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Snapshot Product Reviews

Oct 1, 2005 12:00 PM

SOUNDTOYS ECHOBOY VERSION 1.2
Echo/Delay Plug-In
EchoBoy from SoundToys (formerly Wave Mechanics) is an ingenious echo/delay plug-in for Mac OS X and Pro Tools HTDM/TDM/RTAS/AudioSuite. With its imaginative and musical design, comprehensive parameters/options and editable Style section, EchoBoy emulates new and classic echo units, creating just about every conceivable type of delay effect.

EchoBoy has four modes: Single Echo, with a single delay value and up to two outputs; Dual Echo offers two delay times and two outputs; Ping-Pong is similar to Dual with two delay times and outputs, except that one delay (Ping) feeds the other (Pong); and Rhythm Echo for creating a rhythmic sequence of delays using up to 16 taps from a single delay line. Rhythm Echo's GUI has a grid of up to four measures long (4/4 time) that shows each tap's delay time, level, panning, repeats and number of sequence recycles. Besides a page of main parameters for each mode, Tweak submenus allow mode-specific fine-tuning.

Delay times are entered by keystrokes or up/down delay adjust buttons, with times expressed in milliseconds or as musical note subdivisions (sixteenth, eighth, quarter, half-note); you can also have dotted or triplet notes. Master tempo is set (in bpm or milliseconds) by typing in values, tapping or by following session MIDI tempo. A Groove knob sets the delay output's groove anywhere between shuffle and swing; a Feel control shifts the onset of the first echo between Rushin' (ahead of the beat) or Draggin' (behind the beat).

Adjusting the relative timing and feel of echo and its repeats can affect how the echoes mesh with the music and the feeling it imparts on the song. EchoBoy is the first processor to offer precise control over timing/feel and the sound character of both the echo and the way the repeat echoes devolve in fidelity.

There are 30 specific Styles that change the quality of the echoes. These range from pristine Master Tape echo, to harder-sounding Digital Delay echo, to Tube echo — where saturated echoes get thinner with each repeat — to the low-fi repeats of Telephone. There are more than 300 factory presets, each with a style that's editable in its Tweak submenu.

On a lead vocal track, I used EchoBoy in Dual mode with each output panned left/right and each having slightly different delay times. I adjusted the Feel knob to the Draggin' side so that the eighth-note delay echoes were late. The Accent controls let me make the even repeats (2, 4, 6, 8, etc.) hotter than the odd-numbered repeats. I then used the Width control to distance the lead singer's main track from the delay. For a low-fi effect, I used the Tel-Ray Style, turned the Saturation control down, added high frequencies and increased Wobble to add a wowing varispeed to the echo.

At $495, Echoboy is a sure winner and a must-have for anyone's plug-in list. If you can dream it up, EchoBoy can do it with style.

SoundToys, 802/951-9700, **www.soundtoys.com**.
— Barry Rudolph

A DESIGNS REDDI
Single-Channel Tube DI
Great DIs are like expensive cars. You can go through life without driving one, but once you do, you'll never want to go back. At $750 retail, A Designs' REDDI is in the high end of direct input devices and has made me a believer, as well as other audio pros who used it during this review.

REDDI weighs a hefty 10 pounds and is 14.5 inches long. The vented all-steel case provides cooling for the
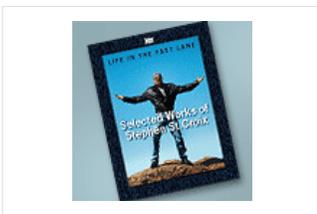
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