

**WHAT IS IT?**

Upgrade to the popular T-Racks Mastering Suite

**CONTACT**

Who: IK Multimedia UK  
Tel: +44 (0)800 0934066  
Web: [ikmultimedia.com](http://ikmultimedia.com)

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Fully featured, yet easy use with preset starting points and chains
- 2 Priced sensibly with upgrade path from older versions and preset transfer
- 3 Professional, ready to release results

**PRICING**

Deluxe  
**£349**  
Standard  
**£139**  
Crossgrade  
**£211**



# IK Multimedia

## T-Racks 3 | from £139

T-Racks returns to the fold with new features, faithful recreations of vintage modules and more. **Dan 'JD73' Goldman** masters Version 3

**T**-Racks has long been a popular software mastering solution. While the fresh perspective of an experienced

mastering engineer is invaluable, it's great that IK multimedia are producing software for those on a limited budget, or that want to get to grips with mastering themselves. But are the results comparable to real world mastering with a professional engineer?

For those used to the previous versions of T-Racks, the original and very decent processors (compressor, multiband limiter, soft clipper, and EQ) are still available (on their own in the standard version) but sound even better due to the higher oversampling rates being utilised. The Deluxe version of

T-Racks 3 includes these four original processors plus five new ones.

T-Racks 3 can run as a standalone plug-in that can import several tracks at once (for mastering albums) and as an integrated plug-in (for use in your DAW on as stereo mix or on individual tracks). IK are well known for their accurate and versatile modeled/sampled emulations of classic gear (Amplitube and Samplemoog are two great examples) and T-Racks 3 Deluxe continues to build and expand on this modeling expertise, with new modules based on classic vintage designs.

**Module madness**

There are nine modules that can be chained together in any order for

mastering or mixing (4+4 in serial plus four in parallel at a time, if you're crazy enough!) This flexible design allows lots of sonic versatility. Putting an EQ after or before a compressor can yield very different end results, and it's great to have this choice.

Three of the five new modules in the Deluxe version are modeled on classic compressors and EQs while two are new highly accurate digital designs. Up first is a recreation of the Fairchild 670 Tube compressor, and man does it sound good – suitably vintage and analogue, with a smooth and musical texture that enhances the original signal and never sounds bad.

IK Multimedia are employing their newly developed modeling technique SCC (Sonic Character Cloning) in these new modules for the first time. This not only models the overall sound of the units in question but also they're unique behavioural characteristics as well.

I'm happy to report, the results are very authentic and having used and heard the real versions of these emulations in various studios over the years, they really do sound fantastic and have bags of that vintage mojo too! These are definitely up there and perhaps even surpass the best modeled vintage recreations out there currently.

The new Opto compressor is an altogether more subtle affair, though it still has character but it's less goopy

than the Fairchild and preserves the initial transients of sounds a little more than the Fairchild model. Great for applications where more transparent/accurate compression is needed.

The last of the new compressor/limiters is the Brickwall Limiter that is designed to be as transparent as possible for mastering applications and adds loudness without peaking out your master buss. There are also several algorithms available with different characters. I love that there are preset chains and settings available as starting points for mastering and also to process individual elements/instruments within a mix as well.

## EQ for you

New EQs onboard include a highly specified 6-band linear phase EQ that allows natural and surgical EQing and there's also a lovely vintage equaliser module (modeled on the fabled Pultec EQP-1A) which is known for its beautifully smooth highs and lows and also works as a broad shelving EQ. This recreation sounds spot on. It's warm and smooth and musical – everything you'd want from a vintage EQ.

## T-Rack's Metering

The meter area is located along the bottom of the plug-in screen and includes many types of visual feedback.

The first meter is a stereo digital peak meter with accurate digital 'over' indicators. Next up is a very useful perceived loudness meter that has an optimal loudness zone, dependent on the type of genre or style selected

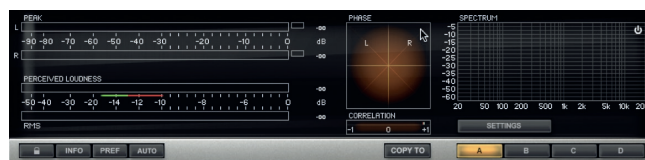
from the preset menu.

Under this is another meter showing the RMS level (Root Means Square) that gives an indication of average loudness of the track. IK advise playing commercial releases through these meters in order to gauge an ideal level for your own masters.

