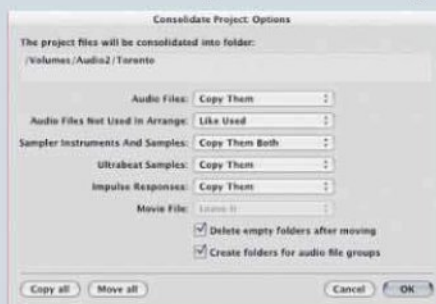
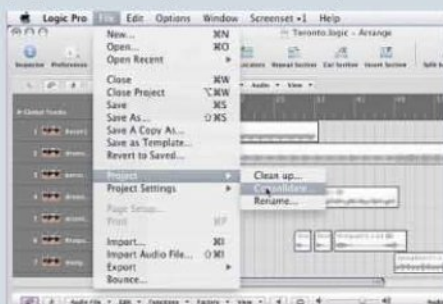
Doug Kraul replies:

A Migration Assistant is a utility program provided with OS X. Normally it is used to move settings and data

during initial computer set up, or when doing a fresh install of the OS. You can, however, use it even after the OS is installed. Chances are, using it will do everything you need to do. You can find it in Applications/Utilities.

If you use Migration Assistant you should first prepare all of your projects using the same procedure

you should always follow when creating a project backup or archive. We will examine this and some of the less obvious places Logic stashes personal settings in a moment. Once your new system is up and running, keep your old computer handy for a few weeks. That way if you discover any missing data, you can easily grab it.



1 Before you transfer or archive a project, it's best to bring all of its audio, sample, and other files into the same folder as the project file itself. Logic offers the Consolidate command to make this easy. Choose File/Project/Consolidate... to start the process.

2 Consolidate locates every project bit and copies (or moves) them into the project folder. This includes the EXS24 instruments (including samples) the project used. The command's option panel offers flexibility but most of the time simply hit Copy All. Afterwards, back up or relocate the project folder as needed.

3 Two folders hold personal Logic settings, <your home folder>/Library/Application Support/Logic, which you should copy completely, and <your home folder>/Library/Audio. In the latter copy 'Presets' (Audio Unit user presets), and 'Impulse Responses' (Space Designer files). Grab the Apple Loop folders too if you use those.

From GENESIS to REVELATION...



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020 8208 6988

ElectroMusic
Doncaster
01302 369 999

StudioXchange
Letchworth
01462 677 333

Nevada Music
Portsmouth
023 9220 5100

Red Dog Music
Edinburgh
0131 229 8211

Music Matter
Preston
01772 797 908

Kazbar Systems
Cambridge
www.kazbarsystemsinc.com

Musicland
Cardiff
02920 621 715

One Man Band
Banbury
01295 266 788

The Music King
Birmingham
0845 200 5464

Nilam Music
Hereford
01432 278 227

Music Street
Huntingdon
01480 431 222

Giggear
Harlow/Hertford
01279 432 900

Counterpoint MTC
(Education)
01903 538 844

Sounds Live
Newcastle
0191 491 3185

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as I don't want to disturb my girlfriend or neighbours, but quite often when I go to bed that night, I have ringing in my ears and I'm scared I'm damaging my hearing.

I don't think I'm working particularly loudly, but I'm not sure, it can be hard to tell on headphones, especially after a while of working on them. Are there any pointers you can give me for keeping my levels in check and to protect my hearing?

Dan Goldman replies:

A This is a very important and relevant question for anyone working in this industry. Our hearing is the most valuable asset to us in the audio world and so, we should be doing our utmost to ensure we protect it as best as possible. Working on headphones late at night is one of the easiest ways to damage your hearing.

The nature of headphones makes it especially hard for our brains to judge whether the sounds that are

emanating are too loud or not, so it's the perfect environment for hearing damage to occur. The best bet is to always err on the side of caution and turn it down if you have even the slightest suspicion that you are monitoring at too loud a level. Ideally, don't mix on headphones for prolonged periods.

Working on dedicated monitor speakers is a much better bet and investing in a great set of monitors will actually help your hearing, as you'll be able to hear the detail you require for accurate mixes much better at low levels, therefore negating the need to turn them up loud all the time, and there'll be less of a strain on your ears as you won't struggle to pick out the details.

Finally, it's worth investing in a decibel meter and net searching 'safe sound exposure levels' just so you know what is actually a safe volume for you to monitor at. Also check this link that has some good info on safe

levels gcaudio.com/resources/howtos/loudness.html and be sure that when you're going out to clubs and live gigs to wear earplugs to further limit any potential damage.

Notable confusion

James Hans asks:

Q I have a MIDI pad controller that seems to have a bug. I assign one of the pads to note C1 but when I hit the pad it plays the sample assigned one octave lower. Is this a bug, or did I miss something?

Doug Kraul replies:

A Your problem is probably a notational problem and not a bug, per se.

Manufacturers and software publishers have historically disagreed about what to call middle-C. The MIDI specification is quite precise that middle-C is always 60 but says nothing about note names. Most products call middle-C

'C3', making the lowest MIDI note 'C-2', and the first piano C key 'C0'. This flies in the face of musical tradition where the first piano C key is normally named 'C1'. Yamaha is a proponent of this 'C3 is middle-C' convention.

The second honours piano tradition and names middle C 'C4'. Unfortunately this still gives the lowest MIDI note an uncomfortable negative octave, 'C-1'. Korg is one manufacturer that practices this naming scheme.

The third approach starts at C0, so no pesky negative octaves here! Middle-C is 'C5'. It is rather non-traditional, and not something you will often encounter, but it does shows up from time to time.

None of this affects what is really happening under the bonnet. MIDI uses the number, not the name. Your only 'solution' is to learn what convention each of your products uses and then adjust accordingly.



Preamp Puzzler

Peter Bradley asks:

Q When I've been reading interviews with producers, I've often been intrigued to see them mention how they have a favourite analogue preamp that they always use for recording to give them a certain sound. Forgive my dimness here, but what does using a preamp actually do? My understanding was that

they're just used to bring a signal up to the right level, but I'm guessing there may be more to it than that.

Also, is there any way that I can replicate the effect of a preamp using a plug-in?

Mark Gyver replies

A You're right when you say that a preamp is used to raise the level of a signal, but analogue

models also have a habit of putting their own signature stamp – or colouration – on a sound. Usually a form of harmonic distortion – this becomes especially apparent when the preamp is driven hard. When producers talk about having a favourite preamp, it's usually because they particularly like the colouring that it provides, which is why you'll hear

them referring to classic gear from the likes of UA, SSL and Neve. While it's debatable whether this effect can every truly emulated in software – and I don't want to get into that debate here – 112dB have made a pretty good fist of trying with their relatively recently released Redline Preamp, which offers “a customisable combination of even and odd harmonics, saturation, and soft clipping”. This, perhaps wisely, doesn't emulate any specific piece of hardware,

and its effect can be a fairly subtle, but reaction to it so far seems to have been pretty favourable. It can help to make the various parts in your mix 'sit' better, and also seems to emphasise the right frequencies on specific instruments.

All that said, plug-ins like Redline Preamp aren't a shortcut to a perfect mix, so before you consider buying it (or checking out the demo) make sure you've got your head around the likes of compression and EQ.

MIDI Beats in Audio

Q **Simon Reynolds asks:** I've recently purchased MOTU BPM and use it with Logic for creating beats. I love its sounds, but want to work with the MIDI beats I've made in BPM as audio within Logic. Is there a way to do this easily? Basically, I want to multi-track my beats in BPM then transfer them to Logic's arrange as audio. Can this be done and if so how?

A **Dan Goldman replies:** This is a pretty good question as committing to audio can force you to get creative with your beats. There's an easy way to do this, and it makes working with your BPM beats easier, plus allows you to bypass BPM completely once the sounds/beats are imported.



1 Load up BPM into an instrument track in Logic. Press the sequence button to bring up the standard sequence programming matrix.



2 Next, we need to get some sounds into BPM, but we'll be using MIDI triggering for now. Select the kick drum from the sound library and drag it to the pad you want to use it on.



3 Make sure you label your sounds properly so you can reference them once they are as audio in Logic. Name the pattern as kick drum 1 and write in the pattern in the sequence matrix.



4 Repeat the same thing for the snare and hi-hats and any other instruments you want to include on your arrange page, making sure to name them all appropriately.

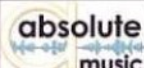


5 Once you have all the required components tracked individually, drag them onto your arrange page by clicking and holding on the word 'pattern' in red above the pattern name and dragging to the track you want on the arrange page.



