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Professional Audio and Music Production

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After only five years in business, the three-member team at PSPaudioware of Jozefoslaw, Poland (near Warsaw), have released a total of 19 software plug-ins. The line's universal appeal stems from the products' dependable, good sound and clever, intuitive GUIs. The software supports 44.1 to 192 kHz, and comes in HTDM, DirectX, VST, AudioUnits and RTAS formats for Mac OS 9/X and PC operating systems.

PSP also makes many of its products double-precision (64-bit floating point) and double-sampled with its proprietary Frequency Authentication Technique (FAT). For this review, I field-tested PSPaudioware's latest processors: PSP MasterComp and the 608 MultiDelay.

## INSTALL AND GO

I installed VST versions of both plug-ins into an AMD 4400 X2 (Dual Core) with 4 GB of RAM, overclocked at 2.5 GHz and running Nuendo 3.2. Installation went flawlessly. On my PC, set to 128 samples (3 ms) of latency, MasterComp registered about five percent of CPU and doubled when FAT was engaged. The 608 MultiDelay, fully maxed out, registered close to 20 percent

## DEUCE COMPRESSOR

MasterComp is a precision mastering compressor with a peak limiter that runs on PCs only (Mac version



coming) under DirectX, VST or RTAS formats. Designed for stereo mastering processing, the plug works wonderfully for any compression task where transparent gain control is desired. However, twist the controls far enough, and you'll achieve very analog-sounding limiter/compressor effects with as much pumping and breathing as possible. Every sound from typical "radio" compaction to a smooth, clean and transparent aesthetic is possible.

The preset brick-wall peak limiter will not allow output levels to exceed 0 dBFS. Like an insurance policy, this limiter is especially useful for rough mixes when there's no time to correct overs.

The compact GUI has all the usual compressor controls: threshold, ratio, makeup gain, attack, release, peak and RMS detection/operation, and a hard/soft-knee compression selector.

### **MASTERCAMP: TOOLS AKIMBO**

MasterComp has many new tools for stereo mastering. The Mix control adjusts the blend of the compressed signal to that of the original. Set up a severely squashed sound and then mix back in some of the uncompressed audio. Like an old-school method of mixing those two signals on a console, this technique worked well on lead vocals and for adding attack to a snare drum track.

Auto-Makeup Gain instantly brings the output level back up very close to where you would manually set it. I liked Link, a variable control that musically sets the amount of stereo linking action. For a wider soundfield on mixes, I used very little linking as long as the center image didn't noticeably shift due to left- or right-channel gain reduction.

MasterComp includes both highpass (1 to 16kHz) and lowpass (25 to 400Hz) variable filters, with Listen monitoring available for the compressor's sidechain. Rolling out low frequencies worked well for bass-heavy mixes to apply extra compression with less pumping.

Also, I checked the accuracy of MasterComp's RMS reading VU meter calibration against Nuendo's meter and Elemental Audio's Inspector XL Level Meter plug-in, and they all agreed.



## PSP 608: MORE, LATER

The 608 is a multidelay processor with eight delays feeding a stereo bus. A must-have processor for any sound designer, the 608 is the ultimate delay for music mixing. It offers up to eight seconds of time for each delay, along with mix level, panning, feedback and a choice of a lowpass, highpass, bandpass, shelving or peaking filter. The filter is modulated by an LFO, envelope or another delay's output.

The processor offers two modes: MultiDelay, where each delay line has its own feedback, and MultiTap, where a master feedback operates on a single tap. Each delay has its own reverb with a choice of a plate or spring, both with adjustable decay. A tape-saturation simulator is based on PSP's algorithm used in its mastering processors.

The 608's GUI is dominated by a large, virtual LCD with a clever feature: Mouse over any control, and the display indicates the name of the control and its parameter value. All parameters are programmable via host or MIDI automation.

The display is divided into three sections: Multidisplay includes buttons, level meters, MIDI information and parameter readouts for supervising different elements of the 608; Tap Params lets you view and edit delay tap setup for all eight delay lines on an intuitive bar graph; and the Modulation section controls the LFO and Envelope Follower. There is also a Graph mode sub-menu that covers the LCD (except for the Mod section), showing all eight delay taps on a timeline, although you cannot adjust them on this page--too bad, I like this view.

## DELAY ACTION

I put the 608 to work providing timed delays for a syncopated guitar part. While adjusting distortion, delay times, feedbacks, filter settings and modulation schemes, my guitar part evolved from a flat, sterile and vibeless part to a funky R&B motif. Later, after more tweaking, it became a dance-floor confection and finally, after still more tweaking, it evolved into a techno trademark with radical filter sweeps and feedback howling. Along the way, I

saved each iteration as a preset so I could recall them if I went over "tweaker's cliff."

## PLENTY OF BANG

As is true of all great plug-ins, there is much more to discover than I have room for here. Both PSP MasterComp and 608 MultiDelay are excellent, top-notch and valuable processors. I found the 608 daunting at first, but after reading the excellent manual, I became an expert. You can lock to session tempo and adjust delays in quarter, eighth, 16th notes, etc., use milliseconds or the large Tap pad. The MasterComp has many pro features, including extensive metering. The plugs are sold separately (MasterComp, \$249; 608, \$149) or as parts of bundles.

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