In the centre is a phase meter and a correlation meter that show how

balanced your track is in terms of stereo image and how wide or narrow that spread is. Again, IK recommend observing commercially released tracks to gauge how the meters should look.

Also, there's a spectrum analyzer that can be configured to show peak levels, rms, frequency and more. Comprehensive facilities to say the least!



as well which allows not only the L and R signals to be treated but also the centre channel, perfect for tweaking a vocal within a stereo file.

On top of all this, there's a very comprehensive metering section (see the *T-Rack's Metering* box) that gives

sounding plug-in suite suitable for novices and those with prior mastering knowledge/experience.

While I still believe pro mastering is best left to professionals, for those who want to learn about the mastering process or have limited budgets,

T-Racks 3 Deluxe is a fantastic product that provides high-quality results. Not only does it sound and look great, it worked flawlessly

on my Mac with no crashes and little CPU drain.

## T-Rad

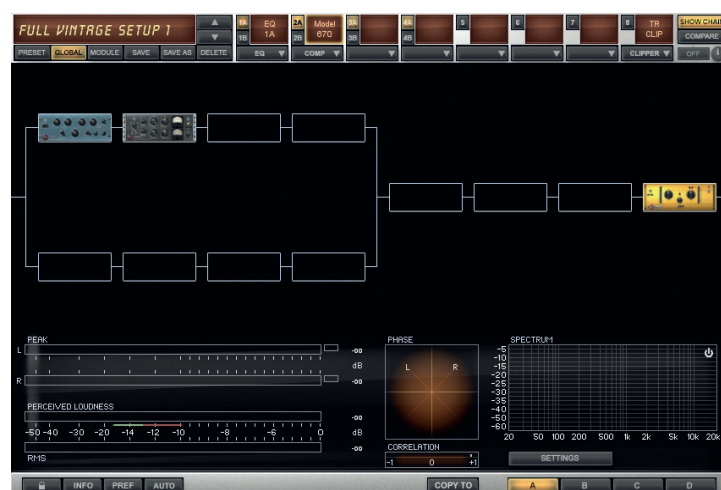
At a reasonable £350 cost for new users, T-Racks 3 Deluxe is a no brainer that everyone can find use for. While pro mastering is still worth the outlay, this software sounds very authentic and is capable of pro-mastering-quality results every time. **FM**

This is a versatile sounding plug-in suite suitable for novices and those with prior mastering experience

Another useful new feature is Compare. This allows accurate level matching and comparisons between your effected and unaffected track with volume matching. It's also worth noting at this point that many of the modules in T-R3 allow M/S (mid/side) encoding

excellent visual feedback, including a perceived loudness meter. The only obvious omission from the module selection, is a dedicated imaging processor for stereo widening.

So what to make of T-Racks 3? All in all, this is a versatile and faithful



T-Racks lets you run classic processing emulations in series or in parallel

## SPECS

### Software

Standalone or plug-in  
Compatible with Mac OS X (Universal Binary), and Windows (XP / Vista)  
Supported plug-in formats: VST, RTAS, and Audio Units  
ASIO (Windows) and CoreAudio (Mac OS X) compatible (standalone only)  
Configurable mixing/mastering chain – run up to 12 processors

### Processor list

Vintage Tube Compressor/Limiter model 670  
Vintage Tube Program Equaliser  
Opto Compressor  
Multi-algorithm Brickwall Limiter  
Linear Phase Equalizer  
Classic T-RackS  
Compressor  
Classic T-RackS Multi-band Limiter  
Classic T-RackS Clipper  
Classic T-RackS Equalizer

### Metering

Multiple scale precision Peak Meter, peak hold and digital Over indications  
Real Perceived Loudness Meter  
RMS Level Meter  
Hi-speed Phase scope with selectable display options  
Spectrum Analyzer with Peak, RMS and Averaging display options

## ALTERNATIVES

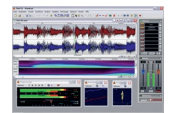


### iZotope Ozone 3

£119

Mastering suite with stereo imaging plugins, mastering reverb and a low price!

[izotope.com](http://izotope.com)



### Steinberg Wavelab 6

£399

Mastering and editing suite with VST plug-ins and restoration tools

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



### Waves Masters Bundle

£494

Comprises an EQ, the much used L2 ultramaximizer and a multiband compressor.

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

## FutureMusic VERDICT

### STABILITY



### VALUE



### EASE OF USE



### VERSATILITY



### RESULTS



With a little practice you'll be mastering your own music in no time. At this price, it's a no brainer!