6 Once on the arrange page, your beats are available as separate audio tracks and can be treated just as you would treat any audio. You can then arrange your parts as you please, plus remove the BPM plug-in to free up memory and CPU usage. **FM**

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Demos



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Demo Of The Month



SELECTED KIT

Hardware

- > Intel Quadcore PC 2.40GHz
- > Logitech PC Speakers with subwoofer
- > Native Instruments Audio Kontrol 1 interface
- > BCT Midiplus 49 keyboard
- > Digital voice recorder Olympus VN-3500PC
- > Video game machine AX-3114

Software

- > Steinberg Cubase SX3
- > Absynth 5
- > Toontrack EZdrummer
- > Plogue Chipsounds

FAVOURITE GEAR

> "I couldn't live without my Hercules DJ RMX mixing controller because I think playing with music is funnier and more exciting than to compose. Also I love my Marshall MG100DFX electric guitar amp and my Casio Celviano AP-45 electric piano."



Living The Soundgame Robonaut 86

Contact: myspace.com/robonaut86



It's that compressed, hard, mid-EQ boost that makes this. As soon as you establish a mix like that your

drop back to full range always sounds tremendous. It's a great trick that this track uses aplenty, and is particularly effective given the depth of the bass and the pointed, chip tune leads here.

We love the programming. The chiptune chop ups are nicely complex and the unidentifiable chirrup and thwacks certainly give this a personality all its own. The crazy pitch tricks at 2:08 are superb and the surprise

introduction of real conga and percussion at 2:30 takes the track forwards nicely.

In fact the tricks come so thick and fast that the extended portion between 2:30 to the tracks end seems to drag as you're waiting for the next incredible trick or effects mix switch around. "I try to make use of the tips your magazine offers," says Jordi. "They can help me to improve myself and right now, I have few projects on my mind." Wise words indeed.

This is a great track, some adventurous and unusual sound choices, an edgy full frequency mix and track that's uniquely your own.

The Artist



Name:
Jordi Montserrat
Pellejero
Where:
Sant Boi de
Llobregat,

Barcelona, Spain

My track: "It's very Electronic. It contains tribal percussions that remind you of the old songs of ancient video games."

Which bit of this track are you most proud of?

"I like the force of bass and the input at 2:30. The chiptune songs are extracted from the Plogue Chipsounds plug-in and the AX-3114 video game machine that are recording with my Digital voice recorder Olympus VN-3500PC."

If we were to give you £5,000 for gear what would you spend it on?

"First of all, I would get the best headphones on the market, good monitors and a powerful notebook computer in order to compose or do different sessions at any place. With the rest of money I'd like new instruments like the Eigenharp and Reactable."

What are you working on now?

"I'm thinking about finishing an album called *Living The Soundgame*. It won't be all chiptune as I like experimenting with music."

The Best of the Rest...

I Love You Max

soundcloud.com/max4beats



Now here's a tricky one to get your head around. Dubstep, with a live-sounding, very real kit, vocal chops, autotune from

Pop R'n'B and some Pendulum/Prodigy lead sounds. It's got the lot.

The mix is a little soupy with the super thin hi-hat – essential for tapping out time in a tune like this – getting lost in the top end. More mid to it would give it some presence and keep the downbeat timing in

check. It's a strong and unusual tune but because it never drops, stripping away the dense background pad to give the bass and drums some limelight, it doesn't quite fulfil its potential. Great bass sound, but a shame that you have to wait until the end of the track to appreciate it.

"The bass is my favourite part," says its maker Max von Mensenkampff. "It really bounces throughout the whole track. It started as just a preset bass sound on the 3xOsc synth in FL Studio, then I just changed the shape of the oscillators messed around with the LFO and added a few effects like a chorus to really beef up the sound." Cool, but how about some more stops and chops throughout the track? And

we're expecting some double-tempo fills at any moment. Listen to Portishead's *It Could Be Sweet* to hear how they imbue tension.

Shine Civilian Death Machine

myspace.com/civiliandeathmachine



After all the Electronica and noodling elsewhere it's nice to have a bit of

good old rockin' for a change. *Shine* is thin, edgy and sharp Nirvana-meets-Pearl Jam-meets-Foo Fighters-meets-Big Country rock jaunt that successfully combines a live feel with plenty of studio tweakery.

The vocals and guitars are thinned to almost Leppard proportions and it's this lack of mid that's most noticeable. When layering guitars don't be afraid to let one of your tracks be overly-middy. Introducing this 'rogue element' to your otherwise 'sheeny' production will fill it out. Right now you've a very scooped sound.

We like the vocal, though – as ever – we'd like it a little louder. All in all a little less of that extreme EQ and you'd have a very slick track.

Captain Johnson Penis Penis Penis



Some dark Techno for you now. And by God this is deep. Love the sinister undercurrent here, even if the choice of 'lyrics' does rather throw it open to ridicule.

Love the fake Germanic vibe here too. Kraftwerk were big jokers you know so while you may think that you're taking the piss we like to think they'd be in on the gag!

It's certainly the vocal that makes this tune. There's plenty of great, zapping percussion and a nice, nagging bassline but it's the warm dome of delay and reverb over the robot vocal that makes it. We can hear this dropped at the heady climax of a Minimal night and fully anticipate the crowd to go mental. The insane discordant drop at 3:16 is a throwback to Acid House at its most riotous and unhinged.

The arrangement is varied the bottom end solid and when it does go crazy your hi-energy top end is searing without being off limits. Marvellous – thoroughly frightening – stuff.

A Take On Harmony RouJe

roujesound@googlemail.com



Ah, That thirty-second intro might be a bit hard to swallow for most, but once the



SELECTED KIT

Hardware

- > Dual Core PC
- > M-Audio FireWire 410
- > Korg Zero 4 Mixer
- > Roland 909 Groove Box
- > Yamaha PSR-290
- > Samson Resolv 40a
- > MXL 990 microphone
- > Sennheiser HD 280

Software

- > Ableton Live 8
- > Korg Legacy Cell VST
- > NI Massive
- > Waves plug-ins
- > URS EQs
- > Sound Forge 8

I Need Your Love Eckul

Contact: myspace.com/marcianoxx

Wow. Nice big, fat, wide sound. And easily the loudest track we have on offer this month. It's a super compressed tune with some extreme sidechaining to keep things pumping along. It's almost a bit too much to take in as the whole track seems to come and go like someone's winding the volume dial.

Try sparing some of your tracks the pumping treatment – perhaps some more of those occasional nice long high-frequency reverb tails on snaps or claps

– just to fill in the gaps?

We really like the vocals here and it's great performance and sound. "I got it by treating my vocals with the Waves Morphoder plug-in and the Ableton vocoder," says Mr Eckul, Luke Honey. It's a really strong tune, especially in the bridge and the bass note that drops at 2:26 that marks the track out very nicely musically.

Brilliant stuff and plenty of cutting edge tricks, but maybe spare the ducking for fat elements such as your bass or pads rather than giving it the beans.

Hot Pick



SELECTED KIT

Hardware

- > Yamaha MSP5A monitors with an SW-10 sub.
- > M-Audio interface
- > M-Audio Oxygen 8 keyboard
- > Yamaha MG12/4 mixing desk
- > Apple Power Mac G5

Software

- > Reason 4
- > Ableton Live 7
- > Steinberg Recycle.

FAVOURITE GEAR

- > "Reason!"



Give It Up SPL & D Poetica

Contact: myspace.com/soundpressurelevels

We love it when a track confuses and surprises us. So where's the bass we're wondering. Then at 0:21 there it is! The feel of this one is great. There's a through-the-floor BPM but the glimpses of crazy hi-hat and the excited promise of the vocal shouts and effects keeps the tempo in our heads racing far in excess of the gigantic weighty Dubstepping elsewhere.

You're really pushing this one as far as it will go. There's an extreme top end and – loud – this will test any system

with its over-exuberant bottom end. "We've been really interested in adding as diverse of a sound as possible to our sets and catalogue," say the guys. "It's awesome because this is our first track working together."

We love the endless edits, chops, extreme bit crushing, stops, starts. Someone has really taken the time to go in at a miniscule level and made every bar different to the last.

How about teaming this with a nice bit of in your face lyrical action? (UK DJ) Zane Lowe would go mental for it!

The Artist



Names:

Sam Pool (SPL) & Garrett Jolly (D Poetica)

Where:

Portland, USA

This track: "It's just another four hour session in Reason. We wrote it at half the tempo of 175bpm so SPL could throw it in his Drum 'n' Bass sets easily."

Which part of the track are you most proud of?

"The kick drum is pretty awesome. I like the edits too. Everyone loves 16th note 808 hats."

If we were to give you £5,000 for gear what would you spend it on?

