

**LEN DAVIES and
LINDA CLINKER**
get to grips with
the latest plug-in
to emerge from
the Sony camp.

It's been a little while since I sat behind a Sony Oxford console and I must admit that the logical thinking behind the layout has stayed with me ever since. On that trip to Basingstoke the R&D people were putting the final touches to Pro Tools software based on the Oxford technology, and Linda and I managed to sit behind the latest result from that team effort in the form of the Sony Oxford Dynamics TDM/RTAS plug-in.

Installation

Having downloaded the software onto my PC and burned the appropriate CD, we then found that the review system wouldn't take the plug-ins, being only version 5.1, which prompted a download of the minimum requirement 5.1.1 version (which is a free upgrade to registered users I hasten to add). Finally ready to go, the actual installation was simplicity itself, however the authentication was the fun part. The review system was not connected to the Internet so the provided code was hastily scribbled down, taken to the PC, entered into the authentication site, which then

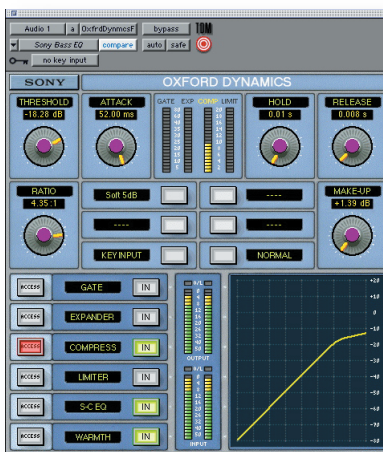
input gain is added and shelf and activation buttons come into play.

The lower section comprises the actual activation for each process, with an access button to the left (red when illuminated), and an 'in' button on the right (green). In the centre are the input and output level indicators (one or two sets depending on whether a mono or stereo unit is selected), followed to the right by the ample visual display that shows all of the dynamic operations in process, indicating a range between -80 and +20dB.

In Use

For a quick start there are six supplied presets ranging from bass EQ to kick and snare, all of which can be adjusted and saved as per normal Pro Tools applications. Depending on your available DSP multiple versions in mono or stereo configurations can be opened, and of course RTAS can process any extra requirements to your hard drive, so overall there's a lot of capability.

In the compressor mode, one of the centre buttons



SONY OXFORD DYNAMICS TDM/RTAS PLUG-IN

generated a long reply code (179 characters) that had to be copied into the reply window on the Mac. Phew!

The effort was worth it. On power up we were presented with the familiar light blue facade that is the livery of the actual Oxford console. The interface offers control of gate, expander, compressor, limiter, sidechain EQ, and a subtle feature titled simply 'warmth', all of which can operate simultaneously or in preset combinations of gate/expander, compressor/limiter or complete dynamics minus side chain EQ. The RTAS version however features only the option of using the full dynamics section plus side chain EQ, all of which can be switched in or out individually.

Description

Visually the interface has a true 3-D feel and the control functions change according to the processor in use, as it does on the actual console. The top row features four rotary controls divided into two groups by level indicators for gate, expansion, compression, and limiting, all of which are greyed out until the process they're monitoring is switched in. Most of the time these rotaries control threshold, attack, hold, and release until the side chain EQ is switched in, at which point they change to low and high frequency with Q controls, and only the top left control comes alight with 'amount' in percentage when the 'warmth' is selected.

Below these and in the middle of the interface are six activation buttons whose functions also change depending on the selected process, although the bottom left control remains as 'key input' for all except the sidechain EQ function. The Key input itself is assigned at the top of the plug-in window and has the option of interface or bus giving a large flexibility. On each side of these buttons a rotary control that operates, ratio, make-up, and range in the case of the gate and expander. This changes in the Sidechain EQ as a central

switches the style of compression between normal, classic and, linear. Classic has no attack, hold, or release capability, and linear appears to be a harder squeeze on the signal.

Overall the Oxford Dynamics performed brilliantly and didn't colour any of the sound when the processes were switched out, providing the degree of quality you'd expect and require when in circuit. The limiter has an amazing quality that even helped mastered CD tracks sound a bit more polished without squeezing the life out of them. The compressor did all we asked and more, and the gate and expander have great creative potential when combined with the key input possibilities. The sidechain EQ has been well thought out, covering the full range and, crossing over at 500Hz with 20dB cut or boost, and the 'warmth' does exactly what it says on the tin, actually giving some humanity to a pre-selected rather digital sounding track.

Conclusion

For me it was a forgone conclusion that this plug-in would be superb as I'd already witnessed the power of an early Beta version, and having the capability of the Oxford dynamics to hand has got to be a bonus for any Pro Tools owner. The only negative aspect of our whole experience on this system was the installation as we both feel the software security angle was a bit on the excessive side, but we must admit that the headache soon faded as we played with what is definitely a wonderful piece of kit. □

Since this review was written, Sony has improved and simplified the installation process for its plug-ins.

INFORMATION

- £ Sony Oxford Dynamics £550 incl. VAT; £860 approx.
- Ⓐ Sony Oxford, Oasis Park, Eynsham, Oxford.
- ✉ feedback@sonyplugins.com
- 🌐 www.sonyplugins.com

This plug-in and the others in the Sony line are available for purchase and download online, or you can buy the boxed version through local dealers.