

**WHAT IS IT?**

A suite of reconfigurable audio processing modules brought together in a complete master-processing system.

**CONTACT**

Who: iZotope  
Web: [www.izotope.com](http://www.izotope.com)

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Powerful preset management
- 2 Sheer depth of features
- 3 Looks and sounds great

**PRICING**

Ozone 5  
**\$249**  
Ozone 5 Advanced  
**\$999**



# iZotope Ozone 5 | from \$249

**Bruce Aisher** takes a listen to Ozone 5, and considers whether it really is possible to master at home

**M**ost will not deny that the profusion of audio plug-ins, increasing CPU power, and major changes in the way music is recorded and mixed have lead to ever-increasing numbers of producers demanding access to 'professional' mastering tools. Of course, in reality a mastering system, be it hardware or software, is ultimately composed of a number of processing units – most of which will be familiar to the modern producer.

The system approach merely frames them in a context that will optimise workflow (and hopefully the final result). In fact for iZotope – who produce a range of well-respected mixing, mastering and restoration tools – at nearly ten years old Ozone is one of their most mature products.

Its last incarnation, Ozone 4, hit the shops three years ago, and was very-well received at the time. Ozone 5 brings with it cosmetic redesign, a raft of processing improvements and additions, as well as a split into two versions – the Advanced version comes at a considerably higher price-point, but offers even more features.

## Global Warming

The Ozone philosophy is built around providing a collection of processing modules. These modules are then combined within one plug-in. The main Ozone 5 interface allows you to access a wide range of ready-rolled preset categories ranging from general and genre-specific mastering to post-production and individual channel processing applications. The presets are

a good place to start for the novice, but the real masterstroke here is the ability to control the amount of processing (from 0 to 200%). There are also presets and associated 'Amount' sliders for every module. If you wish to delve deeper you can change the order of processing, and dip into a wealth of adjustment parameters – some available within the module window, and others in the exhaustive preferences section.

In terms of the modules themselves you get EQ, reverb, multi-band exciter, dynamics and stereo image tools (all capable of independent and freely configurable crossover management), post-EQ (new in Ozone 5), and a maximiser. The options available within each module are both relevant and extensive, including the use of both Stereo and Mid-Side processing (even in multi-band configurations). The maximiser also includes a wealth of post-processing dithering options.

Installation is as straightforward as it should be. iZotope offer two different authorisation options – either via a web-based Challenge and Response system or utilising an iLok dongle. I tested Ozone using Cubase, and the plug-in was installed in both VST2 and VST 3 versions (although they are both functionally the same). Ozone 5 Advanced also (for the first time) installs separate plug-in versions of each processing module for use in a mix-based context.

## Master & servant

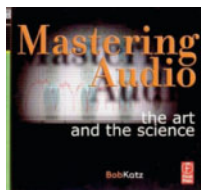
While the standard version of Ozone builds on what has gone before in substantial ways, the addition of Ozone 5 Advanced (at a premium) offers the individual component plug-ins mentioned above as well as increased metering flexibility (with undocking and full screen options) but also ITU and EBU standardised loudness metering and comprehensive spectrogram and spectrum graph modes. The 'Advanced' version of Exciter adds additional tube-modelled modes, the Stereo Imager includes a Stereoize function for widening mono (or very narrow) sources, and Dynamics has wider range of signal detection options. This version also expands the number of Reverb algorithms and controls, add 'Transient Recovery' to the Maximizer, and alternative analogue-style and variable-phased EQ options.

Even without the more specialised features of the 'advanced' offering Ozone 5 is a real improvement to an already solid product. The new interface style, while still familiar really helped the editing process. More use is made of colour, and the plug-in windows is larger, though it would have been good

## Mastering – A Brief History

Mastering – that most potent of words – conjures-up both praise and disdain, depending on context. In fact, it also appears to impress and confuse in equal measure.

Traditionally, the process of mastering predominantly involved the preparation and transfer of a mixed track (or album) from tape to vinyl. Later this also took in DAT, CD and other mediums, and more recently MP3s and other compressed digital media. A mastering engineer might tweak the sound to



improve its playback across as many systems as possible, and for non-classical styles manipulate the dynamic range for more punch.

However, along the way, and especially since the late 1980s, there has been ever more use made of compression and

limiting (its more extreme cousin) to increase perceived loudness. This squeezing of the dynamic range in pursuit of loudness (where peak level remains the same but the average level increases) has been dubbed the 'Loudness War'. Unfortunately, the easy availability of digital software processing hasn't helped the cause.

For a more detailed exploration of this, and of mastering in general, I recommend reading Bob Katz's renowned book, 'Mastering Audio'.

of the pre-existing modules, which can only be a good thing.

## In the zone

The truth is, I love Ozone 5. While Ozone, or any other mastering solution for that matter, cannot replace a dedicated professional mastering

engineer, with great ears, plenty of experience, working in a good acoustic environment with top quality monitoring, but it offers a dazzling array of

options for making your mixes sound great, especially with so many well-designed presets to get you started.

The advanced version is a lot more expensive, but also acts as complete plug-in bundle besides all the other extra pro-level features. Whatever your views on 'home mastering' I urge you to check out the downloadable demo and see what it can do for you. **FM**

# Ozone cannot replace a dedicated mastering engineer, but it offers a dazzling array of options

to resize the processing windows in similar vein to the metering display. In terms of its sheer depth, in my view Ozone 5 is a long way ahead of competitors like IK Multimedia's T-Racks. It steers away from presenting a vintage-style interface, taking a more

represent a complete overview of the entire mastering process, and alongside the context sensitive help system, assist in demystifying the huge number of parameters. As well as adding more editing options, iZotope have also improved the sound quality of a number



Ozone 5 has a brand new GUI to go with its new features

## SPECS

### Minimum Requirements:

**PC:** XP Service Pack 2 or later, x64, Vista, 7  
**Mac:** OS X 10.5.8 or later, Intel dual core CPU

### Plug-in formats:

Pro Tools 7.4+ (RTAS/AudioSuite), VST, MAS, Audio Unit, DirectX

### Plug-in host compatibility:

Pro Tools, Cubase, Nuendo, WaveLab, GarageBand, Logic, Audition, SONAR, ACID, REAPER, Sound Forge, Peak, Ableton Live, and many more

For use of the scrolling 3D Spectrogram, Ozone 5 Advanced requires a graphics card that supports Open GL 2.0.

## ALTERNATIVES



### IK Multimedia T-Racks Deluxe

£499

Described as a 'High-End Mastering & Mixing Suite', T-Racks takes the analogue modelling route. Well-regarded, but not as all-encompassing as Ozone.

[www.ikmultimedia.com](http://www.ikmultimedia.com)

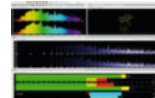


### Waves Grand Masters Collection

\$1,600

A formidable collection of standalone plug-ins, that cover most bases in the mastering realm – from maximising and 'vintage' processing to metering.

[www.waves.com](http://www.waves.com)



### Steinberg WaveLab 7

£508

A complete editing, mastering and preparation system that includes many built-in plug-ins as well as Sonnox-designed restoration tools.

[www.steinberg.net](http://www.steinberg.net)

## FutureMusic VERDICT

### STABILITY



### VALUE



### EASE OF USE



### VERSATILITY



### RESULTS



A worthwhile upgrade to a strong product – the 'go to' mastering plug-in for many producers.