"We would buy a new MacBook Pro for SPL. An Akai MPD32 for D Poetica. A Lemur for each of us. Some phat Adam or Dynaudio speakers. A super awesome condenser mic and some hookers that can sing."

What are you working on right now?

"SPL is busy running Hollow Point Recordings and making music. D Poetica is working on his abs and pecs."

beat kicks in (it seems to be quite the month for Minimal this month) everything makes a lot more sense.

Nice snare and kick combo. Everything here is super-tight and letting that 'computer bleeping' sound though as short bursts stops the track being too insane.

"I like the breakdown at 4:44," says Noah Araujo Hill. "I didn't want this track to be massive and I think I achieved a solid break down without it becoming too huge."

Just what is that incredible 'intake of breath' sound? It's used so sparingly in your arrangement but it sounds so great. Push it up in the mix too. Loud, in headphones, this really sounds like it's in your brain coming out, rather than vice-versa!

Full marks for keeping things nice and reserved here. Too much Minimal feels obliged to do something crazy to avoid repetition but the quality of the sounds here and the way they're introduced and removed keeps you on the edge of your seat.

Look At Me Now Marcianox

myspace.com/marcianox



The scratchy warm start sets you up for a bit of glitch or some nice doom-laden

Breakbeat but when the piano drops it's like an out-take from the Titanic soundtrack! Fortunately this quickly gives way to a shimmering, upbeat bit of Electronica that shows off some great playing and mixing skills.

With piano so obviously to the fore melody is by far the strongest element here. It's a great tune and

riff. So much so, we can hear a female vocal on the top. There's some great chord changes, just watch your Bruce Hornsby/Mark Cohen fills and overly bright, happy-clappy mix which can make this sound a little 'daytime TV'. Perhaps a more electric piano sound, or a Yamaha CP-80 tone would take the 'earnest rock' edge of what is actually a great Pop Dance tune. And not sure about the clap sound panned right. Cheers.

Let The Truth Decide Dynamic1

myspace.com/dynamic121



Hey wait a second.

We've heard this girl

before it's... it's...

"It's Zero G's Vocal

Forge," explains Leo Capper, the track's maker.

Now while we're impressed by Vocal Forge and there's a lot to be said for using it for ideas, how about writing your own lyrics and swapping it out with your own vocalist that you don't have to fess up about later? VF sounds so... impressive that it's starting to stand out like a sore thumb. And just when you want a bit of sexy wailing or a cheeky ad-lib, you get that same robo-impairity.

The rest of the track however is a slick mix of Urban and Pop elements. It feels very Euro with its choir and chords (and that super-neutral vocal). So much so, we're reminded of Denmark's excellent Gangway.

But where's the bass? Prince can get away with it on *When Doves Cry*, but here? You're not doing a great tune justice. Superb starting point for a future smash though. **FM**

Hot Pick



SELECTED KIT

Hardware

- > Apple MacBook Pro 2.5 GHz Intel Core 2 Duo
- > M-Audio Firewire 410
- > M-Audio Oxygen 49 keyboard
- > Mackie HR-824 monitors

Software

- > Logic Pro 9
- > ReFX Vanguard Synth
- > Lennar Digital Sylenth1
- > PSP Vintage Warmer
- > Rob Papen Sub Boom Bass

FAVOURITE GEAR

- > "I'd have to say Logic Pro. As long as you have that you can make music. I can find a way to do without everything else."



Thomas Market Nick Rockwell

Contact: nickrockwell.com

It's not often that we refer to a track as 'totally ON the hook' and mean it as a complement but

this is the one. Tight, stripped, absorbing and involving at every slap and tap.

The mix is just right here. That is to say it's right *there!*

You can pick out and understand every one of your fizzes and pops and some nice dynamic programming gives it a bouncy, exciting feel that – while it might not deliver on truly euphoric levels – will be enough to get anyone nodding their head in appreciation. Love the vocal shouts and your arrangement

never rests, either pushing each element out in the mix or made more visible through careful modulation of release times and envelopes.

"I like the grainy lead synth. It's from the Vanguard plug-in by reFX. I actually found out about that plug-in by watching *Future Music's In the Studio With Funkagenda*. I took a Trance-sounding preset, took out all of the delays that were with it then took the release down." Sweet.

It's the dark rumbling bottom end that does it for us. Just when you think it's all there it just gets bigger!

Unsigned and unloved? Get your tracks on these pages!

If you're an amateur music maker wanting to take the next step up then we want to help. Broadcast your music via the *FM* DVD and bravely subject your work to our expert advice!



1 Non pros please!

Are you unsigned, non MCPS or PRS registered and making music that you think could be something special? Then our *Demos* pages are for you. We're here to help and want to broadcast your work to *FM* readers around the world! If you're already making money and living the dream then thanks, but no thanks. Everyone else should head to futuremusic.co.uk our virtual home and blog site where you'll find regular input from the *FM* team.



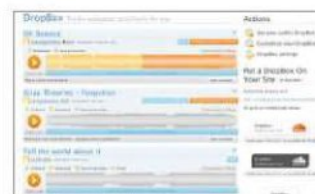
2 Look for the SoundCloud DropBox

We're big fans of SoundCloud, the online audio sharing service that let's you effortlessly pass around your audio to your friends or collaborators. SoundCloud lets you audition the audio in your drop box without the need to download it first – it plays in your browser with a click – making it the fastest and easiest way to get at audio files ever. Check out soundcloud.com to get your own SoundCloud box. Ours is on the right, just below the advert.



3 Click on the box and upload

Click on *Future Music's* SoundCloud DropBox then click on the big 'Choose files' button and upload your very BEST work. We haven't the time to wade through 12 tracks to get to the good ones! They need to be MP3s please. AND YOU MUST take the time to add a description – your name, address, band name, track name please – and give us your email address too! Include your track name and band name in any correspondence please!



4 Start work on that bio...

If your track is selected to be featured in the magazine we'll email you and ask you a whole bunch of questions such as your favourite gear, how you got your sound, you know – all the things you see us ask people! We're always up against one deadline or another here at *FM* so a rapid concise and easily understood reply to our questions is appreciated. Make sure you put your real name, artist name and track name on all correspondence!

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Swissonic MDR-4

Mobile digital audio recorder

24bit, sample rate: 44.1/48kHz, record format: WAV (16/24bit) and MP3 (64/96/224/320kbs), 5 effects (delay, chorus, room, reverb, pitch shift), built-in speaker, 128 x 64 pixel LED display, 1/8" stereo line in, 1/8" external mic in, built-in stereo mic, 1/8" headphone out, Mini-B type USB connector, powered by PSU or 2 AA size batteries, incl. power supply unit, 1GB SD card and USB cable, dimensions WDH: 6,7 x 2,9 x 10,7cm.

€ 89.-

£ 80.-

a. code 226599

Tascam DR-07

Mobile digital audio recorder

Record and play MP3 (up to 320Kb/s) and WAV files (up to 24bit), 44.1/48kHz, built-in stereo mic, analog automatic level input control, analog limiter, stereo in for external mic, stereo line input, headphone and line-out (3.5mm TRS mini jack), USB 2.0, powered by AA size alkaline or NiMH batteries, incl. 2 GB SD card and windshield.

€ 149.-

£ 134.-

order code 223287

Zoom H2 UK

Mobile MP3/WAV recorder

1-point stereo mic design, MS stereo technique, built-in USB interface with audio interface function, WAV 96/48/44.1kHz and MP3 up to 320kbs VBR, headphone out, time stamp function, uses SD-cards (up to 4GB), perfect for interviews, podcasts, meetings and live recordings. USB cable, stand, mic-stand adapter, windscreens, UK power supply and 512MB SD card included.

€ 166.-

£ 149.-

a. code 213436

Tascam CD-A700

CD/Tape player

Balanced inputs and outputs, pitch control for CD and tape, includes IR remote, dimensions HWD: 27 x 13,9 x 48,3cm, weight: 6,6kg.

€ 190.-

£ 171.-

order code 136953

Zoom Q3

Handy video audio recorder

Stereo condenser mic, true X/Y configuration, 2.4" LC display (320x240px), video resolution 640x480 at 30 frames per second, video format MPEG-4 SP, NTSC/PAL TV out, audio formats with video: 44.1/48kHz 16/24bit Linear PCM or MP3 up to 320kbs, without video up to 96kHz/24bit Linear PCM WAV, up to 1 hour video with 2 GB SD card, auto record level, includes TV cable, soft case, wind screen, 2GB SD card and 2 AA batteries.

