

Waves V-Series and MaxxVolume

Waves have gone soft — instead of Diamond, the new number one collection is the Mercury Bundle. This contains 91 processors and everything in their range except SSL emulations. Included are the new V-Series and MaxxVolume plug-ins — both presently exclusive to the bundle. **GEORGE SHILLING**



FOLLOWING ON FROM its modelling of SSL hardware, Waves has turned its attention to the next obvious candidate and its ever-popular classic processing represented by the V (Vintage? NeVe?) plug-ins. However, the N-word is not mentioned and the GUI is oddly (but attractively) rusty brown rather than battleship blue. But the manual freely mentions Neve model numbers and the suite comprises two EQs and a compressor.

The V-EQ3 Equalizer is modelled on the 1073 and 1066 modules, and like those, the plug-in offers selected fixed high and low cut-off points and a bell-shaped curve, with +/-18dB gain. High-pass filtering switches from 45Hz to 360Hz. A useful meter (dBFS) is provided, along with an Output level knob. As with the SSL plug-ins there is an Analog button that turns off the distortion and noise (yes, hiss is added!) characteristics of the modelling, and there is a separate EQ bypass so you can employ the analogue character without EQ. Switching both buttons off is similar to overall plug-in bypass. On an HD Accel each instance uses just 11% of a chip.

EQ frequency selectors add points in-between the 1073 values, and the High shelf is selectable between 10 and 12kHz. This top-boost seems slightly more aggressive than the Universal Audio UAD 1073 emulation, but it's pretty close. The analogue modelling adds a nice subtle syrup to the sound, it's slightly subtler than the UAD one, it can be indiscernible depending on the source, but there is some sweetness added here. Low end boost seems slightly more solid and slightly less squidgy than the UAD, but it's big and very warm, and you get the 1073's 110Hz and the 1066's 100Hz along with the other frequencies. The bell-curve also seems a little more pokey than the UAD version. Overall this is a fantastic sounding EQ, it's a little sharper and less furry than the UAD 1073, (although this depends somewhat on drive level).

The V-EQ4 models the 1081 module. Like the V-EQ3 the panel layout is reversed compared to the sideways hardware reissues. With the 1081's far more comprehensive specification, there are no extra frequencies here, this is a straightforward copy. Adding HF shelf boost definitely makes things thinner and more edgy than similar settings on the UAD 1081 which is again furrer, even in SE guise, but of course comparisons should be taken with a pinch of salt, as furriness is level-dependent (*Ladies and gentlemen — George Shilling! Ed.*) Bottom end is very fat and Neve-like, but overall the UAD seems to add a little



more of this, plus some honk in the midrange. I marginally preferred the UAD, but the V is not far off, differences are subtle.

The V-Comp Master Bus Compressor models the 2254, and the controls are broadly similar although the layout is different. The Analog control here varies from Off to 25, 50 and 100%. Even at 100% this can be subtle depending on programme type and levels, but these settings can be useful as they introduce subtle hiss and noise. Noise is at about -80dBFS, but chaining additional instances adds 10dB more noise per instance! On vocals and acoustic guitar the analogue-style warmth is immediately evident, with a clean input signal things can be warmed nicely, it never gets horrible, and is pretty convincing. Compression-wise, this sounds as fat and warm as one might hope. I missed the 33609's fastest compressor release setting which this lacks, and this plug-in is based on the earlier 2254 without variable Limiter attack. But otherwise, all expected controls are present, including the useful De-Ess setting that works great — an excellent subtle de-esser for those who hate de-essers! This is a great sounding plug-in, if you like compression you should enjoy this.

MaxxVolume combines four different level-related functions into one easy to use plug-in, combining technologies from Waves' L2, C1, Renaissance Vox and Renaissance Compressor plug-ins. Central to the plug-in is a large bargraph 'Energy' meter. The Low Level Compression brings up the level of quiet signals, much like an upward expander, while the High Level Compressor works more conventionally.

The Leveler is a slow acting compressor that is reminiscent of cassette recorders with auto-gain recording level. There are no controls for attack or release timing on any section, and the High Level compressor does have a tendency to pump if pushed. The Gate is actually a mild-mannered downwards expander, so it is more forgiving than might be assumed. This is probably more of a tool for broadcast and post than for music. However, as a quick fix for reducing dynamic range on any signal, it works pretty



well, and set accordingly can give a desirable boost to individual sounds in a mix situation, or keep a handle on dynamic signals when recording.

The graphics of all these plug-ins are excellent and clear, even better than other Waves plug-ins, although the V-Comp and MaxxVolume take up an unnecessarily large amount of screen space — Waves seems to have adapted its designs to match trends towards larger screens. All of Waves' software is rock solid, and if you can put up with slightly tricky authorisation processes and the much-maligned WUP, these are super tools. ■

PROS

Great sounding emulations; comprehensive multiple formats supported and good compatibility with different DAW hosts; large easy-read graphics.

CONS

WUP expensive; Mercury Bundle enormously expensive; these plug-ins only available with Mercury — real 1073 is cheaper and probably lasts longer...

EXTRAS



The Mercury Collection from Waves features 91 processors with more than 200 component plug-ins. It includes the entire Diamond bundle, the L-Series Ultramaximizers and Multimaximizers, the GTR Guitar Tool Rack, the complete 360 Surround Tools collection of 5.1 processors, Waves Tune pitch correction and DeBreath breath eliminator, IR1 and IR360 parametric convolution reverbs, Z-Noise dynamic noise reduction, the complete Renaissance series, Q-Clone, the X-Series of archive restoration tools, and the Transform Series. The MaxxVolume plug-in combines technologies from the company's L2 Ultramaximizer, C1 Parametric Compressor, Renaissance Vox and Renaissance Compressor for music production and broadcasting.

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