

Mini Reviews

The latest musical bits and pieces racked and rated



Plug-In Alliance Pro Audio DSP: Dynamic Spectrum Mapper Version 2 | €329/€49 Upgrade

www.plugin-alliance.com

For those of you who read the review of the original Dynamic Spectrum Mapper in *FM*, you will already know that this plug-in has some pretty fancy processing capabilities.

Using the Capture button the DSM takes the dynamic characteristics and frequency-domain of any audio material and applies them to a very sophisticated large-scale multiband compression process. Because of the very large number of bands it means that even highly dynamic audio can be enhanced without the usual compression artefacts, and big, explosive moments can be dynamically controlled without pumping, or dulling the highs.

When used on individual instruments and voices it's possible

to have very fine control of the overall character of the sound, and it makes for an incredibly efficient and transparent de-esser on even the most sibilant of singers.

Version 2 has the addition of a Wet/Dry control so you can use very extreme compression settings and still blend in a little of the original signal in parallel.

The ability to map sounds from one song to another means that it can be a rapid method for creating continuity over a complete project with anything from a lead vocal to drums, or even whole mixes. Overall, it's a great audio tool and a real time-saver. It's also a free update for anyone who bought v.1 after August 1st, 2012. **Stuart Bruce**

10/10

Samplr | £2.99

www.samplr.net

Now that Apple's iOS has matured into a serious platform for music-makers, certain trends have become apparent. We've been impressed by all kinds of apps from cheap utilities through to expensive controllers and full-blown DAWs, but the common thread which links most of our favourites is that they take advantage of the multi-touch capabilities of Apple's devices, offering functionality which would be impossible to achieve on nearly every other platform.

Marcos Alonso's Samplr for iPad and iPad Mini leaps straight onto our list of must-have music apps. As the name suggests, this bargain-priced

app focuses on sampled audio, allowing recordings to be manipulated in real-time by sliding fingers across waveform patterns on the screen.

The results are immediately impressive. Samplr's seven multi-touch play modes each offer different approaches, all of which are useful and genuinely musical – Slicer mode, for example, chops a sample into segments to be played back individually; E-bow mode offers a basic form of granular synthesis.

This in itself would be impressive, but the fact that six samples can be loaded simultaneously – each with six-voice polyphony – turns Samplr into a self-contained sample-based composition tool. Load drums and instruments into separate slots and you can build up multi-layered loops and patterns. Five effects (which operate on individual samples rather than across the entire output) provide the icing on the cake, allowing each sound to be treated with processing options including a filter, distortion and reverb.

At such a low price, Samplr is a must-have. **Greg Scarth**

9/10



Skullcandy Supreme Sound Navigator | £85

www.skullcandy.com

When we reviewed Skullcandy's Aviators back in *FM256* we enjoyed their low-end extension and vast stereo width. The Navigators are almost half-price, so we weren't expecting the same quality, but had high hopes for these slimmed-down

cans. And slimmed down they are – removing them from the box, they're more like folded sunglasses than headphones. Placing them over your ears immediately cuts the world's chaos to a minimum – making them perfect for travelling. Then we heard the sound. The bass is excellent, if hyped, but the highs are almost non-existent. 'Muddy' is a word that comes to mind when playing Electronic music. Testing on an iMac, it sounds as if there's a roll-off around 10kHz – not ideal for mixing. Switching to an iPhone 5, the slightly better impedance match makes a difference. The response is still muffled, but the high mids are clearer. They're comfortable, so a potential contender for over-ear use on the go, but it's a big 'no' for anything more pro. **Declan McGlynn**

7/10