€ 238.-

£ 214.-

order code 234280

Zoom H4 N UK

Digital recorder

Perfect for interviews, podcasts, meetings and live recordings, 24bit/96kHz, MP3 up to 320 kbps bitrate, two built-in stereo microphones switchable between 90° and 120°, needs 24V or 48V phantom power, USB port, incl. 1GB SD card, windscreens, UK power supply, mic clip adaptor, USB cable, bag and Cubase LE4.

€ 322.-

£ 289.-

order code 228789

Sony PCM-M10

Portable 24bit/96kHz audio recorder

Built-in stereo mic, internal speaker, cross-memory recording, internal 4GB flash memory + MicroSD/MemoryStick Micro slot, limiter and low-cut filter, 5sec. pre-record buffer, recording level control, USB 2.0, includes power supply, Soundforge Audio Studio LE, cable remote and cable, finish: grey. Bundle includes accu charger BCG-34H S, MDR-V150 stereo headphones and 4 accus NH-AA B4F.

€ 325.-

£ 292.-

order code 239061

Olympus LS-1 I

Digital recorder

24bit/96kHz, 2 built-in mics, internal 8GB HDD, expandable up to 32GB with SDHC card, up to 23 hours record time, edit functions, PCM/WAV/WMA/MP3 record & playback, built-in stereo speaker, display with backlight, SD/SDHC slot, USB, headphone out, silver metal housing, weight: 165g (incl. batteries), connection for external power supply, incl. wireless remote and Steinberg Cubase 4 LE.

€ 339.-

£ 305.-

order code 234496

Zoom R16

USB audiointerface and DAW controller

16-track playback and 8-track record, 24bit/48kHz PCM recording, internal stereo condenser mic, battery or USB, 8 mic ins (2 with 48V phantom power), 2 outs, 8 balanced XLR / 1/4" TRS connections, internal effects, Mackie Control emulation via USB, for Win XP/Vista and Mac OS, incl. Steinberg Cubase LE4 and 1Gb SD Card (Support for SDHC-Cards up to 32GB).

€ 379.-

£ 341.-

order code 232058

Tascam 2488

NEO Bundle

24-track harddisk recorder (4 XLR with phantom power), internal FX processor, 16x CD-RW drive, new effects for mastering, 250 virtual tracks, high speed USB 2.0 connects to PC or Mac® for data backup and SMF/WAV file exchange, 80GB hard drive, bundle incl. the Lbone HD-9900 headphone and 5 Sony CDQ800N CD-Rs.

€ 759.-

£ 682.-

a. code 223374

KRK RP5 Rokit G2

Active studio monitor

75W, 5" + 1" speaker, frequency response: 53Hz - 20kHz, magnetically shielded, dimensions HWD: 27,6 x 18,5 x 25cm, weight: 6,3kg. Unit price!

€ 138.-

£ 124.-

order code 213024

KRK RP8 Rokit G2

8" / 1", 140W.

order code 213090

€ 229.-

£ 206.-

ESI nEar05

Active 5" studio monitors

Magnetically shielded, 33Hz - 22kHz, bi-amped, bass: 42W, treble: 33W, balanced XLR input, 6,3mm jack input, dimensions: 25 x 16,6 x 20cm. Pair price!

€ 169.-

£ 152.-

order code 160180

M-Audio EX66

Active studio reference monitor

Bi-amplified with 200W PWM power per channel, high-impedance analog inputs (XLR and 1/4" TRS balanced), S/PDIF and AES/EBU digital input up to 24bit/192kHz for total digital studio connectivity. Unit price!

€ 258.-

£ 232.-

order code 190176

Adam A7

Active nearfield studio monitor

6,5" Rohacell / kevlar sandwich woofer, A.R.T. tweeter, frequency range 46Hz to 35kHz, 100W (sin), 150W (rms), XLR and RCA input, dimensions: 18 x 33 x 28cm, weight: 8kg. Unit price.

€ 379.-

£ 341.-

order code 193268

Yamaha HS80M stand bundle

Active 2-way studio monitor package

120W bi-amping bass-reflex system, 8" woofer, 1" tweeter, frequency range 42Hz to 20kHz, XLR and jack input, mid EQ, room control, high trim, low cut switchable, magnetically shielded. Bundle including 2 pcs. HS80M and 1 pair of Millennium BS-500 nearfield stands.

€ 458.-

£ 412.-

a. code 227555

Phonic AM440D

Mixer

4 mono mic/line channels with 3-band EQ and low-cut, 48V phantom power, 4 stereo channels, 1 aux, internal effects processor with 100 presets, 2 track I/O, headphone out, balanced master out, incl. external power supply.

€ 75.-

£ 67.-

a. code 196368

Phonic AM442D

4 stereo, 2 aux.

order code 196389

€ 149.-

£ 134.-

Alesis Multimix 4 USB

4-channel mixer with digital output

16bit, 44,1kHz signal on USB, 4 line level ins, 2 XLR ins with gains and switchable 48V phantom power, high impedance guitar input, 2 channel EQ on mic ins, multicolor LED metering, main and headphone outs with independent level controls, incl. power supply, dimensions WHD: 15,2 x 19,6 x 5cm, weight: 0,6kg.

€ 88.-

£ 79.-

order code 235244

Mackie 802-VLZ3

8-channel mixer

XDR2 preamps, 2 mono mic/line ins, 2 stereo line ins, 1 mic/stereo line in, 1 stereo aux return, 1 aux send, 2 inserts, 3-band EQ, low cut filter, PFL, 48V phantom power, internal powersupply, incl. software, dimensions HWD: 27,3 x 22,7 x 4,7cm, weight: 2,5kg.

€ 189.-

£ 170.-

order code 209011

Soundcraft EFX 8

8-channel mixing desk

8x mono inputs, 2x stereo inputs, inserts on all channels, 1x FX send, 1x aux send (pre/post), solo/mute switch, integrated Lexicon FX with 32 presets, peak LEDs on all channels, integrated power supply. Dimensions: 33 x 9,1 x 36,2cm. Weight: 4,6kg. Optional rackmount available.

€ 269.-

£ 242.-

order code 118879

Yamaha MG 166cx

16 channel mixer

8x mono mic/line ins (XLR/jack), 2x mic/line ins (XLR/stereo jack), 2x stereo line ins (jack), 3x aux sends, 8x inserts, 3-band EQ with parametric mids, internal compressors per mic channel, SPX FX processor with 16 programs, 180dB high pass filter, high-end mic preamps, 48V phantom power. Dimensions: 47,8 x 10,2 x 48,9cm. Weight: 5,5kg.

€ 359.-

£ 323.-

order code 115511

Alesis MultiMix 16 FireWire

16ch. mixer with FireWire interface

8 mic/line ins, 4 balanced stereo line ins, 3-band EQ per channel, 2 aux send/returns, 100 28bit FX programs, headphone out. FireWire interface: 18 ins, 2 outs, 24bit/48kHz, ASIO/WDM drivers for Win XP SP2, Core Audio drivers for Mac OS X, incl. Cubase LE.

€ 398.-

£ 358.-

order code 186079

Mackie 1642 VLZ3

Compact 16-channel mixer

8x mono mic/line channels, 2x mic/line stereo channels, 2x stereo channels, 4x subgroups, 4x aux (2x pre/post switchable), XDR2 mic preamps, 60mm faders, 3-band parametric EQ (mono channels), 4-band EQ (stereo channels), 48V phantom power. Dimensions: 42,5 x 13,1 x 42,1cm (WxDxH). Weight: 8,3kg.

€ 535.-

£ 481.-

order code 112362

Allen & Heath WZ¹ 16:2 DX

16-channel mixer

16 mono ins with insert/direct out, PAD, 100Hz HP and 4-Band-EQ with para. mids, 48V phantom switchable, 6 Aux, Aux 5-6 internal effect, 2 stereo Aux returns, PFL, mute, phones, master I/O, A/B out, 2 DigiTech FX processors, MIDI input, internal power supply.

€ 839.-

£ 844.-

order code 132316

suitable flightcase

€ 179.-

£ 161.-

Yamaha 01 V96 VCM

Digital mixing console

24bit / 96kHz, 24 analog inputs, 12 Mic inputs, 40 channels expandable, included ADAT interface, 4 effect processors, parametric EQ, incl. Studio Manager Software.

€ 2390.-

£ 2149.-

order code 161112

suitable flightcase

€ 188.-

£ 169.-

Mackie TT24 Refurbished

Digital live FOH/monitor desk

24 mic/line ins with 4-band EQ/compressor/gate, 8 line ins with 4-band param. EQ, 12 aux sends, left right center/mono outs, 11x8" matrix plus, 8 flex groups, 100mm motorized faders, 99 snapshots, 24bit, 44,1/48/88/2/96 kHz, 5" touchscreen display. Refurbished stock (B-Stock with full guarantee)!

