

PAR PICKS

6

Unique Plug-Ins

Our software editor shares a half-dozen of his favorite plug-ins that simply defy categorization.

by Rich Tozzoli

Sometimes plug-ins don't fit into any particular class — maybe they serve a unique role or combine multiple functions into a single interface. In this installment of "PAR Picks 6," we'll take a look at six useful plug-ins that defy categorization.

1 Brainworx Bx_digital V2 digital mastering processor

The bx_digital V2 is a mastering processor that packs a wallop. In it, you have an 11-band EQ, M/S De-Esser, Intelligent Bass and Presence Shifter, Mono-Maker, Pan for M & S and Stereo Width Control. It also works in three modes: M/S mastering, M/S recording and L/R Stereo.

The M/S capabilities split your mix into two components: mid sum or mono (M) and side/difference (S). You can solo the S and M signals: very useful in tweaking. Of course, you can link any feature for full stereo EQing.

My favorite feature is the Auto Listen Mode — clicking a knob automatically solos the selected band for tweaking. Letting go of the knob immediately brings the full mix back. It has a few other useful functions such as separate Pre, Post and Output meters, Stereo Width, built-in M/S De-Esser, Mono Maker (sets a frequency below where the mix becomes mono) and a Panorama adjustment for both M and S signals. There's an EQ graph for both the Mono and Stereo

section, and Pan M, Pan S and Bal L/R knobs for mix balancing.

V2 clearly uses unique algorithms because the audio has this almost "indefinable" quality to it. Use that Bypass button frequently because you'll do so and say, "Oh, yeah — that's pretty obvious!"

Price: \$359 (TDM, Venue, RTAS, AS, VST and AU, Mac or PC)

Contact: Brainworx | brainworx-music.de

2 Crane Song Phoenix analog tape compression modeling

Talk about one-knobbed goodness. Phoenix



Crane Song Phoenix

is another one of those "Yup, it sounds good!" plug-ins. Officially, it is designed to emulate the properties of magnetic tape machines and their record/reproduce characteristics, but I actually don't think of it that way. It simply adds subtle sonic character to my mixes that EQ/compression cannot.

Phoenix is a suite of five separate plug-ins: luminescent (neutral), Iridescent (more bottom/mid), Radiant (additional compression), Dark Essence (even more aggressive) and Luster (gentle at first/aggressive when pushed). Each also has three "color change" buttons for more sonic flavor. Typically, I will place them (especially Luster) on the Master bus and turn it up until I like what I hear. Because they are very DSP efficient though, they can easily be used on individual tracks. It's kind of a bummer that Phoenix is TDM only, as I'd like to use it on all of my rigs.

Price: \$450 (TDM)

Contact: Crane Song | cranesong.com



Brainworks bx_digital V2

Rich Tozzoli is a Grammy-nominated engineer, mixer and composer as well as PAR's software editor. richtozzoli.com