

1010music Nanobox Razzmatazz £389

The Nanobox range gains a drum machine, but is it too small for making beats? **Simon Arblaster** reaches for his reading glasses

CONTACT WHO: 1010music **WEB:** 1010music.com **KEY FEATURES** 2x FM oscillator and 1 sample per pad, 64-step sequencer, touchscreen control **I/O:** MIDI Input: 3.5mm Type A/B auto sensing; MIDI Output: 3.5mm Type B; Clock Input: 1, 2, 4, 8, 12 or 24 PPQ selectable; Power: USB-C connection 5V, 500mA, 3.5mm audio input and output **DIMENSIONS:** 95 x 76 x 38mm **WEIGHT:** 115g



Last year, 1010music launched its Nanobox range with not one, but two digital synths, the Firebox (wavetable) and Lemondrop (granular).

Both had their plus... and not so plus... points. The big question is, does the new Razzmatazz FM drum machine/sampler suffer from the same issues as its forebears?

As with the Lemondrop and Firebox, the Razzmatazz is encased in a plastic chassis, with two rotaries, four menu buttons and touchscreen interface. At the rear, we're met with the MIDI I/O, Line I/O and Clock In 3.5mm jack ports, which are flanked by the USB-C port and Micro SD slot. In the box you get a 3.5mm to DIN MIDI adaptor, colour-matching USB-C to A cable, and a 32GB microSD card, pre-loaded with 120 presets and 112 wave files. Internally, it's much the same interface as before, but with a few changes. The biggest difference is the inclusion of a 64-step sequencer called the Super Stepper, instead of a keyboard. Each patch features eight pads that can support two FM oscillators and a WAV file each. WAVs can be either loaded in from the microSD card or sampled via the Line in for a maximum of 30 seconds per sample. Each of the eight pad sounds can be crafted with pitch and transient shaping tools as well as filtering, distortion and a bit crusher. There's also delay, reverb and a cabinet distortion effect available on the effects sends and a global compressor.

Unfortunately, the lack of screen real estate and minimal physical controls means that Razzmatazz does suffer from the same issues as the Firebox and Lemondrop. It's just a little too fiddly at times and not just because of the size. Maybe it's my age but I definitely struggled with the inconsistency of the menu controls. Of course, their deployment is entirely contextual, but with so many different layouts it takes quite a while to get used to. On top of that some options seem needlessly hidden. Especially the transport functions, which are revealed by pressing the Clock – that's the two numbers in the top right corner by the way. To me, having to resort to accidentally happening upon or reading a manual to access basic functions is annoying. The Super Stepper, however, has been well thought out. It allows you to see



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all the steps of each pad at once and cycling between each sound is a cinch, though it will require delicate digits to hit the right steps on the grid. Where this drum machine/sampler really stands out is with the sound engine; the FM engine/sampling combo gives you so much to play with and combined with the effects, you can really get some gritty, noisy sounds from it. Sampling and processing sounds aren't too much of a chore either, despite the aforementioned size issues.

Menu quirks aside, Razzmatazz could be a great addition to live setups, especially if you're already using a pad controller as it won't take up a lot of space. It's a shame there's no onboard battery, but that's easily remedied with a power bank. For the money though, it's more expensive than both Novation Circuits, which offer way more sequencing flexibility. And it's on a par with Korg's Drumlogue, which is more versatile in

the sound engine department but can play but not record samples. The saving grace for Razzmatazz is that it's both a drum synth and sampler and as such is actually quite good value. The small screen may be too annoying for some, but there aren't too many pocket-sized drum samplers out there with this sort of sonic power and expandable storage. **FM**

FM VERDICT

8.3

A tiny sonic powerhouse somewhat hampered by its diminutive footprint. Oh what we'd give for a bigger screen and onboard battery

THE PROS & CONS

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It's tiny, lightweight and quite rugged for a plastic enclosure

Intuitive sequencer that makes good use of the small screen

Lots of sonic possibility with the FM engine and sampling capabilities

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So much menu-diving, you'll need that manual by your side

The screen is too small for big fingers, so expect to use a controller

If only it was an inch bigger and had an onboard battery