

Tuesday, 01 November 2022 14:56

SoundDevice Digital MasterMind



Independent development teams federation United Plugins announces the availability of the MasterMind mastering plug-in as its latest release from founding partner SoundDevice Digital - duly designed as the fastest route from any mix to mastered destination by taking care of most tasks automatically, allowing anyone to optimise the track being worked on within a matter of seconds, match that track's EQ with a reference track, and boost the master gain to make the resulting signal sound louder and better... or, better put, simply sound right - as of November 1...

It is fair to say that mastering is sometimes seen as a dark art of sorts when it comes to finalising the record production process. Put it this way: while mastering makes a great recording truly shine forth for all to hear, that is arguably an overly simplistic statement when taken at face value; after all, what constitutes a genuinely great recording at an artistic level is surely in the ear of the beholder? But what about at a truly technical level? Cost constraints aside, that is arguably a double-barrelled question of (technology available at any given) time and taste. That said, one thing is for sure, though: thanks to an always-widening array of mind-boggling and ear-bending analogue and digital technologies, the mastering process

Tuesday, 01 November 2022 14:56

is far from simple.

SounDevice Digital's MasterMind mastering plug-in makes this far-from-simple art so much easier by taking care of most tasks automatically. As such, its OPTIMIZE functionality beats strongly at its helpful heart. Having spent some considerable time researching masses of mastered material, SounDevice Digital developed a specialised algorithm to make the resulting signal sound richer and better, both from an audio and psychoacoustic standpoint. Simply put, it sounds right. Turning the plug-in's onscreen optimizer (%) knob controls how much of that specialised algorithm process is instantly and intelligently applied.

It is also fair to say that stereo feel and spatial perception are integral to achieving an accomplished mastered sound, so MasterMind makes it perfectly possible for its users to do just that with one onscreen knob - namely, the self-explanatory stereo width (%) one, which controls the signal-widening level with selectable settings ranging from -100 to +100.

MasterMind's MATCH functionality facilitates fast-tracking a perfect-sounding EQ-matching application, allowing users to control the level of matching the feel of their favourite reference tracks or, alternatively, unifying the sound of the tracks on their own record production with a few quick clicks. Literally load some source material, loop-play it to analyze, then analyze their own material (your track) to enable MasterMind to perform its mindful mastering magic. It is worth noting that setting the onscreen match (%) knob to settings somewhere between 20-30% tends to produce the best results due to the differences between the source and your track material being analysed.

And speaking of equalisation, MasterMind's EQ section facilitates fine-tuning both the high shelf - freq (kHz) - and low shelf - freq (Hz) - EQ curves of the track being processed in conjunction with their associated gain (dB) controls. By being based on an American analogue equaliser's much-lauded mode, it also provides users with the option of applying some nice-sounding tube saturation, courtesy of the easy-to-use eq tube (%) knob. Thanks to its high-quality audio engine employing up to 16x oversampling, MasterMind makes mindful mastering possible, providing the maximum precision needed to succeed in its musical mission - including, of course, warm-sounding analogue-style saturation without digital artefacts.

Meanwhile, MasterMind's LIMITER section makes mixes sound strong, standing out from the sound of the (mastered) crowd courtesy of a saturation (%) control, which can make the signal sound louder and smoother from a psychoacoustic standpoint, working with self-explanatory gain (dB) and threshold (dB) controls, as well as out ceiling (dB) - controls the sign level after the LIMITER section, thereby determining the plug-in's maximum reachable level.

Last, but by no means least, MasterMind's analysis section provides a perfect visual overview of the three stages of its user's signal so they can not only easily monitor the input and output but also the signal stage between the EQ and limiter, helping

them to add even more precision to finalising the record production process.

Photorealism has been applied to the MasterMind plug-in's gorgeous GUI (Graphical User Interface), imbuing its users with a feeling that they are touching real-world hardware. However, it easily adapts to their needs since they can always drag the arrow at the bottom-right corner to change its size - smaller to save precious 'screen estate' or larger to make it easier on the eye and, as a result, easier to use.

Ultimately, MasterMind provides maximum audio quality by using internal 64-bit audio processing as well as being able to handle any sampling rate - as, indeed, is the case with all plug-ins released under the United Plugins umbrella, so why not try it at 192 kHz... or even higher! Helpfully, the MasterMind plug-in intelligently detects whether it makes sense to perform any processing at all - if not, it temporarily turns on sleep mode, meaning it requires virtually no CPU (Central Processing Unit) power at all, thereby saving computing resources for other processes. Mindful mastering magic abounds otherwise, of course, so feel free to take the fastest route from any mix to mastered destination with its outstanding OPTIMIZE and (EQ) MATCH functionality.

SounDevice Digital's MasterMind is available to purchase for a time-limited introductory promo price of only €29 EUR until the end of November 2022 - rising thereafter to its regular price of €129.00 EUR - as an AAX-, AU-, VST-, and VST3-compatible plug-in (using internal 64-bit audio processing capable of handling any sample rate) directly from United Plugins. (A 15-day, fully-functional trial version for macOS 10.10 and newer and Windows 8/10 can be downloaded for free from the website below.)

www.unitedplugins.com