

# Emagic Space Designer

Convolving reverb software plug-ins have taken a step closer to the masses with the release of this Logic plugin, which offers a wide range of sampled hardware and software reverbs. **GEORGE SHILLING** has gone in search of a cathedral.



**A**UDIO-EASE'S ALTIVERB CONVOLVING reverb software plug-in genuinely broke new ground, but with current computers easily able to provide the necessary horsepower, other contenders are starting to emerge. Emagic recently launched this one, the stylish Space Designer as part of Logic 6.3. This and later versions of Logic include the plug-in with a 28-day demo period and a handful of demo presets. When the plug-in is purchased, however, a CD of presets and Impulse Responses opens up a whole world of interesting possibilities. And as well as samples of spaces and reverb units there are 'synthesised' settings.

Space Designer appears in the Logic Reverb plug-in folder, in Mono, Mono-Stereo and Stereo versions. Altiverb still has the advantage for surround users with its Quadraphonic modes. The interface is more typical of recent software instruments from Emagic, rather than its older, bold blue plug-ins. It has a very modern appearance, although the small fonts and mostly mid-grey lettering on a light-grey background make it hard to read the legending and settings. And there is a lot of wasted space on the 'panel' which takes up nearly a third of my 17-inch 1280 x 1024 display.

However, there are a host of features that make this a sophisticated tool. On the stereo versions, an Input slider travels from stereo through mono to Xstereo, controlling how the reverb interprets the imaging of the input panning, ranging from true stereo reverb, blended input, to reverse-panned reverb. There are also output level settings for direct and reverb signals — irritatingly, the default setting has the direct level full up.

Next to the Input section you can select the IR

sample used, or select a synthesised IR. Sample rate can be halved, quartered or eighthed here, with an option to preserve the length or have it follow the sample rate. This is a nice feature, whereby much longer settings can be achieved from any given IR at the expense of some high frequencies, or you can keep the same length but chop off some high end.

There is also a Length setting; shortening this simply chops the end of the used portion of the sample. The front can also be chopped by virtue of a clever implementation of the Predelay control. Adjusting upwards it can provide up to 200ms (not particularly generous) whereas reducing it below zero can move the start point inwards, the range displayed as a percentage of the total length. Of course, as you chop past the initial reflections, the level would normally be greatly reduced with most reverbs. However, the German boffins have thought of this, and there is a setting 'rev vol compensation' that effectively normalises the response.

The main area in the middle of the window is a multipurpose zoomable graph. A waveform display is always visible, showing the shape of the reverb decay. Superimposed on this are lines with nodes that can be grabbed and dragged to adjust different aspects. The initial display is the Volume Envelope. This includes settings similar to those on a typical synth ADSR envelope, but with a couple of extra nodes that influence the shape of the decay.

You can radically change the decay shape with this and the settings are also adjustable numerically in the section below the graph. Optionally available when using IR samples is a powerful filter envelope, with graphic frequency control similar to the volume

envelope, and knobs controlling resonance and mode — HP, BP and 6 and 12dB LP. Other useful features include a low shelving EQ and a Reverse button that instantly flips the IR for some superb backwards-sounding reverb. When a Synthesised IR mode is selected, the Volume and Filter Envelopes become more essential, and an additional graph is superimposed for a Density Envelope, with a slider for reflection shape. This can be manipulated and shortened to provide different types of digital reverb, and an adjustable Stereo Spread becomes active. Repeated clicking on the 'Synthesised IR' button seems to generate new random responses.

The procedure for creating IRs is pretty straightforward (apart from lugging gear to the nearest cathedral!) and although there is no Space Designer manual, there is a very good sampling tutorial available on the Emagic website that includes a sine-sweep signal for creating your own IRs. Once recorded, these can be imported and decoded from within the plug-in, which simply asks you to load the recorded file, then the sweep file. Decoding takes a matter of seconds. Of course, once decoded they are in a proprietary format, but you can use original audio file responses of user-submitted samplings from various websites.

The CD of settings took an extraordinary amount of time to install, but it was worth the wait. Whereas Altiverb's supplied IRs tend to favour public buildings and churches, the Emagic team seem to have spent most time sampling hardware and software digital reverbs. These are bountiful, and are stored under thinly disguised names — I'm sure you can guess what a Lexington 48 is sampled from. There is a large folder of 'outdoors' settings, and every room at Emagic HQ. Perhaps more churches and halls will appear in the future, but there are plenty of great sounding presets here. This a great plug-in. ■

## PROS

Volume and Filter Envelope functions; temporary start and end editing of IRs; bountiful presets of digital reverbs.

## CONS

Logic 6.3 users only; few real halls provided; no surround mode; no manual available.

## EXTRAS

Emagic is offering the first Logic version optimised for the 64-bit Apple Power Mac G5.

The new Logic Platinum version is available as a Version 6.2 update and is a requirement when running Logic on the G5. All registered owners of Logic Platinum 6.x can now find this as a free download.

Emagic says users will experience a dramatic increase in speed and performance when using the combination of Logic Platinum 6.2 and the G5. The ability to work on larger projects than ever before, including more software instruments, audio tracks and effects plug-ins, is said to be the main benefit.

## Contact

EMAGIC, GERMANY:  
Website: [www.emagic.de](http://www.emagic.de)