

## GEAR REVIEW

# ROLAND SPD-SX SPECIAL EDITION



**£825** Got memory problems? Forget about it!  
The cornerstone of hybrid has just got an upgrade

WORDS: **STUART WILLIAMS**

### FINISH

Roland has got the paint brush out and given the SPD-SX Special Edition a smart red sparkle finish

### SOFTWARE INCLUDED

Included in the box is a free version of Ableton Live Lite to help you prepare samples and backing tracks for loading into the SPD-SX

### EXPANDED MEMORY

The Special Edition features 16GB of memory for you to load your samples into. That's eight times more than the standard SPD-SX



**P**airing an acoustic kit with electronics isn't new, but if there's a product that has helped push this forward, it's the Roland SPD-SX, putting computer connectivity, triggering backing tracks with a click and running custom samples within easy reach. Now it's been updated for a Special Edition version, with a facelift, red sparkle finish and eight times the memory of the standard edition, plus a free version of Ableton Live Lite in the box.

### Build

This is an upgrade to the standard SPD-SX, so memory and colour aside, it's business as usual in terms of specs and operation. For the uninitiated, here's a recap: you get nine playable pads, each of which can be assigned sounds in the form of included instrument loops, one-shot samples or acoustic or electronic drum and percussion sounds. For many, the biggest draw of the SPD-SX is its ability to import any wav file for triggering.

Additionally, there are two trigger inputs for connecting up to four mono triggers, and flexible connectivity such as dual output busses and USB (so it can act as an audio interface). Finally, there's the built-in effects section, which lets you process your sounds on the fly. These things combine to make the SPD-SX a powerful backbone of a live set. But in an age where we talk gigabytes rather than megabytes, even a low-spec phone has more memory than the original SPD-SX.

### Hands On

Roland's expanded 16GB edition (the standard edition is 2GB) solves a problem for busy, sample-heavy players needing to switch their samples for different sets, or even sets with multiple bands. Audio manipulation and workflow (ie: getting your sounds into the thing) is one of the key elements of using the SPD-SX, so it's great to see Roland including a free copy of Ableton Live Lite.

It's tough to critique a product that has become so important in many live set-ups. The

changes here are fairly simple, so the decision on whether to upgrade or not is also straightforward: do you need more capacity, and do you like red? Newcomers, however, have a decision to make – this represents a future-proof package, and the inclusion of Live Lite certainly helps. However, even 2GB means over three hours of continuous CD quality audio playback. **R**

**VERDICT:** A lot has changed in the six years since we first reviewed the SPD-SX. Roland itself now offers the likes of the TM-2, SPD::ONE series, and newly-launched RT-MicS and TM-6 Pro, all with elements of the SPD-SX's functionality. That said, the SPD-SX remains the best all-in-one solution of its type.

**BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★  
**PLAYABILITY** ★★★★★  
**VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★  
**RHYTHM RATING** ★★★★★

### Essential spec

Roland

#### PRICE

£825

#### TYPE

Sampling pad

#### PADS

9

#### TRIGGER INPUTS

Two stereo (4 mono triggers in total)

#### OTHER SOCKETS

Stereo audio in (mic/line, 1/4"), master out L/R, sub out L/R, phones, MIDI in/out, USB x2 (computer interface, sample import)

#### KITS

100

#### CONTACT

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