



TEST

IZOTOPE OZONE 2

IZOTOPE Ozone 2 FOR PC

Do your recordings sound weak, wimpy, dull and lifeless? iZotope's software aims to give it the sparkle of a professional recording. **Ian Waugh** takes a trip through the Ozone layer...

MUSIC TECH MAGAZINE
Recommended

OZONE 2

Manufacturer **iZotope**

Price **\$199; upgrade from v1 to v2: \$49**

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Superior facilities and a deft ear are not enough. To produce a professional-sounding recording you need mastering tools.

And as a mastering tool, Ozone 2 has it all: compression and limiting for punch and loudness; EQ for tonal balance; reverb for fullness and ambience; a stereo imager to improve the stereo spread and positioning; a harmonic exciter to... well, excite and add sparkle; and a loudness maximiser to squeeze that extra drop of welly from your production – or, if you prefer to err on the side of subtlety, just firm up the mix a bit. It's all wrapped up in a single DirectX plug-in that's compatible with most software.

The interface, it must be said, may not be to everyone's taste. It's a bit dull and lifeless – not at all like the sound it produces – and the writing may be difficult to see on a high-res monitor.

Ozone's effects have enough parameters to keep even the most ardent control freak happy. You probably won't want to change the order of the effects in the processing chain, but you can do so if you wish. A Bypass button enables instant A/B comparisons and there are input and output faders for adjusting levels. The six effects are selected for editing individually and a central area shows a graphic display of the effects' controls.

Send in the Paras

The Parametric EQ combines six adjustable notch filters plus high- and low-shelf filters. Adjustments are made by dragging the filter curve with the mouse and you can see not only the curve of the selected band but also the combined curve of all the bands. Ozone uses 64-bit internal processing and can handle signals with large dynamic ranges, but if you move the EQ to the very end of the processing chain you may need soft saturation to catch any clipping.

An interesting feature is the Snapshot function, which enables



Ozone combines six mastering effects in one plug-in, all with highly graphic interfaces. This one is the harmonic exciter.

you to take a snapshot of the frequency spectrum to compare with that of other recordings.

The mastering reverb is designed to add a 'coating' to the overall sound rather than process individual tracks. It has room size, width and damping controls, plus wet and dry settings. A useful feature is the ability to solo the reverb signal so you can hear exactly what's being added to the mix.

The loudness maximiser uses compression and limiting to maximise the volume of the mix and is extremely effective.

The three multi-band processors are arguably the most interesting effects of them all, enabling you to apply dynamics, stereo imaging and a harmonic exciter to four different frequency bands.

Masterful

Mastering is as much art as science and to help ease you into the program there are over 70 presets covering virtually every scenario you can think of. If you're still not sure whether Ozone is for you, there's a

fully functioning demo on the website. This is a plug-in you really must try – it could take your music to another level... **MTM**

SUMMARY

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
• Pentium II 450MHz, Windows 98SE, ME, 2000, XP, DirectX host software

KEY FEATURES
• Multi-band dynamics, stereo imager and exciter
• Parametric EQ
• Mastering reverb
• Loudness maximiser
• Stereo enhancer
• High-quality dithering
• Over 70 presets

WHY BUY
• High-quality mastering
• DirectX automation
• Additional presets on the web
• Superb documentation

WALK ON BY
• Insipid interface

VERDICT

Impressive mastering software that, with a little application, will leave your music in a better state than it found it.



METHOD SPOT
In a dither

We record at 24- and 32-bit resolutions but must reduce this to 16-bit to burn to CD. To maintain the highest quality during the conversion we use dithering. The process is complex but all you need to do is press a couple of buttons in Ozone. The hardy ditherer can read more about it in Ozone's excellent dithering documentation.

