

INCLUDES AUDIO

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WHAT IS IT?

The latest version of UAD's powered plug-ins, offering three new processors

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 You can completely reshape sounds with Oxford's Envolution
- 2 EQ, widen, shape, mix and master with bx_digital V3
- 3 JMP 2203 great for guitarists and those seeking parallel distortion

PRICING

Oxford Envolution:

£189

Brainworx bx_digital V3:

£229

Marshall JMP 2203:

£149



UAD Software v8.5 Plug-Ins | from £149

UAD's v8.5 includes an envelope shaper, a new Marshall amp emulation and the latest incarnation of Brainworx's bx_digital. **Jono Buchanan** gets busy...

UAD's latest release finds the digital division of Universal Audio extending its partner program considerably. Via

Sony Oxford, the envelope shaper Envolution comes to the UAD platform, while the latest collaboration with Softube is an emulation of the Marshall JMP 2203 guitar amp. Last, but by no means least, Version 3 of Brainworx's bx_digital processor is available in both Mix and Master forms, allowing for controlled and impressive mid-side processing, among other applications.

Envolutionary steps

Sony Oxford's latest processor, Envolution, now comes to UAD, to join the other processors in the Oxford suite released in previous UAD versions. Envolution is an Envelope shaper which

lets you independently control the Transient and Sustain portions of a sound to enhance or soften the shape of the incoming signal. These two stages have their own dials offering dB offsets, so that if you want to enhance transients by 2dB, for example, you simply dial in this amount of gain.

However, things are considerably more flexible than this, as it's possible for each stage to be frequency sensitive, letting you boost or tame levels with a selective EQ curve to target only the frequencies you wish to process. The central area of the GUI provides a 'live' display of the incoming audio signal, while clicking the Freq button above or below lets you see the EQ shape for the Transient and Sustain portions.

Comprehensive envelope settings are provided for each stage, with both

sections offering independent Attack, Hold and Release dials, while a Mix dial in the output section allows for easy parallel treatments. This is particularly helpful as it's extremely easy to create wild, sharp treatments with Envolution which, on their own, can sound too extreme. Blending some of this shaping with the original source sound often works wonderfully, allowing you to add bite to percussive sounds in particular. However, applications go much further – adding Sustain brings up the body in a sound as it decays and works brilliantly on drum overheads where you want a denser, more saturated sound.

With its parameter set, Envolution can match the capabilities of 'other' processor techniques. It can be used as a quasi EQ, an alternative to Exciters and even as a kind of compressor, particularly if you soften Transients while boosting the Sustain portion. It might seem like a specialist plug-in but its applications are impressively broad.

Brains work

The original version of Brainworx's bx processor was voted 'plug-in of the decade' in these very pages, so V3 is built on some impressive heritage. Originally designed by Brainworx's founder Dirk Ulrich, it has become a go-to choice for mix and mastering engineers seeking mid-side processing, precision EQ treatments and 'specialty' processing, such as de-essing.

The most significant developments in Version 3 are that the options for each EQ band and filter sections have been expanded with extra slopes and types, while a 'proportional Q' mode gives the option for bandwidth to become narrower and more focused as gain is increased. This models the behaviour of SSL and API consoles and rewards bold EQ treatments. The Dynamic EQ section replaces the De-Esser section as Brainworx are, no doubt, keen to make users realise that frequency-sensitive gain reduction has applications beyond taming sibilant signals. Brilliantly, this now allows for gain increase (as well as reduction), so if you target a particular frequency and want to give it more pep, you can.

All of this builds on the existing heritage of the original bx, which continues to provide 11-band stereo EQ, with dedicated modes for mastering and recording, the latter offering a mid-side matrix for this popular microphone technique. Indeed, its capabilities in terms of widening (or

Brainworx's bx processor is already a legend in its own lifetime, and V3 is a welcome addition here

reducing) the stereo picture of signals is where it has found much favour; its Mono Maker is perfect for folding low frequency signals towards the centre of a mix, while its image enhancement tools are great for widening and exciting signals higher up the frequency charts.

Marching on

UAD plug-ins aren't cheap but Universal Audio's digital division is synonymous with offering some of the best plug-ins money can buy and its reputation marches on with Version 8.5 of its software. Envolution arrives here fairly



Rock On!



The JMP 2203 emulation is the fourth Marshall plug-in which Softube have developed for the UAD platform. It models Marshall's 1975 classic, which overtook the previously modelled Plexi as the centrepiece of Marshall's range. Like Softube's previous emulations, the plug-in is available via UAD's

Unison technology, allowing guitarists to plug directly into an Apollo interface and monitor or record directly through the plug-in, while it's also available at the mix stage for 're-amping' purposes.

As with Softube's previous emulations, the left-hand side of the interface provides control over the amplifier settings

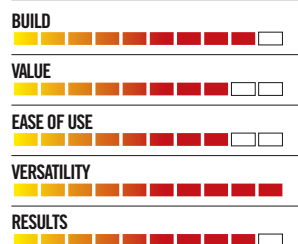
and the right offers a Channel Strip stage, which lets you blend two microphone signals (with 414, 57, SM7b and 251 options available) and tweak output EQ.

Beyond its obvious appeal to 'rockers', there's also plenty here for those seeking grittier parallel treatments for synths, basslines and drum parts.

quickly after its 'native' release from Sonnox, while the range of Marshall amplifier emulations is growing nicely (read more about

the JMP 2203 in the *Rock On!* box above), offering those using UAD's Console software another real-time amp emulator which can be monitored or printed at the recording stage. Brainworx's bx processor is already a legend in its own lifetime and to have the latest incarnation here, using UAD's processors rather than those taxing your computer's CPU, is a welcome addition.

There's plenty to recommend here both for those already wedded to the UAD platform and to entice the as yet uninitiated. **FM**

FutureMusic **VERDICT**

You'll be delighted by the range of mixing and mastering applications each of these processors covers.

SPECS

System requirements:

Windows: Windows 7 64-bit Edition w/SP1

Mac: OS X 10.9 Mavericks, 10.10 Yosemite, or 10.11 El Capitan

Both: 6Gb available storage, Available PCI Express (PCIe) slot for each UAD-2 card, Internet connection to download software and authorise UAD plug-ins, Compatible VST, Audio Units, RTAS, or AAX 64 plug-in host DAW software

Compatible Firewire or
Thunderbolt Apollo interface

ALTERNATIVES



UAD SPL Transient Designer

£149

Independent Attack and Sustain portions are available via SPL's classic Transient Designer but the extended envelope shaping of Envolution goes much further.

www.uaudio.com

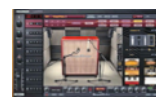


FabFilter Pro-MB

£129

If you seek dynamic EQ settings and want to be able to apply tone curves to mid or side signals, the FabFilter Pro-MB goes beyond 'standard' multiband processing.

www.fabfilter.com



IK Multimedia AmpliTube 4

179.99 euros

In addition to the other Marshall emulations Softube have developed for the UAD platform, amp bundles like IK Multimedia's AmpliTube 4 offer a huge number of emulations within one host.

www.ikmultimedia.com