INCLUDES AUDIO

vault.futuremusic.co.uk

WHAT IS IT?

Software-based mastering system with standalone and plug-in versions and new vintage processing modules

CONTACT

Who: Time+Space (iZotope)
Web: www.timespace.com
www.izotope.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Codec Preview 2 Upgraded Maximizer
- with IRC IV 3 Vintage modules

PRICING

Ozone Standard **£169**

Ozone Advanced **£339**



iZotope Ozone 7 from £169

iZotope's Ozone gets some vintage processing power in the latest update. *Bruce Aisher* checks out its old-school credentials

zone is firmly established as one of the best-known and popular dedicated software mastering suites – maybe because it has been part of the DAW pantheon for over 15 years, but certainly also due to its perceived effectiveness and quality of results.

As always, it is important to detail some disclaimers. Software won't replace a skilled, experienced and sympathetic human-being (in a decent-sounding room). Equally, it will not be able to turn a bad mix into sonic gold. However, mastering was once a technical necessity – transferring from one medium to another – but now it is largely viewed in more singular creative terms.

Computers and digital audio have changed the mastering landscape in many ways – technically and philosophically speaking. Recalling and tweaking mixes is much easier, yet it is prohibitive to 'master' a mix each time you make a change. Plus, there is a pressure to make demos more radio-ready/media-friendly from the start. The stark reality is that producers want access to mastering tools that streamline the process and make the 'black art' more accessible – even if common sense dictates that it's best to get a professional to do the final job.

Ozone fits neatly into this space. Most of the tools and processing it harnesses are not unfamiliar to the average DAW user, though bundling them together is a useful way of utilising them with one goal in mind.

Ozone 7 comes hot on the heels of Ozone 6 which represented a change in both aesthetics and functionality (but it did remove certain features as well). Ozone 7 sticks with this look and feel. Headline features are an updated Maximizer – traditionally one of iZotope's strengths – an improved Dynamic EQ, a Vintage Limiter module and the ability to export audio in an expanded range of formats. The advanced version of the software sees a larger array of 'vintage' elements – Tape, EQ and Compressor all now coming in old-school flavours.

Ozone 7 Advanced still allows you to load each module as a separate plug-in and includes iZotope Insight analysis and metering software, but a significant new draw will also be the Codec Preview feature. This is something I've used successfully in the past with Sonnox Pro-Codec. Given that so much music is being subjected to lossy audio coding, it is extremely useful to be able to hear how dynamic processes and audio encoding interact. The only real flaw here is the audible gap in playback when switching preview on and off.

Take it to the max

Whatever your views on the 'Loudness War', audio limiting has always had a

place in the audio mastering chain. iZotope have been at the forefront of harnessing novel DSP techniques to achieve more transparent, or musically sympathetic, maximisation as the final step (before dithering and conversion). Ozone 7 sees the arrival of the IRC IV algorithm, which utilises frequencyselective shaping, designed to reduce interference between different signal components - think of it as a sophisticated multi-band limiter. I'm a fan of the Ozone take on limiting, and IRC IV is another worthy addition.

Vintage flavour

The new Vintage Limiter module replaces the Tube option introduced to the Maximizer in Ozone 6.1, but with an expanded feature set. It is based on that tube and transformer laden classic. the Fairchild 670, and certainly adds another flavour. I'm not sure it warrants its own module though, as the 'analogue' part of the algorithm is still followed by an IRC I peak Limiter.

Ozone is a strong package. It is functionally very detailed, with clear workflow and a strong range of presets backed by excellent visual feedback and the ability to dig deep when

Going Vintage

Although the Vintage Limiter is include in Ozone Standard, vou really need to purchase the Advanced version to fully embrace the new suite of vintage vibes.

Vintage EQ is based on two well-loved Pultec modules and reflects the quirky functionality of the original units; while Vintage Compressor is a broadband compressor

with an adjustable detection filter and program dependent release. Although not a specific emulation, it is clearly influenced by the famed UREI 1176.

Vintage Tape attempts to recreate frequency related amplitude and phase changes, plus the saturation characteristics of an Ampex mastering tape machine. Unlike some other emulations,

it doesn't delve into the (theoretically) less desirable territory of crosstalk, hiss, wow and flutter - so this does mean that you will need to look elsewhere for a more completist approach to recreating analogue recording's golden years.

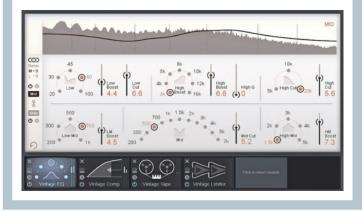
Overall, the results are good, albeit with the primary focus on mastering applications.

SPECS

System requirements PC: Windows 7, 8, and 10 Mac: OS X 10.8–10.11 (Intel only) Plug-in formats: RTAS, AudioSuite, 64-bit AAX, VST 2, VST 3, and Audio Unit Graphics card requirements: For use of the scrolling 3D Spectrogram in Insight, Ozone 7 Advanced requires a graphics card that supports Open GL 2.0

Minimum screen resolution

Plug-in: 1,159 x 614 Standalone: 1,166 x 827



Headline features are an updated Maximizer, improved Dynamic EQ and a Vintage Limiter module

required. I also respect iZotope for resisting the urge to make the new vintage elements look 'old', and keeping the focus squarely on listening. The standalone app is still no replacement for specialist software when it comes to CD preparation, but is useful to have.

It appears that the price difference between versions has been adjusted significantly for the better, with the premium version now being double the \$249 of Ozone 7 Standard (not the inflated \$999 of previous versions). This is good news for new users, but perhaps more than a little

irritating for those thinking of upgrading. Current users (especially those using Advanced) may choose to wait for Ozone 8... or 9.

However, if you haven't used Ozone before, you should certainly take the trial for a spin. The Standard version is excellent value in my mind. The Advanced version is also very good especially if you are looking to expand your plug-in arsenal and require more in the way of visual feedback - but I suspect it will divide some on its decision to 'go vintage'. FM

FutureMusic BUILD VALUE EASE OF USE VERSATILITY A solid update with more audio

flavouring modules and the excellent Codec Preview function.



IK Multimedia T-RackS Grand

480 euros

IK Multimedia have long embraced the vintage analogue path with T-RackS and offer an expandable system via their custom shop.

www.ikmultimedia.com



Waves Grand **Masters Collection**

A suite of 15 plug-ins appropriate to audio mastering, and covering digital and analogue-style processing and metering.

www.waves.com



MixGenius - LANDR

From \$9.99 per track

Controversial Al-based online mastering. Designed to make the process simple. but lacks much in the way of user control and is still an emerging technology.

www.landr.com

мР3

(a) 256 kbps