

## Sound on Sound

August 2007

Back in SOS December 2003 Oli Bell awarded E-lab's Smokers Delight the full five stars. Since then this laid-back hip-hop collection has become recognised as something of a classic, and I've certainly recommended it to musicians on a number of occasions. Following a certain amount of corporate shenanigans, E-lab have transformed into E-quipped Music and have now released a two-DVD sequel to Smokers Delight, Smokers Relight Deux, containing around 5000 loops and one-shots in WAV, REX2 and Refill formats.

The undoubted highlights of this library are the MPC Loops & Vinyl Breaks folders, which are quite simply the most incredible hip-hop drums I have ever come across on any sample library. Impossibly punchy kick-drums, razor-sharp crispy/crunchy backbeats, unstoppable groove, beautifully executed gutsy fills... Where can I buy a fresh bag of superlatives? It's like some freak experiment combined the power of Platinum Essentials, the groove of the original Smokers Delight, and the retro vinyl atmosphere of the Wall Of Vinyl series. If you're doing hip-hop and you don't check out these drums, you might as well pull your trousers up and retrain as a traffic warden! Furthermore, the beats aren't locked stylistically to the library's subtitle ('turntable jazz and loungin' hip-hop instrumentalz') as much as the rest of the library's content, so applications as far afield as urban pop or the more menacing end of dance music would be well within range.

The only downside of such killer drums is that they rather put the rest of the library in the shade, even though it would probably merit a five-star review on its own. The percussion loops (featuring tambourine, shaker, conga, and mixed percussion) share the level of musicianship of the main loops, and work well in their more supporting role. The basses are really weighty and solid, if, by nature of the umbrella style, a little pedestrian, and there are some surprisingly useful curios in the Organ Beatbox Loops folder.

I found the remainder of the loops (largely based around riffs on electric piano, flute, tenor sax, trumpet, or vocals) a little restrictive stylistically, due to their being swathed in masses of delay and reverb — perfect for the style as advertised, but not so hot if you might want to use the sounds in other contexts. Fortunately the one-shots folder has oodles of dry one-shot samples, which really showcase the library's characteristic smokey sonics. The beat-makers amongst us are also blessed with 1400 drum and percussion one-shots, in case any of us are foolhardy enough to challenge the loops already supplied.

In short, don't let the silly name put you off: this library is simply unmissable. Actually, forget that. Whatever you do, don't buy this library! That way I can have it all to myself.

5 STARS

### **Remix Magazine**

Jason Scott Alexander

DVD 1 of Smokers Relight Deux is crammed with 5,012 24-bit loops and samples in Acidized-WAV format (more than 7 GB), while DVD 2 contain 1,163 24-bit REX2 (also prepared for stylus RMX) and a huge 2 GB Reason 3 ReFill file featuring some 4,755 samples and combinator patches. Loops are divided between folders for MPC Loops & Vinyl Breaks, Music Loops & Chord Mix, mixed percussion and other instrument loops. Everything is conveniently shoehorned into 80, 90 or 100 bpm categories, which I love because it allows you to get inspired like a jamming musician, parleying one loop off another without worrying if they'll fit. The MPC vinyl-style loops cover hip-hop/dub and trippy jazz with enormous bottom end and tidal-size swing and swagger. Themed with variations and no-kick versions, they contain just the right amount of saturation, grit and grime to dirty their soul, but not without the occasional sprinkling of sugar on top to give them a crisp, modern dub-lounge aesthetic. While the Fender Jazz bass playing sounds doped out, the chosen amp tone was a little lackluster because it hardly changed throughout the 225 phrases. But the 395 heavily processed flute, tenor sax, trumpet and Rhodes riffs, chords and effects were mind-blowingly cool-enough so that it made me say, "Screw the beats," and focus on creating some minimalist pieces. Other novel treats include vintage Organ Beatbox patterns, processed reggae-dub percussion loops for accenting the main beats and a weekend's worth of single-instrument hits, chords, and riffs by key. But there's more! Beatmakers will get high stuffing their samplers with the 453 kicks, 300 snares, 96 claps and 341 hi-hats and other percussion. If weed-soaked dub floats your sub, check out this joint.

## Recording Magazine

Darwin Grosse

One of the most widely-used sample CDs is Smoker's Delight, a set of lusty down-tempo loops and hits. The maker of that collection has produced a followup, Smokers Relight Deux, that carries on the tradition with over 5000 samples in multiple file formats. I reviewed this sample set using Apple Logic Studio 8, Ableton Live 6, and Propellerhead Reason 3, and found a format that would work with each one of these products. DVD 1 contains the basic WAV files that were easiest for Live and Logic, divided into content groups by type: separate folders for Loops and Samples, with style- or instrument-related sub-folders for each. This collection will be especially handy for Reason users; in addition to providing Rex2 format versions of all the loops, the package includes a Reason ReFill that includes Combinator setups, ReDrum Kits, NN XT patches and even style-appropriate effects patches. This was, perhaps, my favorite way of playing with the collection, since I was able to move beyond the provided grooves without losing the feel and ambience that I love about the sample set. I blew an entire afternoon auditioning the ReFill; it is both huge and high-quality, and I just couldn't step away from the computer! I also transferred some of the single-shot WAV files onto my Akai MPC500 for a little hardware play. The samples transferred just fine, and I appreciated the ability to do some laptop drum programming without having to depend on my laptop computer. It's easy to see this collection making its way into the hearts and beats of many a programmer.

The Drum, MPC and Vinyl Break loops are very reminiscent of the original Smokers Delight CD, with gritty beats that cross styles from hip-hop to twisted jazz. These loops often have a low-fi quality, but avoid the genre-defining constriction that tag might imply.

