

**Freelance  
dubbing mixer  
JOHN ROGERSON  
finds that  
modulating his  
transients is not so  
painful after all...**

**W**hen I was given the opportunity to review the Sony Oxford Transient Modulator Plug-in for Pro Tools HD I smiled. I've always liked Sony kit, especially the 'Starship Command'-esque Oxford R3 digital console. But soon I start to scratch my head and wonder what on earth a Transient Modulator does. I had an inkling but nothing I was prepared to bet a months wages on! I suppose, in truth it couldn't be clearer... it modulates transients! Or uses transients to modulate... or... what? Time to stop and deconstruct.

**Transient:** Any of the non-sustaining, non-periodic frequency components of a sound, usually of brief duration and higher amplitude than the sustaining components, and occurring near the onset of the sound eg. attack transients.

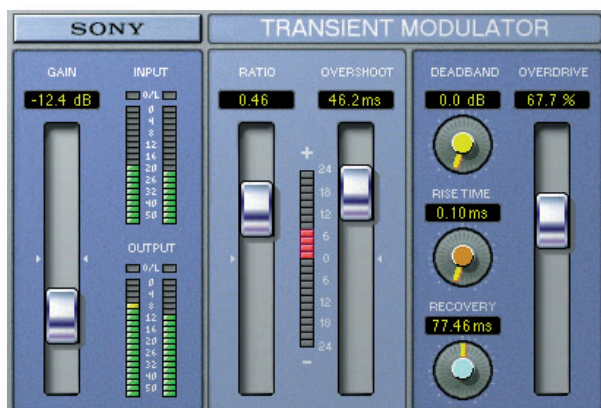
**Modulation:** The process of sending a control signal to a sound source so as to change the character of the sound.

These are the basic definitions. Lets look at what the men who created it say about it and then investigate further.

[Deadband, Rise Time, Recovery] these are all fine adjustment controls that allow the user to tune the process by varying how the TransMod reacts based on timing and amplitude variables. As mentioned earlier, there is potential to add up to 24dB to the original programme input signal which, depending on the input level, could quickly lead you to run out of headroom. This brings us to the final fader, 'Overdrive'. This allows for the harmonic content of peak information above digital max to be included in the TransMod output signal and will allow peak information of 6dB above digital max to be included without hard clipping. This is your 'Get out of jail free card'.

### In Use

The first thing you realise when you start using the TransMod is that the Output Gain fader is going to be very important as the amount of gain you can add to the input signal with quite gentle adjustments of the parameters is frightening.



# SONY TRANSIENT MODULATOR OXFORD PLUG-IN

### Description

So what is modulating what? Sony describes the product as 'an application that allows dynamic control of signals to be modified by the transients in the programme material over time. The effect is to bring transient events in the programme forward, or push them into the background such that the attacks of instruments can be accentuated or attenuated depending on the settings'. So it sounds like it's the transients themselves that are modulating the... er... transients! Sony says the plug-in was developed to 'address the common situation where there is a need to selectively tighten up percussive instruments or soften the unwanted percussive effects of acoustic musical instruments'. That all seems fair enough, onward.

The plug-in operates on Pro Tools HD, TDM, and RTAS systems. Visually it conforms to all the norms of a Pro Tools plug-in and is presented in the same smart blue livery as the other plug-ins from the Oxford stable. It's a very simple layout of four faders, three rotary controls and three sets of meters. The first section contains the Output Gain fader [which is variable between -24dB & +24 dB] and is accompanied by two sets of meters for checking the level changes to the overall programme material.

The next section has two faders. The first is named 'Ratio' and controls the overall effect of the TransMod process; this is variable from -1 to +1. Positive values produce transient enhancement while negative values produce attenuation. The other fader is 'Overshoot' which dictates which elements of the programme material will be affected by setting the time period over which the TransMod process will work. For example, a short Overshoot setting will accentuate [or attenuate] short-term events whilst ignoring longer or softer transient elements. Increasing the Overshoot settings will allow a progressively wider selection of the transient elements in the programme material to be made available for processing. There is an accompanying meter that displays the gain or loss of transients resulting from the TransMod processing.

The final section contains three rotary knobs

I also quickly regretted my decision to use headphones whilst testing it! First I put the TransMod across a stereo drum group. My preference is always to throw subtlety out of the window and try a few maximum settings; I wasn't disappointed, deafened yes, but not disappointed. With the Ratio up full (+24dB) and the Overshoot at minimum you very quickly understand what is happening. As you raise the Overshoot fader the hi-hats get a level boost equivalent to the setting of the Ratio fader, quite quickly the leading edge of the Snare gets included until, as you increase the Overshoot the whole caboodle gets huge lift. It's actually quite amazing how loud it gets. It's very easy to achieve a fabulous gated overdriven drum kit in seconds. By taking the Ratio level down, it really is very quick to tune into various aspects of the kit and pull them up or down in the mix, It's a very pleasing process to use in that every control affects the output dramatically and leaves you in no doubt as to what that particular control is doing to the sound. Forget the manual and use your ears, you really do hear it! The three rotary controls Deadband, Rise Time, and Recovery add myriad variations to the effects you can achieve. It really rewards a good fiddle with each control and I found myself saving another user setting after very minor tweaks.

### Conclusion

There simply isn't enough space here to go into the possibilities of this plug-in. I was a bit underwhelmed by the concept on paper, but by equal measure impressed by the possibilities when I heard it. □

### INFORMATION

- £ Sony Oxford Transient Modulator £290 for TDM, HD and HDAccel (Mac and WinXP); £145 for Pro Tools LE (Mac and WinXP).
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### THE REVIEWER

Jon Rogerson is a well-known UK freelance dubbing mixer and dialogue/FX editor.