



REVIEWS LEXICON MX200

All that Lexicon quality for a bargain £200!



ON THE DVD

Lexicon MX200

Lexicon's latest budget effects box has a couple of tricks up its sleeve. **Jon Musgrave** is on hand to check them out...

DETAILS

PRICE £200

CONTACT

Tel: 01707 668222
Web: www.lexiconpro.com

TECH SPEC

Presets: 99 factory, 99 user
Inputs / Outputs: 1/4" TRS balanced / unbalanced
Frequency Response: 20Hz to 20kHz +/-1dB at 1kHz
THD+N: <0.007%
Dynamic Range: >107dB
Converters: 24-bit, 48kHz
Audio Processing: 24-bit
Software: Win XP / Mac OSX - VST / AU
Power: 9V PSU

THE PROLIFERATION OF software effects has meant a serious decline in new hardware boxes, and rightly so, you might say. But if you're working in live sound or simply don't feel particularly enamoured with your software effects, a tidy little box of tricks is often the best bet. And if it's hardware you're after then you may as well go for a quality manufacturer like Lexicon.

Well respected for their fancy high-end stuff, Lexicon has for many years delivered good budget

lets you edit and save programs on your desktop (or indeed back to the MX200 itself). And the included VST/AU drivers let you bring up the MX200 as a plug-in within compatible software packages.

As you would expect from Lexicon, the emphasis is on reverbs (there are 16 basic types included). But you'll also find delay and modulation effects, and dynamics courtesy of dbx, with 99 factory presets organised by category.

Like many dual-processor units, you can configure the signal routing

To keep things clear and simple, each processor gets its own front-panel controls, and the matrix indicates which effect is loaded into which processor. Throughout the labelling, you'll find that green LEDs have been used to indicate processor 1, and red LEDs processor 2. Plus there's a useful audition button, which plays a selection of samples so you can test the patch you've loaded.

In use

I think I've probably used all of

"IT'S EASY TO UNDERESTIMATE JUST HOW GOOD A BUDGET REVERB CAN BE"

equipment too. With hardware prices seemingly at an all-time low, it's easy to underestimate just how good a budget reverb can be.

Chip off the old block?

At £200 you may consider the MX200 to be just another addition to Lexicon's more affordable line (I'm thinking MPX110 and MPX550 here). You get a similar dual-processor set-up with 24-bit converters and S/PDIF operation.

However, what you're looking at in addition is a box that's been designed to better integrate with your computer. Using a standard USB connection, the MX-Edit software

lets you edit and save programs in different ways. So in some cases the two effects will be independent of each other and in some cases not. It's worth bearing in mind that with a single stereo output, stereo signals get blended on the way out.

Lexicon's reverbs over time, and I remain a fan of their mid-priced MPX1. Hardly surprisingly the style and character of the MX200 reverbs falls within those familiar boundaries. So in addition to the more typical



Why muck about with the front panel controls when you can edit the MX from your desktop



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ALTERNATIVES

TC ELECTRONIC M ONE XL

£449, 7/7/10/8/9, FM124
TC's most recent dual-engine box offers a taste of their flagship reverbs at a fraction of the price.

www.tcelectronic.com

YAMAHA REV500

£349
The REV500 is a highly regarded box, but a little pricier than the MX200.

www.yamaha.com

BEHRINGER V-VERB PRO

£250 8/10/9/7/9, FM157
The V-Verb Pro is probably the cheapest modelling reverb you can get and can be picked up for much less than the list price.

www.behringer.com

plate and hall algorithms, you get 'room', 'chamber' and 'ambience' for more up-close applications, with 'gated', 'reverse' and 'arena' offering more interesting spaces.

Overall these sound as you would expect. For me the shorter style verbs (ambience, studio and room) do good work, with the longer styles (large hall and plate) lacking the undesirable flutter you can get on reverb plug-ins. Overall I think most of the reverb presets are too bright, and I found myself heading for the 'liveliness' control. On the subject of controls, they've been kept to an absolute minimum, with only three per effect (plus a tap-tempo). This means that in the case of a reverb you're looking at pre-delay, decay time and liveliness. I would have liked some kind of low frequency cut too. Anyway, that's what you get, and with no hidden menus, simplicity has been favoured over flexibility.

The modulation and delay effects also do the job, with the chorus and phaser particularly pleasing. The dbx dynamics, although quite simple, add extra facilities you might not expect from an effects processor.

As mentioned, the MX200's USB connection allows two types of remote control. The first (MX-Edit) lets you edit and save programs from the desktop. No doubt a useful feature, but maybe a little wasted on a unit with so few controls. However, the second option, the VST/AU plug-in, looks more promising.

At first I thought this might be a

Hardware plug-in

WITH THE MX200 plug-in relying on physical connections for its audio, you could simply set up a standard effects loop. However, most software packages usually offer some form of plug-in for interfacing with the outside world. In the case of Logic Pro, this is called I/O (found under the 'helper' folder).

To set up the MX200 on a bus, insert one of these before and one after the MX200 plug-in. In the first one leave the input source blank and set the output destination as the hardware output feeding the MX200. In the second one set the input option as the hardware input receiving the MX200 output, and leave the output box empty. Then simply open the MX200 plug-in, select the preset you want and make sure the mix controls are set to maximum. And the great benefit is that the plug-in delay compensation sorts everything out, so aside from the negligible processing delay in the MX200, there'll be no latency. Magic!



Someday all hardware boxes will be controlled this way...

complete USB solution, but you still need to connect the MX200 for audio, so you'll need some spare ins and outs on your computer (S/PDIF connections are perfect candidates). Within your host software, the MX200 editor appears in the plug-ins list, and combined with the appropriate routing (see the box out), should be pretty simple to set up.

Try as I might I had unreliable results on my PC, but was successful on my Mac. One thing that is worth mentioning is that you can only access the MX200 from one source – either one plug-in or the stand-alone editor. Once up and running everything seemed simple. It was good to see the MX200 settings

loading with my song, and that I could automate parameters.

Conclusion

The MX200 will certainly interest many people purely because of its plug-in feature, but overall I get a sense that this is a bit of a halfway house. The USB function is good, but we should really be seeing audio and data running down that cable. And as I've already said, you really don't need a desktop editor for such a simple box. But maybe given the price, I'm asking a little too much, and I don't want to detract from a box that is good value. Even so, it would be nice to see reverb manufacturers employing the same sort of trick that Waves have with their APA boxes. Let's hope it's not too far away. FM

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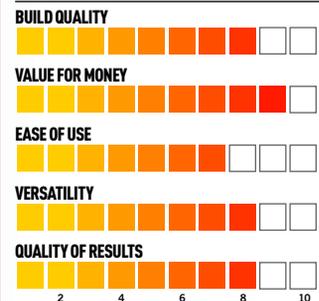
Audition effects easily with the onboard sounds

ON THE DVD



Drums with reverb on snare: small hall, large hall, room, gated, drum hall, ambience, spring, chamber.
Synth with insert effects: chorus, flanger, phaser, tremolo/pan, rotary
Clap impulse: studio delay, digital delay, pong delay, mod delay, reverse delay, large plate, arena

VERDICT LEXICON MX200



An affordable yet good quality multi effects unit with the benefit of software control