€ 2899.-

£ 2606.-

order code 191748

www.thomann.de

Telephone Hotline: +49 9546 9223-55

Fax: +49 9546 9223-24

Akai LPK 25

USB MIDI controller keyboard
25 mini keys, arpeggiator, sustain button, octave up and down, tap tempo controls, 4 programmable memory banks, includes software editor for Mac and PC, plug-&-play USB connection on Mac and PC, requires no driver installation, dimensions HWD: 2,79 x 34,04 x 9,65cm, weight: 635g.

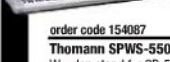


order code 235491

€ 46.-
£ 41.-

Thomann SP-5500

Keyboard / Stage Piano
88 hammer action keys, 559 sounds, 203 styles, 3 user styles, 100 songs, 64-note polyphony, accompaniment controls, dual mode, split mode, metronome, DSP, transpose function, lesson function, pitch bend, stereo aux I/O, MIDI I/O, USB port, design: silver grey.



order code 154087

€ 377.-
£ 339.-
Thomann SPWS-5500
Wooden stand for SP-5500
order code 204071 € 46.-
£ 41.-

Novation Launchpad

Ableton Live and MIDI controller
Bi-directional communication, 64-button Grid with color synced feedback over the status, scene control switchable to control volume, sends, muting and more, up to 6 units at the same time, USB bus-powered, large rubber grips to hold it steady, automap-enabled, incl. Dedicated Launchpad Ableton Live 8 version, weight: 0,76kg.



order code 236641

€ 166.-
£ 149.-

Focusrite Liquid-Mix 16

FireWire plugin processor and remote
24bit/192kHz Sharp DSP processing with dynamic convolution technology, over 40 compressor & 20 EQ models, 7-band EQ (freely configurable as vintage EQs), 16 channels each with compressor and EQ @ 44.1/48kHz, 8 @ 96kHz, or 4 @ 192kHz, optional available DSP extension-board for 24 plugins @ 44.1/48kHz, bus or PSU powered, for Mac or PC.



order code 210257

€ 169.-
£ 152.-

Akai APC 40

Ableton Live DAW controller
USB plug-and-play, 40 triggers, 16 rotary control knobs with LED, 8 channel fader, 1 bus fader and 1 cross fader, 2 footswitch connections for tap tempo, tempo nudge, record enable, solo/cue function, for PC/Mac, incl. Ableton Live Lite Akai APC40 Edition.



order code 223229

€ 398.-
£ 358.-

ESI DualFire

24bit/96kHz FireWire audio interface
2 ins with level controls (1/4" jack), mic preamps with phantom power (XLR), 2 Hi-Z ins, 4 analogue outs, direct input monitoring with level control, headphone out, bus powered or by separate power supply, supports DirectWire 3.0, MME, ASIO 2.0, GSIF 2.0, DirectSound and Core Audio, incl. power supply and Steinberg Cubase LE 4.0.



order code 206255

€ 95.-
£ 85.-

Cakewalk UA-25 EX CW

USB audio interface
2 channels, 24bit/96kHz AD/DA, mic/guitar/line ins, 48V phantom power, USB powered, integrated limiter and analogue compressor, ground lift, headphone out, MIDI I/O, direct monitoring, compatible with Windows (XP/Vista) and Mac OS X 10.3.9 and higher.



order code 235896

€ 185.-
£ 166.-

Steinberg C12

USB audio interface and DAW controller
USB studio with 24bit/48kHz, 2 mic/line XLR/TRS inputs with switchable 48V, input 1 with Hi-Z switch for direct input of guitar and bass, 2 balanced line outputs, 1 stereo headphone output, latency free hardware monitoring, incl. Cubase AI 5, compliant to Mac OS X, Win XP and Vista.



order code 235705

€ 188.-
£ 169.-

Apogee Duet Bundle

FireWire audio interface
24bit/96kHz, 2 channels, FireWire 400 I/O, breakout cable with 2 XLR mic ins, 2 1/4" jack instrument ins, 2 1/4" jack monitor outs, multi-segment LED display input and output levels, multi-function controller knob, headphone out, Maestro software for advanced control and low latency mixing, compatible with any Core Audio compliant audio application, compatible with Mac OS X Core Audio. Bundle incl. original Apogee carry case and 2GB USB stick.

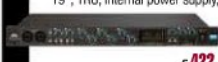


o. code 209773

€ 419.-
£ 377.-

Focusrite Saffire PRO 40

24bit/96k FireWire audio interface
20 I/Os, 8 mic preamps, 8 analog I/Os (2 mic/line/instr. combo XLR, 6 mic/line combo XLR), ADAT I/O, 2 S/PDIF I/Os, 2 monitor outs, monitor switch, 2 separate headphone buses, MIDI I/O, zero-latency DSP mixer/router, incl. plugin suite, 19", 1RU, internal power supply, weight: 3kg.



order code 219725

€ 422.-
£ 379.-

MOTU Ultralite MKIII Hybrid

FireWire and USB audio interface
24bit/192kHz, 2 mic/instrument ins, 6 bal. ins and 10 outs (1/4" TRS), 48V phantom power, S/PDIF I/O, headphone out, CueMix FX, internal DSP, LCD display, suitable for use as a standalone mixer, compatible with Windows and Mac, supports WDM, ASIO and Core Audio, incl. AudioDesk software for Mac.

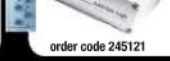


order code 239141

€ 469.-
£ 422.-

SSL Duende Mini Musicians Pack

Compact DSP powered SSL processing
Contains Duende Mini + stereo bus compressor, drum strip and vocal strip, up to 16 channels of console-grade SSL EQ and dynamics processing, powerful DSP engine, single FireWire connection, expandable with optional SSL plug-ins for the Duende platform.



order code 245121

€ 473.-
£ 425.-

RME Fireface UC

USB audio interface
36 channels, 24bit/192kHz AD/DA converter, 48V phantom power, 18 I/Os usable at the same time, instrument input, 8x analog I/O, ADAT I/O, S/PDIF I/O, 2x MIDI I/O, WordClock, intelligent clock control, SyncCheck, SyncAlign, SteadyClock, Digicheck and TotalMix, 9,5", 1U.



order code 229395

€ 822.-
£ 739.-

Digidesign Digi 003 Rack Factory

24bit/96kHz FireWire interface
8x analog I/O, 4x prof. mic preamps, 48V phantom power, 8-channel ADAT optical I/O or 2-ch. S/PDIF optical I/O, 1x MIDI in, 2x MIDI out, BNC WordClock I/O, dedicated studio monitor out, alt control room out, alt source in for external device monitoring, dual headphone outs. Incl. Pro Tools LE Factory bug-in bundle and Pro Tools Ignition Pack 2.

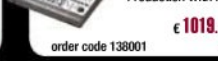


order code 111200

€ 888.-
£ 798.-

M-Audio ProjectMix I/O Pro Tools Bundle

FireWire audio interface
8 touch sensitive 100mm motorized faders, 8 mic/line ins plus one ADAT I/O, supports Mackie Control, Logic Control and Mackie HUI. Compatible with Cubase, Logic, Sonar and Pro Tools. Incl. M-Audio Pro Tools M-Powered 7 and Wozoo "Music Production with Pro Tools 7".



order code 138001

€ 1019.-
£ 916.-

Peavey Q1311

31-band equalizer
Constant Q factor, 1/3 octave, switchable 6dB or 12dB, 40Hz low cut feature, frequency range: 20Hz to 20kHz, XLR and 1/4" TRS inputs and outputs, output LED display, dimensions HWD: 4,4 x 48,3 x 18,7cm (19"/19"), weight: 3kg.

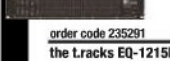


order code 238485

€ 45.-
£ 40.-

the t.racks EQ-2331E

2x 30-band equalizer
20Hz - 20kHz, status LEDs, volume control per channel, low cut filter on each channel, balanced 1/4" Jack and XLR I/O, ±12dB, 19"/2U.

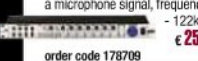


order code 235291

€ 75.-
£ 67.-
the t.racks EQ-1215E
2x 15-band EQ, 25Hz - 16kHz, low cut 10 - 250Hz on each channel, range: ±6dB and ±12dB, 19"/1U.
order code 235290 € 55.-
£ 49.-

Focusrite Octopre LE

8-channel Class A microphone preamp
8 analogue outs, 8 balanced 1/4" jack ins located on front panel for quick and easy access, first two channels can be used for DI free plug-in of guitars and basses, channels 1 and 2 also allow a microphone signal, frequency response: 10Hz - 122kHz, 19"/1RU.



order code 178709

€ 255.-
£ 229.-
Octopre LE ADAT Bundle
incl. Focusrite ADAT converter.
order code 235373 € 319.-
£ 287.-

SPL GoldMike 9844

2-channel valve preamp
Discrete Class A solid state, 48V phantom power, phase reverse, pad function, flair presence enhancement, very clear and warm sound. Dimensions: 19"/2U.

