



Audio Ease Altiverb 7 XL

The first soft convolution verb has grown with host processing power but the latest iteration also adds a change of approach. **GEORGE SHILLING**

You may recall that Altiverb, the first widely available software convolution reverb, was named after the Altivec processor it used, which was part of Apple's G4 PowerPC. Computing power has moved on, and so Altiverb has evolved over time to work with other forms of DSP but Version 7 now brings a major overhaul of the interface and operation, along with a number of new bells and whistles that include 64-bit compatibility.

The 'Regular' version is a stereo in and out native plug-in, supporting RTAS, AU, VST, and also (perhaps less commonly these days) MAS. The XL version adds TDM and surround, plus sample rates beyond 96kHz. Instead of myriad different TDM plug-in versions for different maximum reverb times, management is now handled more elegantly from a menu within the plug-in, although if you have Accel and Process cards there are different versions accessible for each, which helps you manage the processing distribution. Authorisation is via iLok.

The plug-in window has been boldly restyled with a black/grey background using larger and clearer fonts and, thanks to hidden controls and pages, it is beautifully streamlined. The Reverb Time knob is still featured as the largest control but there is now a simplified row of controls for the other frequently used adjustments, such as level, basic EQ, Damping and Predelay. These sections each incorporate a button and chevron indicator that accesses further related parameters on a pop-out. For example, Predelay is now simplified into one knob, with the hidden section including separate gain knobs for Direct, Early and Tail, and the Reverse IR button, and so on. Predelay also comes with the additional welcome bonus of Tempo sync from the session, with a comprehensive choice of note values. There is also a related Attack knob to smooth the onset of reverb. Along the top of the window are a series of named pages that access sections such as full EQ with interactive graph and the Stage Positioner. The main window defaults to showing a left-right split of a photo of the space alongside the waterfall graph. And yes, the cool 3D VR pictures are all still available!

At top left the name of the loaded space is shown clearly, along with basic information in the description. Clicking anywhere here opens a separate resizable browser window. The IRs are categorised, and clicking on a category takes you deeper to the impulse response collections. The categories and these



subfolders are represented by fairly large photos by default, but there is an alternative text-only list view. A search feature enables you to tap in keywords (for example, 'wooden') to find appropriate settings. These can then be ordered in the window by name or size. There's also a 'Similar' function to find related settings if the chosen one is not quite on the money, results of which can be additionally ordered by similarity.

Third-party and User settings have their own sections and folders. I did initially struggle to get some old added-on favourites working. First, during installation I had foolishly chosen the old version 6 folder as the location for user settings in the vain hope it would find all my old favourites. This made things a bit messy and didn't work anyway. And then it transpired that folders within folders are no longer accessed by the Altiverb file system, so I had to quit and do a bit of reorganising. But on the plus side, impulse response loading is now gapless and seems faster, and it's lovely to see the clear, colourful pictures before loading.

A big improvement is that rather than faffing around with Snapshots you can now automate every parameter, even the choosing of IRs. However, the Snapshot feature is retained on a separate page for those who prefer to work in this manner. The Modulation section seems to add some pleasant subtle LFO chorus to give bland IR decays a little colour; this is useful to enrich and vary the reverb a little when required.

Altiverb's main strength has always been its IR library. Audio Ease have been collecting impulse responses from around the world since 2000 and these are being added to all the time at the rate of

about one a month. Generously, Audio Ease provides the whole library and any new additions for free to Altiverb owners. With an already bountiful collection, I would hardly ever check the website for new ones — after all, when I started working in studios, the 9 programs of the AMS RMX-16 seemed like plenty of choice to me! But it's often inspiring to find something new, and Version 7 makes this rather easier with its in-built News page, where you can download and use additions to the library directly without even needing to open a web browser or restart.

Samples of real spaces are divided into Music and Post, the latter including more than 20 different car interiors, for example. Highlights of the music collection include the new 13 seconds long Kings Chamber of the Great Pyramid in Giza (not necessarily suited to all styles of music!) and auditoria such as



Sydney Opera House. There is a fine selection of famous recording studios too. Entertaining collections of reverb gear new and old, plus oddities such as bucket, washing machine and vacuum cleaner hose will keep users experimenting for hours.

If you want to create your own impulse responses, the process is now simplified. A page is provided within the plug-in to drag and drop audio files for easy creation of new settings. And you can get creative by dragging and dropping any audio files here for some fun effects.

Over time an oft-levelled criticism of convolution reverb is that it doesn't provide the rich, bright, grainy, trashy or sophisticated sonics of 80s digital reverbs, and there has been a trend towards plug-ins that model classic digital reverbs, not to mention the ongoing success of hardware such as the Bricasti M7. To this end, a Brightness knob introduces an algorithmic synthesized bright reverb, tailored to the shape of the chosen impulse response. The theory is that this can bring the best of both worlds — with all the smoothness of real rooms. This is useful and helps the reverb cut through the mix a bit, although it is subtle until you turn the knob up full.

As well as the option of Reverse reverb, there is also a Gated Reverb section. Here you can dial in a length of time or use a Tempo sync setting — this sounds great, and manipulating the Wooden Church IR with a short gate and a healthy dose of the Brightness knob provided rich 80s-style drum reverb.

This latest update incorporates many welcome improvements and is quite a step forward. The upgrade is free for anyone who purchased from 2010 onwards, and Audio Ease has clearly been working hard to sustain Altiverb as the number one convolution reverb plug-in — and succeeding. It's still the Daddy. ■

PROS

Much neater interface; bountiful additional features including Gated Reverb, Brightness Algorithm, Full Automation; easy IR import; ever-improving Convolution Library.

CONS

Streamlined interface means some features now default to hidden; embedded folders no longer accessible in browser.

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