The content that brought the original Smokers Delight disk to prominence was the beautifully effected Rhodes piano, trumpet, saxophone and flute riffs. Luckily, this is also found in Smokers Relight Deux, with a ton of jazzy content lit up with deep, dubby delays and lush reverb. The Rhodes loops and samples are especially inspiring: combining them with a gritty drum loop and one of the available matching bass lines will give you the basis for amazing tracks. The trumpet riffs have been greatly expanded from the original disks, with smooth blowing on A minor, C minor, D minor and F minor. These riffs are a perfect example of the inspirational quality of this sample collection – in cases where I used them with existing music, they would always lift the quality of the track, often inspiring me to change the existing sequence to meet the level of these samples. Wonderful stuff!

Smoke 'em if you got 'em

This is a high-value, high-concept package. It has all of the "grease" of the original Smokers Delight, but adds considerable value by increasing the number of ancillary instruments and riffs that can help elevate a production. It is the perfect package for anyone interested in bridging the worlds of hip-hop, acid jazz and low-fi, but doesn't want to be pigeon-holed into a stylistic dead end. I loved the original, and I love this disk even more – I just don't think I could overrate the efforts of Equipped Music on this one!

## **Keyboard**

Francis Preve

Ask any downtempo producer which soundware release they rely on most, and the answer is likely to be Smokers Delight. Its loops have appeared in countless tracks, films and television shows – I've heard 'em myself. So when Smokers Relight Deux crossed my desk, I jumped right on it. With two DVDs – one for 24-bit WAV audio and the other for REX2 loops and a 2GB Reason ReFill – Deux is an order of magnitude more ambitious than its predecessor. The WAV format DVD boasts over 5,012 loops that cover drums, percussion, bass, chordal material, stabs, and deeply organic effects. The amount of usable drum loops in this collection is mind-boggling. The MPC & Vinyl Breaks folders contain stellar trip-hop grooves worthy of Om Records or Ninjatune, and many of these come in flavors with subtle variations, fills, and "noBD" (no bass drum) versions.

Fans of filthy, crunchy drums will thrill to the LoFi Breaks and Organ Beatbox folders, both of which contain rhythms that are exquisitely distressed in all the right ways. Several percussion folders cover territory from shakers, tambourine, and conga, to reggae-tinged dub loops for those who actually do inhale.

Bass licks range from lightly funky to laid back and jazzy. The Music folders include luscious electric pianos, horn and flute snippets, and those atmospheric washes that characterize the modern downtempo sound. Many loops are swimming in reverb and delay, but that's part of the vibe. My only complaint is that key and pitch information is not included in the file names, forcing the user to match elements by trial and error. The Samples folder has individual kicks, snares, hats, handclaps, and other drums, as well as tasty flute, sax, and trumpet riffs. Unlike those in the Music folder, these riffs are organized by key, which makes it easy to match or retune an element to your

track. The second DVD includes all of the above material in exquisitely-crafted REX2 format for use in supported DAWs. In addition to individual REX loops, a gi-normous 2GB ReFill is for Propellerhead Reason, and includes Combinator, ReDrum, NN-XT, and effect presets. In my tests, the presets were sensibly designed and worked as advertised. The depth and scope of Smokers Relight Deux is extraordinary. Not only is it a worthy successor to Smokers Delight, it also eclipses the competition. If you're a downtempo fan, get that credit card out now.

## **Future Music US Magazine**

James Rotondi

While successful sample CDs are rarely regarded as "hits" by the public at large, within the producer community certain titles are definitely remembered as classics – after all, who hasn't lifted a sample or two from collections like L.A. Riot, Drum Crazy, Liquid Grooves or Methods of Meyhem? Included in that rarified sphere is E-Lab's 2003 Smokers Delight, a packed collection of smoky trip-hop loops and one-shots that perfectly nailed the aura of dusky new-millennium downtempo music. Ambient horn squiggles, lush Rhodes chords, crunchy beats and loads of distinctive scratches and turntable vocal snippets made Smokers Delight (the name was borrowed from a 1995 Nightmares On Wax album) a favorite of commercial music composers and bohemian hip-hop heads alike, showing up in countless TV spots and film scores.

Equipped Music's new Smokers Relight Deux certainly updates the musical zeitgeist to a 2007 perspective, but it also owes much to the original's post-Nineties lounge aesthetics. The similarities end there: For starters, Relight blows away the original in terms of sheer volume: while Delight clocked in at under 600MB, Relight's two DVD, 7GB soundest includes 5012 24-bit WAV loops and samples, 1163 24-bit REX2 loops and multi-Rex files (formatted

to work in Spectrasonics' Stylus RMX), as well as a 2GB refill for Reason 3 with 4755 24-bit Rex2, multi-Rex and WAV samples. Fans of the original will instantly recognize the browser layout: separate folders for "Music Loops and Chords," "MPC Loops & Vinyl Breaks" and other categories, collated into 80, 90 and 100 BPM folders.

The Reason refill includes Combinator, Redrum, NN-XT and even effect patches, but even if you stick to Acidized WAVs, you'll still find obscene amounts of cool Wurli and Rhodes loops on Relight, as well as tambourines, congas, shakers, and other percussion. While the bass loops suffered from a notable lack of gusto (too much weed, perhaps?), we really enjoyed the vibe of the wacky collection of Organ Beatbox patterns, Lo-Fi grooves and Dub drum loops. What's more, Relight's several folders of horn loops include trumpet, tenor sax and flute riffs, with clearly indicated key information (Cm, Dm, etc). Even just as a source of single drum hits, Relight is a serious treasure trove: the snare drum folder alone has over 300 different snares, and there are no less than 385 discrete kick drum hits. Put that in your drum sampler and smoke it...