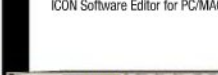


order code 123370

€ 425.-
£ 382.-

tc electronic Reverb 4000

24bit AD/DA converter
USB-Interface, 44.1 - 96kHz, analog and AES/EBU, S/PDIF, TOS-Link and ADAT digital I/O, ICON Software Interface for PC/MAC.



order code 160189

€ 1135.-
£ 1020.-

the t.bone Micscreen Mini

Portable absorber and diffuser
With microphone clamp, reduces the transmission of unwanted room reflections, echoes and ambient noises, recommended for vocals, instruments, live and studio applications, quick and easy mounting on nearly every standard microphone stand.



order code 223803

€ 66.-
£ 59.-

the t.bone Micscreen

Portable absorber/diffuser
Positioned behind any microphone, reduces the transmission of unwanted room reflections, echoes and ambient noises, recommended for vocals, instruments, live and studio applications, quick and easy mounting on nearly every standard microphone stand.

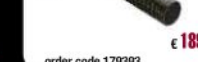


order code 209023

€ 83.-
£ 84.-

Rode NTG-2

Directional condenser microphone
Broadcast quality, condenser transducer, low-noise circuitry, low handling noise, phantom powered (44 - 52V) or battery powered (1.5V), frequency range: 20Hz - 20kHz, 131dB SPL max., ideal for film/TV/video, includes stand mount, windshield and zip pouch, weight: 161g.



order code 179393

€ 189.-
£ 170.-

Oktava MK012-01 MSP2 Matched Pair

Matched stereo set
2 small diaphragm condenser microphones, cardioid, frequency range: 20Hz - 20kHz, finish: silver, delivered in a wooden box, made in Russia!



order code 165104

€ 279.-
£ 251.-
MK012-01 MSP2
Single mic, cardioid
order code 165103 € 149.-
£ 134.-

Rode NT5

Condenser microphone stereo bundle
2 matched small diaphragm condenser microphones, 0.5" gold sputtered capsule, polar pattern: cardioid, frequency response: 20Hz to 20kHz, excellent for drum overhead, acoustic guitar and stereo live recordings, including plastic case, microphone holders and wind screens.



order code 154595

€ 285.-
£ 256.-

SE Electronics SE 2000

Large diaphragm studio microphone
Cardioid pattern capacitor, gold sputtered 1" mylar diaphragm, frequency response: 20Hz - 20kHz, sensitivity: >16mV/Pa -36dB ±2dB, impedance: <200Ω, output noise: <17dB typical (A weighted), THD: <0.5% at 125dB SPL, phantom power 48V ±4V, incl. wooden case and shockmount.



order code 223700

€ 88.-
£ 79.-

the t.bone SCI 100 Set

Studio large diaphragm microphone
polar patterns cardioid, figure-8 & omni, low cut switch and -10dB pad, frequency range: 20Hz to 20kHz, incl. aluminium case and shockmount. Bundle including the t.bone MS180 pop shield.



order code 203865

€ 139.-
£ 125.-

Rode NT1-A Complete Vocal Recording Solution

Large diaphragm microphone
Frequency response: 20Hz - 20kHz, impedance: 100Ω, dynamic range: 132dB, SPL max. 137dB, incl. deluxe shockmount SM6, 6m cable and tutorial DVD "Studio Secrets" from Peter Freedman.



order code 235937

€ 179.-
£ 161.-

Shure SM 7 B

Studio microphone
Dynamic studio microphone with cardioid polar pattern, 50Hz-20kHz, bass rolloff switch, mid-boost switch, 150Ω, shielded against broadband interference, fixed stand adapter, XLR connector, includes windshield.



order code 129929

€ 379.-
£ 341.-

EV RE20

Dynamic large diaphragm microphone
RE series, cardioid, switchable HP filter, variable D design, 150Ω, 45Hz-18kHz, includes clip and box, ideal for vocals, brass and bass drum. Length: 217mm. Diameter: 54mm. Weight: 737g.

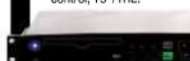


order code 128926

€ 459.-
£ 413.-

Swissonic CDMP 1

Compact CD/MP3-Player
40 seconds anti-shock, pitch ±16%, loop function, slot-in drive, balanced XLR output, direct headphone output with volume control, master level for the line output, IR remote control, 19"/1HE.



order code 221521

€ 139.-
£ 125.-

Pioneer CDJ-400

MP3 single CD player
with ID3 tag & CD text, MIDI controlled via USB, jog wheel, scratch jog FX, ±6/10/16% pitch control, master tempo control, reverse play function, shock-proof memory, hot loop & beat loop for 10 cue/loop points per disc (maximum).



o. code 138321

€ 579.-
£ 521.-
suitable flightcase
order code 206436 € 83.-
£ 84.-

Pioneer CDJ-2000

Professional multiformat single CD player
Plays Audio CD, CD-R, CD-RW, USB, SD, DVD-R, DVD-RW, USB sources and SD cards, includes Rekordbox software, quantized beat loop, compatible with MP3, AAC, WAV, AIFF and Tonium Pacemaker data, 24bit/48kHz soundcard, HID and MIDI controllable from USB, frequency range: 4Hz - 20kHz, dim.: 32 x 40,6 x 10,7cm, weight 3.9kg.



order code 238585

€ 1666.-
£ 1498.-

Vestax VCI-700

DJ MIDI controller
24bit, 4-channel soundcard (2x I/O), 1 stereo input, 1 microphone input, 2 stereo outputs (master/monitor), USB-connection (bus powered), 1 microphone input, 2 AUX-inputs, 1 headphone output, 2 master outs (cinch), dimensions HWD: 41 x 2,8 x 27,5cm, weight: 3,2kg, incl. ITC software, power supply optional.

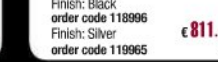


order code 212112

€ 709.-
£ 637.-

Pioneer DJM-700

Professional 4-channel DJ club mixer
Crossfader assignment, fader start, 3-band EQ (-26dB to +6dB), talk over (-20dB), peak level meter, rotary pots for master output. Dimensions: 32 x 38,1 x 10,8cm (WxHxD). Weight: 7.5kg.



Finish: Black
order code 118996

€ 811.-
£ 729.-
Finish: Silver
order code 118995

The Thomann services

- 30-day money back guarantee
- free shipping to the UK and Ireland on orders above £159

Gear Chart

Are you giving your music a fresh kick? In the market for new kit? Finally putting together that dream set up? Then you'll need *FM's* exclusive guide to all our favourite gear

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Hardware Synths



Dave Smith Instruments Tetra | £552

Review FM219 Super Mopho meets cut-down Prophet '08 in this fantastic analogue polyphonic synth.



Dave Smith Instruments Prophet 08 | £1,499

Review FM194 A beast of analogue power. Warm, fat and wooden-ended – what more do you want?



Clavia Nord Wave | £1,395

Review FM196 If you liked the Nord Lead you'll love the Wave. It's more versatile and sounds fantastic.



Moog Taurus 3 | £2,042

Review FM226 With more lows than an Eastenders omnibus, this beast will blow your socks off. Modern features make this a dream to use.



Use Audio Plugiator | £329

Review FM202 A software and hardware hybrid that is brilliant value for money. We all want one at FM!

Soft Synths



FXpansion D.CAM Synth Squad | £179

Review FM217 A powerful synth collection from FXpansion, favoured by Electro House heroes.



Rob Papen SubBoomBass | €299

Review FM215 Another superb synth from Rob Papen that caters for all your bass-in-your-face needs.



Spectrasonics Trilian | £215

Review FM224 A long-awaited update to the monster of all bass software. An instant classic.



Arturia Jupiter 8V | £150

Review FM189 One of the definitive, all-time great polysynths is now a plug that delivers thunderous bass as powerful as its searing leads.



u-he Zebra 2.1 | \$199

Review FM183 Subtractive and analogue synthesis with an ultra-phat sound. Ideal for shaking ground and wrecking speakers. In a good way.

MIDI Controllers



Novation LaunchPad | £149

Review FM220 Greta features at an amazing price make this Ableton controller a performance dream.



