

# McDSP V5 Classic Pack

The V5 update has brought with it some tweaks and tucks to McDSP's emulations of vintage equalisers, compressors, tape machines and channel amplifiers.

GEORGE SHILLING gets stuck in.

McDSP plug-ins are quietly popular with many a great mix engineer yet it has been quite a wait for the native/AU versions that are now in place. It was clearly time for a spruce-up of some of the older plug-ins which are now more than 10 years old. As of V5, there are now two main product lines — HD and Native — with both supporting RTAS, AudioSuite and AU, and HD additionally supporting TDM. AAX plug-in support will be added in 2012 as a free update to V5 owners.

The Classic Pack comprises four basic plug-in types: Analog Channel, Compressor Bank, FilterBank and MC2000. Prior to V5 the variations of these comprised no less than 19 different unique plug-ins. V5 reduces this to a more wieldy nine plug-ins. Other McDSP products remain essentially unchanged with V5, but these four all have a smarter look, with new knobs and graphics, but still, of course, with a familiar green colour scheme.

Analog Channel 1 and 2 have been updated to equivalent new versions 101 and 202 — Analog Channel 101 is console emulation while 202 is tape emulation. Gone are the VU meters, replaced with smart LED-style meters. Previously, each VU was accompanied by a selector knob to choose input, output or GR display. Now there are stereo input and output VUs and a separate Gain Reduction meter, making it easier to see what is happening to your audio. (However, the three LEDs accompanying the Drive knob have gone). You could previously switch to LED meters, but there was no gain reduction display. The Comp knob has been rebranded as Curve and still works just the same, but the new rationalised layout no longer shows the resultant compression curve on a graph. The 202's graph is smaller, but uses smarter shading rather than two lines to show Bias along with Rolloff and Bump.

The adjustment knobs are now larger and easier to use, making the 202 a larger window than the old 2, but conversely the plug-in window size of the 101 is reduced compared to the 1 for stereo versions. This is due to McDSP ditching the separate left and right Input and Output knobs, a common theme with all four plug-ins and no great loss. If you really need to have separate control over levels, this is easily achieved outside the plug-in, or by instantiating a dual-mono version. Unfortunately, all these revamped Classic Pack plug-ins have also abandoned the handy polarity reverse button that used to be found within all McDSP plug-ins. I'm not sure that was a good decision; it is often handy to be able to check the phase, and I often tended to use a McDSP plug-in because I knew it had this feature. Sonically, these are very similar to the old versions, but when pushed very hard, I discerned a subtle difference: a touch less tendency to crackle, and a fraction more smoothness now.

CompressorBank's original four versions have been reduced to three now and are labelled 101, 202 and 303. The old CB4 comprised a collection of emulations and that job is now rather better satisfied by the all-

new 6030 Ultimate Compressor available separately (*Resolution* V10.6). However, the CompressorBank presets still contain a number of hardware-derived settings, and studying the manual reveals what these cryptically-named settings are meant to be emulating. The old CompressorBank offered a choice of knobs or



sliders, the latter being the default. But that choice has gone; the new ones all use the new larger rotary knobs. And Output Gain, which used to span +/-24dB, is now 0-48dB.

CB101 comprises a fairly conventional looking set of controls. The Attack, Release, Threshold, Comp (Ratio) and Output Level are joined by the less common variable Knee and Bite, both now promoted to proper knobs instead of hidden pop-up sliders. Bite is Bi-directional Intelligent Transient Enhancement, which essentially allows some overshoot separate from the Attack setting to better emulate vintage units. There are also Auto (which disables the Attack and Release knobs), Rel 1 (pure peak detection) and Rel 2 (adaptive release) settings. CB202 is similar but adds a parametric sidechain (or inline) EQ/Filter band. CB303 further adds an EQ/Filter band at the output that can operate dynamically. This can be handy, for example, in reducing the harshness of singers when they belt it out, without influencing the more softly sung sections. Historically I was sometimes deterred from using CompressorBank by the wildly varying and sometimes inconsistent threshold and level settings in some of the presets. The same set of presets is supplied here, and I couldn't hear any sonic differences between old and new versions.

FilterBank used to provide versions with varying numbers of EQ bands, but these have now been simplified in favour of maximum configurations for each type. The B1 notch filter has been abolished — the separately available NF575 now performs that function rather more comprehensively. Shelf and Parametric

bands now boast +/-15dB gain instead of 12, and the calibrations have apparently changed slightly, because matched settings between old and new versions don't entirely cancel out when phase-flipped.

E606 comprises HP and LP filters, two Parametric bands and two Shelving bands, great for general EQ duties. Here, the shelving sections include Peak, Slope and Dip settings for tailoring the curves to exact requirements or to emulate vintage EQ units. Clicking on these in the old versions used to bring up a hidden horizontal slider. Now, clicking on the numbers brings up a text entry box or, if you are left with the mouse and can find the little arrows, you can

nudge the settings but this is very tricky to do as the numbers scroll way too quickly across an unimaginably tiny and narrow area of screen dragging. The other small niggle with the FilterBank plug-ins is that Factory Default now has each band separately bypassed for no apparent reason. F202 replaces F1, F2 and F3 and comprises HP and LP filters each with four different curves from 6 to 24dB per octave. P606 is simply six 20Hz-20kHz parametric bands.

The MC2000 multiband compressor has been graphically improved with a bigger window — the old versions were rather cluttered looking and many controls were on hidden sliders. Now

everything has its own knob making setup a little easier. The two graphs showing crossover points and compression curves remain static (you can click and drag crossover points), whereas I do prefer the approach of rivals where the graph moves to show gain reduction. The MC2000 comes in three varieties with 2, 3 and 4 audio bands. This remains the case, with the new versions named MC202, MC303 and MC404. Each band is essentially a CompressorBank plug-in, so the controls are familiar and better laid out. The metering is also now improved with each band's level meter now switchable between input and output level. ■

## PROS

Rationalised selection of plug-ins; still sound great, some subtle sonic improvements to AC and FB; full provision of old versions for backwards compatibility; AU versions; ultra-low latency.

## CONS

Polarity reverse has disappeared from all plug-ins; no new presets; FilterBank Shelving tweaks are difficult to adjust; sliders replaced by knobs.

## Contact

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