



WHAT IS IT?

A set of rare vintage compressor and EQ emulation plug-ins with a fine pedigree.

CONTACT

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Fabulous fat drum compression, from subtle to pumping.
- 2 Very musical EQ, broad and solid.
- 3 All four of these plugs really do sound like the real thing.



Waves Jack Joseph Puig Pack | £470

Waves go for the Holy Grail of vintage emulations. **Stuart Bruce** wonders if there's room for more...

There are various items of vintage gear which are on most recording engineers wish lists and the subjects of this review must be very high on very nearly all of them. Jack Joseph Puig is an engineer who's worked with everyone from U2 to the Klaxons so successfully bagging his signature sound is really like finding gold at the end of a rainbow. As with all Waves plugs, the JJP collection works with iLok licenses and installation is very straightforward. These plugs are processor-heavy and require pretty much current versions of any host software and OS.

Starting with the Puigchild 670, the

user interface is as you would expect, a close likeness of the front panel with the useful addition of output gains for both channels. There is also a 60Hz and 50Hz power switch for when you need to nip across the Atlantic while bypassing immigration!

Fair enough

Fairchilds are very straightforward in use, balancing input gain against threshold to get the desired amount of gain reduction and moving the time constant to get the attack and release characteristics right. The time constant affects both the attack and release, positions 1-4, giving faster to slower

and 5 and 6 having auto release (6 faster than 5). The Puigchild has a very useful fast release on position 1, something that not all originals or emulations have. I am a big fan of the UAD 670 but the Puigchild is definitely quicker and as a stereo drum limiter, really does grab hold of the kit in a very positive way.

The auto release positions are also very useful, but it's when you start to push the inputs that things really hot up. A good original 670 is capable of adding incredible energy into drums. When you wind up the input gains and crank the thresholds, the whole sound gives the impression that it will jump out of the speakers and smack you between the eyes, and this baby does it too! Whether you use it straight across the drum buss or mix it in via an aux, it will add a lot of power to a kit.

But the Fairchild is wonderful for pretty much any instrument, and with this plug you can really put some life and energy into even the dullest sound. When pushing it hard, it still doesn't lose any of the high end, even on vocals – in fact, if anything it gives presence and adds real warmth. On electric guitars, pushing the input and having a low threshold setting adds bite without overcompressing, and playing with the

time constant can really affect how you perceive the attacks in the track. The 50/60Hz switch does make a difference too, 60Hz sounds a little crisper while the 50Hz seems to make it just a bit thicker in the low end and a little more 'chewy'. Maybe that's why so many American guitarists complain that their amps don't sound how they expect them to in the UK!

EQuality

With this package come emulations of the two classic Pultec units, the EQP1A and the MEQ5. The EQP1A is the 'program' EQ and the MEQ5 the mid-range unit, the front panels being faithful to the originals with, as on the Fairchilds, the addition of a voltage frequency selector and an output level. They also come with a suitably vintage looking VU meter, which contains an overload indicator.

One of the great features of the EQP1A is the ability to simultaneously boost and cut on the same band in the low frequencies. You'd think that this would result in the two controls cancelling each other out, but on a Pultec, the LF becomes a resonant shelf adding another dimension to what you can do to the low end. The HF boosts as a notch with bandwidth control and

Why Emulate?

With all the myriad of compression and EQ plug-ins on the market at the moment why do manufacturers devote so much time to bringing out emulations of old gear? Well, the answer is in the detail. Taking the Fairchilds and Pultecs as examples, these units have been used by engineers since the 1950s. The reason they have lasted is that they sound incredible. Each one of them has its own individual characteristics

and no two sound exactly the same. That's why Waves went to Jack Joseph Puig for this collection and UAD, for example, went to Alan Sides at Ocean Way in LA when they brought out their Fairchild. The plugs, while similar, really do give two different sounding results and that means more choice for the



rest of us and more sounds to add to our palettes. If you are chasing the feel of recordings made when these units were the standard kit in studios, (and that means from 1951 to today) what better place to start than with good emulations. Most manufacturers have demo's available, so try before you buy and find out why these things are so loved. Now what about some Decca EQs and some Pye compressors?

this deceptively simple looking EQ has a very broad range of possibilities. Add to this the MEQ5 and you have a full range EQ with some very individual features.

I've used many Pultecs over the years and they have always been a weapon of choice because, beyond anything else, they sound so musical. From the real weight they add in the low end to the mid-range crunch on drums or a distorted guitar and the 'air' and sheen they put into the highs, and all

that into a plug-in is quite an achievement but Waves have done it. Both these equalisers give exactly what they should. Whatever you ask of them they do just what you'd expect, and like the originals the results are musical, warm and solid.

Puig perfection

I've looked for criticisms but to be honest, I can't really find any. Waves plugs are never cheap and these are no

exception, but at the very high standards that they set for themselves, and achieve, they justify the price. In 27 years, I've used a lot of

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seven selectable frequencies and cuts as a shelf with three selectable frequencies, allowing you to focus in on a specific area while shelving out what goes on around or above. In practice,

with that legendary warmth, they are the perfect foil to the clinical nature of digital. Even with the most extreme settings the sound is always believable – it's never too twisted or nasty. To get

Fairchilds and Pultecs and no two are ever the same. The characteristics are always similar and you get to know the good ones from the bad but if I came across units sounding like these in a studio I would use them every day. Now there's no need to raid Jack Joseph Puig's rack with a screwdriver. **FM**



FutureMusic VERDICT

STABILITY



VALUE



EASE OF USE



VERSATILITY



RESULTS



Very expensive, but then they sound it. Demo them at your credit cards peril!

SPECS

Mac: G5 2.0GHz or Intel-based 1.83GHz, 1024x768 display, 1Gb RAM, OS X 10.4.11 or higher

PC: Win XP or Vista, Intel Pentium 4 2.8GHz / AMD Athlon 64 or equivalent, 1024x768px display, 2Gb RAM

Version requirements for host applications.

DAE

Pro Tools HD 7.3.1cs6/7.4, Pro Tools LE 7.3.1cs6/7.4, Pro Tools M-Powered 7.3.1cs6/7.4

VST

Cubase SX4.1.2, Nuendo4.1.2, Live 7-7.0.7.

Audio Units

Logic 8.0.2, Garage Band Version 4.1.1, DigitalPerformer 5.1.3, SoundTrack 2.0.2, MainStage-1.0.2, Wave Burner 1.5.2

ALTERNATIVES



UAD1e: Express Pak
£266

This card comes with \$100 worth of credit on the UA site, where you buy and register extra plugs, and they also have an offer at the moment which gives you \$150 extra credit. This means you could get their version of the Fairchild and Pultecs just by buying the PCI card.

uaudio.com



Bomb Factory Fairchild and Pultec emulations

Fairchild: \$550

Pultec: \$550

I've used these and they are not bad, but the JJP and the UAD really are, in my opinion, much closer to the real thing, and being Bomb Factory you can only use them with Pro Tools.

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