Akai APC40 | £400

Review FM215 Although there's still a few things that could be addressed, this is still the best option for performing with Ableton Live.



Livid Instruments Block | £349

Review FM223 Built out of wood and metal, the Block is a great alternative to the more mainstream controllers.



Native Instruments Kontrol X1 | €199

Review FM223 An intuitive, well-built controller at a great price. If you're a Traktor user, try this.



Vestax VCM-600 | £649

Review FM216 A fantastic way to control Ableton Live. Vestax deliver a well built, fun and feature packed DJ style performance controller.

How Our Chart Works

We've fought, bitched, whinged and racked-up all our favourite gear that's available today into our Gear Chart. If it makes an appearance on these pages, then it's well worth a look. We've appraised the hardware in terms of its price point, performance and usability, along with the fond memories and sheer joy factor of cranking it up for the first time. We're not saying that keyboard number six is 'better' than keyboard number seven, for example. We're saying that you should have a think about the music you want to make, read our recommendations below, and check out the gear that sounds cool. Each month we'll be updating our charts with new finds and introducing new lists to keep things fresh. Special mention to the Digital Audio Workstation bit at the back, which should help you nail your ideal recording solution.

The FM Awards

Editor's choice. If you see this little flag tagged on to one of our reviews it's impressed us above and beyond the usual excellence.

Platinum. Buy these. Unless you've got a perfectly good alternative or produce your music on comb and paper.

Value. A special chapeau to bits of gear that deliver the goods without breaking the bank. Value awards mean great gear at even better prices.

The Charts This Month...

120	Hardware Synths	From two-octave upstarts to two-grand monsters
120	Soft Synths	Our pick of sound-producing software
120	MIDI Controllers	The best performance and studio controllers in town
122	Monitors	Record, mix and master with confidence
122	Keyboard Controllers	Everything you need from portables to studio staples
122	Audio Interfaces	Get audio into your computer with quality and style
122	Effects and Mangers	Warp your sound and break new ground
124	Performance Samplers	Take control of your audio live and direct
124	High-end Audio Plug-ins	Treat yourself to the best that money can buy
124	Field Recorders	Record your band or go searching for found sound
124	Microphones	The best mics around for everyone's budget
125	eBay Classic Retro Finds	Keep an eye out for our suggested list of nostalgic love
125	Ways To Stand Out	Dare to be different and reap the rewards
125	Digital Audio Workstations	Which DAW is best for the music you want to make?

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Waldorf Blofeld Keys | £699

Review FM211 A huge amount of exciting presets and solid good looks make for a killer all-round synth.



Korg microKorg XL | £439

Review FM210 This fresh update of everyone's favourite mini-synth gives a new engine and a great vocoder.



MFB Kraftzwerk | £580

Reviewed FM219 German-built modular synthesis on a budget. Prepare to get addicted to analogue with this flexible patch-happy synth.



Doepfer Dark Energy | €398

Review FM223 A good introduction to modular analogue synths, in a lovely wooden-edged box. Nice!



Analogue Solutions Telemark | £689

Review FM217 A semi-modular upright beast, with plenty of unique sonic possibilities.



Spectrasonics Omnisphere | £299

Review FM207 Great sounding, flexible and unique, this is truly a powerhouse of sound design.



GForce Virtual String Machine | £90

Review FM201 Classic string sounds, with hybrid patching, plus a lovely tweakable interface - great stuff!



Waldorf Largo | £175

Review FM217 Waldorf take their Blofeld sound and technology and create a powerful and unique soft synth. Check it out.



Native Instruments Absynth 5 | 179Euro

Review FM220 The super soundscaping synth with a much improved feature list and GUI.



Lennar Digital Sylenth1 | €139

Review FM208 This simple-to-use, Virus-like synth comes packed with a great set of presets.



Novation Nocturn | £69

Review FM199 Once you integrate this Automapping wonder into your studio, you'll wonder how you lived without it.



Moog MP-201 | £400

Review FM211 MIDI and CV control in a unique one-of-a-kind package. LFO generators and USB MIDI are just some of the other great features.



Akai LPD8 & LPK25 | £45 each

Review FM224 A better keyboard design and build than its rivals. Shame about the short throw rotaries.



Korg nanos | from £36

Review FM209 The keyboard let's the series down, but these portable controllers are still a bargain. They're bundled with great software, too.



Behringer BCF-2000 | £140

Review FM153 Eight 100mm motorised faders for such a low price, this is still a great controller.

Gear Chart

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Monitors



Event Opal | £2,498

Review FM215 Easily the best active monitors you can get for this price. Our reviewer bought a pair and the rest of the FM team want a pair too!



Focal JM Labs Twin 6 BE | £829 each

Review FM206 These are some of the best sounding speakers we've ever heard. Worth every penny.



Genelec 8040 | £1,000

Review FM181 Genelecs are always a favourite with FM and most of our experts use them so it's no surprise that we love these.



Samson Rubicon R5A | £235

Review FM181 Trustworthy for reference monitoring but priced at an unbelievable level. Get some in.



Acoustic Energy AE22 | £899

Review FM201 For accurate mixing, these are one of the best sets we've used. Very highly recommended.

Keyboard Controllers



M-Audio Axiom Pro 49 | £318

Review FM216 Our reviewer found this to be the most tightly integrated DAW controller ever.



Novation Nocturn 25 | £190

Review FM221 A well-rounded well-priced controller that does plenty of great work with Automap 3.3.



Korg Kontrol 49 | £319

Review FM160 Great keys and pads, and its looks and build elevate this above the competition. But there are easier to set up controllers out there.



Akai MPK49 | £299

Review FM197 A well made deck that's the control section from the legendary MPC with 49 keys strapped to the front. Sleek.



CME VX5 | £499

Review FM192 It's built like a tank and adds some awesome motorised faders into the mix. An excellent professional choice.

Audio Interfaces



M-Audio ProFire | £359

Review FM202 A brilliant interface that includes the great Octane Mic Pres, making it a superb recording solution at an amazing price.



MOTU Traveler | £795

Review FM177 Came out on top in our FireWire group test. Enough outs and ins for any project studio and still portable too. A real all-rounder.



Apogee Duet | £329

Review FM200 Getting the quality Apogee sound on the move is now easier than ever thanks to this tiny silver wonder.



RME Fireface UC | £746

Review FM219 Robust reliability, rock-solid build quality and the trusted RME sound. Plus it's now on a lovely USB connection.



Metric Halo ULN-2 DSP | £1,279

Review FM206 Great sound, onboard DSP and some of the best pres we've ever heard inside an interface.

Effects Plug-ins and Sound Manglers



Rodec / Sherman Restyler | £649

Review FM219 A live filter that sounds good enough for the studio. Missing MIDI, but worth a look.



Moog MoogerFooger MIDI MuRF | £419

Review FM220 The old MuRF filters combine with the attractive features of MIDI and software patch editing.



Peavey ReValver MkIII | £179

Review FM208 This amp-modelling software let's you delve deep into the amps circuits for true soft-modding.



Native Instruments Guitar Rig 4 | 179 Euros

Review FM221 A stack of new amp and microphone models make this a tasty upgrade at a great price.



Electro-Harmonix Voice Box | £160

Review FM213 Give this a decent input and it will output robot voices or perfect harmonies with ease.

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**PMC DB1S-AII** | £2,056

Review FM225 You get what you pay for with these monitors. Adding a PMC sub will help you feel the real bottom end though.

**KRK Rokit RP5 G2** | £270

Review FM205 These are so nice to work with our reviewer bought a set for his own studio. Great value monitors with a great punch.

**Adam A5 Studio Monitors** | £499

Review FM209 Though they're at the budget end of the Adam range, these compact near-fields still deliver.

**APS IO Active Monitors** | £919

Review FM216 These provide an honest listening experience that could threaten the big boys.

**Focal Professional CMS65** | £1,230

Review FM215 The natural and detailed sound of Focal, delivered in a compact and affordable package.

**Edirol PCR500** | £200

Review FM189 Great-looking, sturdy, Roland-style 'board. Laden with controls and a cool software editor for making set-ups for all your plugs.

**Novation 49SL Compact** | £269

Review FM193 The stripped-down alternative to a full-size SL. Cheaper, but still packed with unique features.

**NEW ENTRY****Akai MPK88** | £600

Review FM226 A few minor issues considering the high price, but a great weighted hammer action keyboard redeems this controller.

**M-Audio Mid Air 25** | £199

Review FM181 Not only can you sling it in a bag, but you can also stride to the front of the stage thanks to its wireless power too.

**Korg microKontrol** | £275

Review FM143 Great build quality and looks and while its reduced-sized keys are an acquired taste, it's certainly more portable as a result.

