

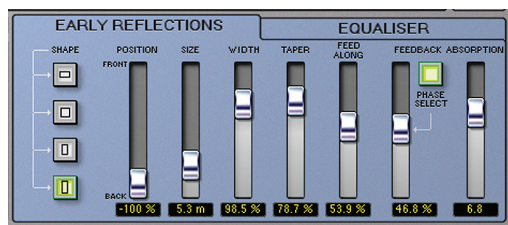
Sony Oxford Reverb Plug-In

Add Ambience to Your Mix With Versatile Emulations

Sony's Oxford division has come out with a reverb plug-in that offers some of the things you'd expect from a verb with some excellent new additions. As you'd expect, the standard churches, chambers and emulations of other popular spaces head up the menu, but Sony has chosen to approach the ambience-building process in a new, fresh way.

If that's not enough, the company has also included a special version of the acclaimed Oxford EQ right into the interface. The Oxford Reverb GUI opens in a large window, with all of the controls immediately accessible with one clickable layer. This layer gives you access to the 5-band, Type 1 Sony Oxford equalizer, which is configured for the reverb's input. The interface is slightly intimidating at first glance. I strongly recommend reading the excellent manual to learn how all of the parameter controls affect the finished reverb sound.

With 48 automatable parameter faders and switch choices, Oxford caters to any user's skill or interest level. You can drill down to the most arcane levels of reverb and space synthesis, design any reverb effect from scratch or start with any of the 137 wonderful presets, then tweak and save from there.



A detail of Oxford's Early Reflections section. Users can choose between four different room shapes (including position, size and width) and four different programmable controls.

THE CONTROL SECTION

Control functions are divided into three sections: early reflections, reverb tail processing and mixing/routing. Unlike a lot of software or hardware reverbs, there is no interaction between these sections and any of their parameters. You can freely adjust early reflections without affecting the tail's settings and vice versa.

Oxford starts with an input mixer with input gain, stereo separation and low-frequency roll-off controls. From here, the signal flows to the early reflections' mix fader in the tail mixer, where you can blend the ratio of the input signal with the early reflections' output to drive the tail processor. You can use dry input without early reflections, use delay comp on the dry signal to time its arrival with early reflections' signal or delay the input up to 30 meters to the tail processor.

The output mixer lets you mix the early reflections-to-tail ratio, plus the wet/dry balance of the whole plug-in when you instantiate the plug-in as an insert effect. There is also a convenient 100-percent Wet button for typical mixer send/return instantiations.

AMBIENCE-BUILDING TOOLS

Both early reflections and tail parameter faders are arranged in order of importance, from left to right. I found designing a reverb on Oxford to be very easy, especially when you start with the early reflections section and listen 100-percent wet. Early reflections determine the overall nature and color of the reverb's total sound. After choosing one of four different room shapes, the listener's position in the room—anywhere from front to back—and size, you then set the width. You can set the width up to 130 percent for superwide "beyond the speakers" spaces.

Early reflections' programmable controls continue with Taper, a way to control the loudness of reflections predicated on



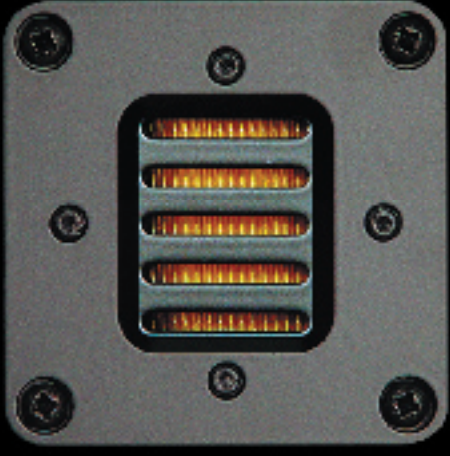
Oxford Reverb control functions are divided into three sections: early reflections, reverb tail processing and mixing/routing.

their path lengths. Greater density and complexity can be controlled with the Feed Along fader. Feed Along allows you to control the re-injection of sound within the space for early reflections. Moving the Feedback fader will add repeats of early reflections until it reaches a boiing resonance-like sound. At the end of the early reflections' section is the Absorption fader, a high-frequency roll-off that simulates spaces with soft furnishings, rugs or wall coverings.

TAIL PROCESSOR

Reverb time is adjustable from 200 ms to 10 seconds, and overall size is adjustable from 0.15 to 1. The size of a space is conveyed to our ears by building density over time; large settings of overall size cause the sound to build density slower at the onset of reverberation.

The overall size control, along with time, was the most important fader when programming a reverb's tail character. To make the space sound bigger with more low-frequency energy and fullness without making a change in the ambience's length, keep the time value the same and increase size.





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IN THE STUDIO

Installing Oxford Reverb in a new Pro Tools|HD5 TDM (Version 6.7) system was trouble-free. iLok dongle and software registration/authorization took place simultaneously. The Oxford Reverb uses plug-in sharing and takes up 46 percent of an Accel DSP chip for one instance or 86 percent for two instances. Provided are both TDM and RTAS versions; the reverb is compatible with Pro Tools|HD Accel, HD, LE, OS X and Windows XP platforms.

From Oxford's large collection of churches, ambiances, chambers and emulations of popular patches, I went right to Medium-Size Room and mainly tweaked early reflections, reverb time and size parameters. I could enlarge the apparent size of the kit and improve the thin snare drum sound I had recorded without getting an overly wet sound.

Oxford Reverb is exceedingly wide and easily surrounds any instruments in your mix—even narrow, point-sourced mono sounds. Vocals can usually stand a medium reverb, and I liked the Fat Plate emulation; I only tweaked reverb time and brightened the EQ.

Tight, small and convincing ambiances are usually harder to synthesize, but Oxford comes with many dry space patches and 32 post settings with Foley-esque names such as Atelier, Swimming Pool, Foyer and more. I inserted an Oxford set to Effects/Pipe on a single vocal track and used the wet/dry fader to put a vocal in a tubular space. The early reflections' size and width faders got the most use, and I did not use any reverb tail in my final patch version.

VERSATILE PRODUCTION TOOL

With so many presets and maximum adjustability, the Oxford Reverb's great sound is perfect for any production situation. From lush, wide spaces to crispy, shiny splashes to tiny claustrophobic boxes—you have them all here. The generous 5-band Oxford EQ is a big added bonus. I found it useful for fitting a patch more effectively to the overall track and sizing voices and instruments.

From live to studio to post work, Sony's Oxford Reverb is the new must-have. MSRPs are \$1,050 for the PTH-REV2 (HD) and \$530 for the PTL-REV2 (LE).

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