

FOR
MAC

Sony Oxford OXFORD EQ

MusicTech
RECOMMENDED
 ★★★★★★★★

Sony Oxford's EQ is now available as an AU plug-in, but can it still compete with other native EQs? Mark Cousins gets equal.

KEY FEATURES

- 5-band parametric design
- Selectable shelf settings on LF and HF sections
- LF and HF filters providing up to 36dB/octave slope
- 4 selectable EQ types

MEASURING UP

Strong contenders to the Sony Oxford EQ include Waves' Renaissance Equalizer (\$200) or (if you're willing to invest in a UAD-1 card) Universal Audio's Cambridge EQ (\$149). Although the Sony Oxford EQ seems expensive in comparison, bundle deals can offer up to a 40% reduction in price, so this is well worth checking out!

OXFORD EQ

Manufacturer **Sony Oxford**

Price **£235**

Contact **Source Distribution**
020 8962 5080

Web **www.sonyoxford.co.uk**

Minimum system requirements

Mac OSX 10.4, RAM 512MB, iLok Key

When companies such as Sony spend a considerable amount of money developing a high-end digital console such as the OXF-R3, you know it's not going to skimp on the design of the EQ. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Oxford console's EQ became a modern 'design classic' – not only because Sony had managed to create an EQ that delivered both flexibility and a healthy dose of musicality, but by porting the code to Pro Tools and TC Electronics' PowerCore system, the company managed to bring the Oxford EQ's sound to an even wider base of musicians and engineers. The only downside, however, was that users not running TDM, RTAS or PowerCore didn't have access to this well-respected EQ plug-in.

A few months ago, though, rumours began surfacing that the Sony Oxford EQ might finally be making its way into a native format in the shape of an Audio Units version of the plug-in. Sony Oxford's Dynamics and Limiter were accompanying it, with the remaining tools – including the Inflator, Transient Modulator and Reverb – to follow at a later date. But in a world now flooded with native EQ plug-ins, is the AU version of the Sony Oxford EQ still a relevant and worthwhile addition to your plug-ins folder?

Oxford graduate

Arguably the Sony Oxford's strongest asset has always been its flexibility. This is digital EQ after all, but rather than half-heartedly copying an ageing outboard EQ, the Sony Oxford attempts to provide a wide palette of tools and features suitable for a range of production objectives. What this palette of tools equates to is a comprehensive five bands of fully parametric EQ with switchable shelving operation on the LF and HF bands, as well as high- and low-pass filtering sections to 'top-and-tail' your audio appropriately. This offers a lot of potential sound control, but with the curve display (which can now be

manually manipulated) and the clear colour coding, the Sony Oxford is always a joy to use.

Another distinguishing feature is the provision of four different EQ types – a useful way adapting the plug-in's operation to be more sympathetic to certain types of activity, whether that's mixing or mastering. The differences between these types are largely driven by the various EQ's response to Q with differing amounts of gain. The Type 1 EQ, for example, is said to closely follow that of the SSL 4000, with tight Q settings at low gain (great for precision applications). Type III, on the other hand, models a Neve's variable response to Q, so low gains produce wide curves, and high gains produce a sharper overall notch.

The sound of Sony

Undoubtedly, the Sony Oxford is a great tool to have to hand when mixing. Despite lacking some of the character of certain vintage plug-ins, the sound of the EQ delivers dependable results that rarely appear too pushed or harsh. Overall, it's the kind of EQ plug-in that you can rely on for the bulk of a mix – massaging the majority of your instrumentation into place without revealing a sonic fingerprint that's too large or overpowering. The different EQ types are also a welcome addition, although it does take time to appreciate how best to integrate them within your working process.

Having been familiar with the Pro Tools version for some years, we were pleased to see the Sony Oxford EQ finally reach an Audio Units version. Of course, software EQ has come on leaps and bounds since the Sony Oxford EQ emerged in 2001, but it seems to have stood the test of time well, delivering a performance that is tangibly more 'console-grade' than many of the workhorse EQs we're used to nowadays. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- A great workhorse plug-in
- Clear, intuitive interface
- Transparent but effective equalisation
- Different types of EQ provided

WALK ON BY

- Lacks some character in comparison to recent 'vintage' EQs
- Takes some time to appreciate the various EQ types

VERDICT

An undoubted classic of software equalisation finally becomes available in Audio Units format. The Sony Oxford EQ maintains its unique position thanks to its sonic transparency and sheer flexibility.

★★★★★★★★

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