**Novation nio 2/4** | £149

Review FM196 Well-built, jack-of-all trades portable solution for guitarists, producers and DJs. Complete with an awesome software bundle.

**Mackie 1220i** | £799

Review FM224 This hybrid mixer and interface covers all recording bases in a neat package, with the added benefit of Pro Tools compatibility.

**Focusrite Saffire 6 USB** | £163

Review FM225 A fantastic interface for the studio or for anyone looking to get into digital DJing or Ableton Live

**Presonus FireStudio Mobile** | £269

Review FM224 Not the cheapest mobile interface, but great I/O make it worth a look.

**Steinberg C12** | £226

Review FM222 A tidy package that works well as an introduction to the DAW recording environment. But, lack of MIDI let's it down.

**Boss SL-20 Slicer** | £175

Review FM205 There are many ways of chopping up audio, but this convenient stomper will work both live and in the studio.

**OTO Biscuit** | €529

Review FM225 Gorgeous design details and fantastic for anyone who fancies a bit of lo-fi 8-bit computer game crunch in their music.

**TC Helicon VoiceTone Synth** | £225

Review FM221 A few teething problems, but this is still a fantastic hardware vocoding and tuning tool.

**Audioease Speakerphone 2** | €400

Review FM217 This creative and comprehensive speaker emulator adds air to your sounds and mixes.

**Avid Digidesign Eleven Rack** | £789

Review FM222 It's a guitar processor that makes re-amping a breeze. Plus it's a Pro Tools interface to boot!

Gear Chart

1

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Performance Samplers



Korg microSampler | £436

Review FM219 Easy to use sampling with some clever extras. Another micro-dominator from Korg.



Akai MPC 5000 | £1,549

Review FM203 The 5000 isn't perfect, but it's without a doubt the best pad-ridden studio-in-a-box on the market. Check it out.



Roland SP-555 | £410

Review FM195 The latest in Roland's line is packed with features. A durable and flexible partner for the loop experimentalist.



Roland SP-404SX | £289

Review FM220 This new update tweaks the original SP-404 but lacks anything really special, so it doesn't climb any places in our chart.



Electrix Repeater | £649

Review FM117 Used by our current fave Imogen Heap for building whole tracks, this discontinued unit still has a healthy second hand market.

High-end Audio Plug-ins



Celemony Melodyne Editor | £319

Review FM222 A plug-in that has the potential to change music production forever. A killer tool for every genre.



Lexicon Native Reverb Bundle | £1,174

Review FM225 The motherload of all reverbs brings the original digital algorithms straight to your DAW.



NEW ENTRY

Pro Audio DSP DSM | £200

Review FM226 An incredible multi-dimensional EQ and dynamics processor that works magic!



UAD 4K SSL Plug-ins | from \$199

Review FM215 Brilliantly modded pieces of SSL goodness that are begging to be on your UAD card..



Brainworx BX Digital | €398

Review FM200 There's no other plug-in quite like BX's top of the line mastering tool – incredible software.

Field Recorders



Tascam HD-P2 | £729

Review FM186 Built to last and definitely the pro's choice. A multitude of formats and mic settings and superlative sound too.



Roland R-09HR | £259

Review FM204 This flagship recorder will produce crystal clear, 24-bit 96kHz recordings, all from the palm of your hand.



M-Audio MicroTrack II | £229

Review FM202 Not only does this new version look better, but it's also cheaper. A superb update.



Yamaha PocketTrak | £260

Review FM202 This ultra-compact 2GB recorder is a really useful weapon in your recording arsenal.



Edirol R-44 | £499

Review FM205 Record four tracks simultaneously via its quality pre-amps. If you need the flexibility it does the lot and more besides.

Microphones



Newmann Retro NR47 | £999

Review FM225 Despite the choice of name, this mic definitely delivers the classic sound. Bargain.



sE X1 and Project Reflexion Filter Bundle | £169

Review FM223 Unbelievable value for a robust recording solution.



Blue Bottle Rocket Stage One | £600

Review FM222 Interchangeable capsules make this great sounding mic even more of a must-buy.



Lauten Audio Horizon Mic | £649

Review FM213 This mic is a serious competitor to classic models that sell for many, many times the price.



AKG C214 | £450

Review FM205 As part of the classic AKG family, this mic sets itself up nicely to be a recording bargain that holds its own around the studio.

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eBay Classic Retro Finds

**Roland HS-60** | £250

Released 1984 Same guts as the Juno-106 but the ugly built-in speakers mean it's often overlooked.

**Korg EX800** | £100

Released 1984 This rack-mount version of the Poly800 has a similar sound to the Roland Juno but with the added bonus of a sequencer.

**Yamaha MK-100** | £30

Released 1983 Bargain analogue style workstation that has limited synthesis options but a great programmable drum computer.

**Yamaha TX7** | £80

Released 1983 With DX7s back in vogue, get your hands on the true hardware sound at a fraction of the price with this desktop module.

**Sequential Circuits Multi-Trak** | £250

Released 1984 Easier to program than a Six Trak with a better sequencer – a gem find.

Ways To Stand Out

**Snyderphonics Manta** | £398

Review FM218 Space-age-style control with incredible good looks and amazing control possibilities.

**Yamaha Tenori-on** | £599

Review FM193 The amazing lights-in-a-frame synth 'n' sequencer that'll test the way you think about music. Grab one while stocks last.

**Jazz Mutant Lemur** | £1,799

Review FM166 Techni-coloured touchscreen controller. Why not put a camera on it feeding a projector?

**Percussa Audio Cubes** | 399 Euros

Review FM207 Expensive, but one of the ultimate ways to stand out when performing electronic music.

**Moog Etherwave Theremin** | £300

Review FM207 Even 50 years on, people will still gawp as you flail your arms around making Sci-Fi sounds.

Digital Audio Workstations

Best all-in-one solution

**Logic Studio** | £399**Review FM218**

The home studio regular and all-in-one studio package goes V9.1 adding 64bit support – if your Mac can handle it.

Best features include:

- > Incredible time-stretching with Flex Audio technology.
- > New amp designer and pedal board options for guitarists.
- > The best and biggest range of 'built-in' plugs and synths of our favourite DAWs.

Good and bad:

Fantastic Flex Audio raises Logic's appeal even further and despite that stealthy price increase to £399 it remains a bit of a bargain all told.

Best combo of ease and power

**Cubase 5** | £499**Review FM212**

Cubase 5 sees Steinberg lower the price and raise the plug-in and feature list. VariAudio, Batch Export and new effects plug-ins all come bundled with 5.

Best features include:

- > The new VariAudio Melodyne-style pitch editor.
- > Plenty of built-in plugs to get you creating professional tracks from the moment you install the software.

Good and bad:

Although Cubase is playing catchup in terms of both bundled content and price, it can't be argued that it's only getting better. Loyal Cubase users rejoice – Cubase 5 is a winner.

Best for recording audio

**Pro Tools 8** | £319**Review FM210**

The industry standard DAW gets a fresh modern update with a brand new GUI, enhanced MIDI editing capabilities, and a heap of new instruments and plug-ins.

Best features include:

- > For mixing, recording, processing and editing audio there isn't anything easier to use or more stable and reliable.
- > Now that it's MIDI is finally up to scratch, it's a great choice.

Good and bad:

Great performance and stability with tempting upgrade offers to a HD system. Well-conceived though limited plug-ins.

Best for jamming and creating

**Ableton Live 8** | £315**Review FM214**

Bigger and better than ever. If you like chucking loops together and experimenting then this is for you. Flexible and creative, it'll spark ideas you wouldn't otherwise have.

Best features include:

- > Instantly beat-match any audio and trigger samples in time. DJs can use this instead of decks.
- > Flexible routing and modulation options let you mess and mangle.

Good and bad:

It's a dream for mixing and messing. It's getting a little costly (thanks to that bulging library content) but the cheaper versions remain a bargain and a real studio essential.

Best bangs for your bucks

**Sonar 8** | £349**Review FM207**

Updated from the much loved Sonar 7, this new version adds even more features and amazingly puts less pressure on your CPU due to a streamlining of it's core. It's a firm favourite with PC-based producers.

Best features include:

- > Beatscape – a fantastic slicing and warping groove-based beat and drum machine.
- > The TS-64 Transient Shaper is a simple but brilliant plug-in addition.

Good and bad:

A continuous effort to streamline and an incredible amount of features make Sonar 8 a great choice DAW on PC.

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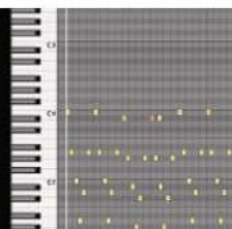
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