cm mini reviews

A rapid-fire round-up of add-ons, ROMplers and music gear

Audient
EVO Start Recording £199

Web audient.com
Format PC/Mac/iOS

We do love a good recording bundle here at *Computer Music*. Not only do you normally get a good smattering of gear, but generally the asking price represents a bit of a saving over buying the component parts separately.

Audient's new Start Recording bundle is clearly aimed at those new to computer music making but, given that its central component is the award-winning EVO 4 (9/10 and Value Award, **cm**282), you could – and they probably will – make the argument that this collection of gear could suit intermediate producers too.

A quick EVO 4 recap: it's a compact USB interface with two combi mic/line inputs at the back and one instrument input at the front for guitar or bass. There are two speaker outs and a central dial to rule them all – its function is generally determined making a selection on the top of the panel so it can control input and output levels (headphone if one is plugged in) and the mix between the input and DAW. One

use is to play along and record with your songs using the unit's zero latency performance (not to mention its use in podcasting overdubs).

With the EVO's Smart Gain feature, that helps you avoid distortion on input recording, plus its pristine sound, it's fair to say that we loved the unit when we reviewed it (aside from wanting a slope panel option), concluding: "great value and one of the simplest and cleverest – solutions we've come across". Having it as this bundle's core, then, is already a great start.

Next up is the SR1 condenser mic. This general-purpose microphone is good for vocals (especially podcasting and general chat) and guitar and it will give you decent results on many instruments, especially with the supplied shockmount. OK, it's not up there with a Neumann, but neither is this bundle's price.

The final component – bar a useful XLR cable – is a set of cans in the form of the SR2OO monitoring headphones. These are comfy and reasonable sounding. Again you'll get better results by paying more, but this is all about 'starting', and with light versions of Cubase and Waldorf and G-Force instruments, it really is all you need for that – just add a decent magazine!

9/10

Template Mixing and Mastering
# The Ultimate Guide to Achieving a Pro Sound

£14.99

Web crowood.com

Billy Decker's mixing has helped shift 25 million records, mostly in the country and rock arenas, but his production methods apply to many other genres. His theory is basically that it's all in the template, that initial DAW setup that has channel settings, levels, plugin values all set up as you load a session up, allowing you to get on with the important business of mixing. He argues, very convincingly, that time spent setting up one great template – which might take up to a day to do – will save you hours at the mix stage (and he therefore advocates spending less than one hour mixing per track using this method).

It is indeed hard to argue with a man who goes into such detail – and there are some absolute gems of advice to pick up here. It's not completely perfect – you might find yourself arguing with the odd, more subjective point, and the mastering section doesn't really touch on streaming – but the brilliant and clear way everything is presented and the actual (hallelujah!) settings for your template laid out for you, make this essential for any mix engineer, or anyone striving to be one.

9/10
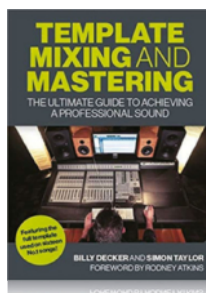
CME
WIDI Master £53

Web cme-pro.com, handinhand.uk.net
Format Mac/PC/iOS

Wireless MIDI is the order of the day here, with a device that can plug into the output of your MIDI controller (along with an additional plug that can connect as an input) and will then be picked up by your computer or mobile device via Bluetooth. If it works, it is surely one of those 'why haven't we seen it before?' inventions, and happily it does! You'll need to manually connect it up via your settings (we tested with a Mac and iOS via Cubasis) but the device simply appears as an external device MIDI option which you select and then play away on your keyboard for it to trigger whatever app or DAW you have loaded up. Latency is, as you might expect, an issue, although we managed to thump this down to 'barely negligible' by reducing our buffer settings. For hardware lovers, connect two devices to each piece of hardware and they automatically sync so one controls the other (it does only work with two devices, however), and for mobile lovers it gives you even more wireless connectivity. What with MIDI 2.0 and now this, there's a lot of life in the old format yet.

9/10