

Waves

# Platinum Native Bundle 4



Plug-ins litter the world of desktop recording and vary considerably in quality and usefulness. Waves plug-ins deliver both in abundance, and are compatible with Mac OS X. **Bob Dormon** waves his approval.



FOR  
PC  
MAC



**Ultra Pitch Logic.** Logic Audio on OS 9 plays host to UltraPitch, a six-voice, real-time pitch transposer with formant correction functions.

## Kit Platinum Native Bundle version 4

Manufacturer **Waves**

Price **£1874 (Upgrade pricing varies according to plug-ins owned)**

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If the name Waves is unfamiliar to you then you must be a relative stranger to desktop music making. The company is an audio plug-in developer of considerable repute. Ask an engineer or programmer about their experience of Waves and they'll no doubt raise a smile, lean back in their seat, reach for the bag of Werther's Originals and reminisce on the first time they saw that spinning 'W'. Indeed, Waves has been around since hard disk recording was a two-track affair and 16MB of memory was colossal.

Adding a Waves bundle to your system will expand its capabilities and, at the very least, provide flexible and finessed alternatives to existing plug-ins in the host application. These

sonic software signal shapers are no poor relation either. In many ways, these plug-ins are much improved and far more versatile than their hardware equivalents. A case in point is the L1 Ultramaximizer. Used in mastering, this dynamic plug-in became so popular that Waves was persuaded to make a hardware version.

## Nativity play

The release of Waves 4 has some minor enhancements for PC and Mac OS 9 users but, more importantly, signifies support for TDM and VST plug-ins on Mac OS X, with Audio Units versions due soon. Except for the TDM plug-ins, all other formats are referred to as Native, and rely on the host computer's CPU resources. The TDM plug-ins are different in that they utilise DSP Farms within high-end Digidesign hardware.

Apart from Restoration noise removal plug-ins, the Platinum Native bundle has the

lot. This includes the whole Renaissance collection, a relatively new range, delivering a vintage feel to dynamics, EQ and reverberation. New in Waves 4 is Renaissance

Channel, which is available free when upgrading.

The Platinum bundle costs more than the top three professional sequencers added together, a case of the petrol costing more than the car. Still, Platinum covers a lot of ground. Like a Russian doll, the Platinum bundle is comprised of other bundles. Included is the Native Power Pack (NPP), a one-stop shop for many, providing dynamics tools including the legendary L1 Ultramaximizer, multi-channel equalisation, multi-tap delay and the S1 stereo imager that delivers spatial enhancement to mixes and samples alike. There's also

TrueVerb, a reverb with an extensive set of parameters and interactive graphics. At £464, NPP is also the cheapest individual Waves

## Method spot RED ALERT

The L1 and L2 Ultramaximizer mastering plug-ins utilise an excellent levelling algorithm with automatic gain compensation. The perception is of a louder, in-er-face mix. IDR (Increased Digital Resolution) is featured, enabling 24-bit audio conversion to 16-bit for CD audio. The L1 can quantize further to 12- or 8-bit.



**Enigma Pro Tools:** Waves plug-ins are even accessible on Pro Tools FREE. The Enigma is shown above, and is a beguiling blend of reverb and resonance.

bundle. If you're choking on your Werther's Originals right now, consider how much hardware equivalents would cost.

### Pitch pipes

Platinum also includes the Gold bundle. That contains NPP, Pro-FX Plus and the original Renaissance collection. If you like swirling modulation effects then Pro-FX Plus is a treat. MondoMod has an LFO and a combination of AM and FM modulators. It also has rotational panning effects for that morning after feeling. Enigma is a neat mix of modulation, filtering and reverberation and can deliver sweeping resonances to rhythmic playing. UltraPitch has six voices with individual transpose, panning, level, delay, filtering and mute functions. Each

has a formant control that brings out resonances based on vowel sounds. It helps avoid the chipmunk effect on pitched-up vocals, but can deliver rich tones on instruments too. Pro-FX Plus also includes flanging, doppler and multi-tap delays.

### Classic combination

The Renaissance collection offers similar features found in other Waves plug-ins, but are

by no means surplus to requirements. Indeed, Renaissance plug-ins are either shockingly simple or intriguingly intricate. The factory presets give a very good indication of what can be achieved. If you err towards simple but effective, Renaissance VOX can be used as an insert to deliver in-er-face vocal treatments suitable for rappers and rambling radioheads alike. It has only three controls: Gate, Compress and Gain. The compression slider affects how hard the compressor works on a signal and the output level is automatically compensated. The Gate slider acts more as an Expander and determines the threshold. VOX is very unobtrusive – if the vocal has lots of popping then you'll hear it, warts and all, but on clean recordings it's extremely effective.

Renaissance Bass doesn't dally with subtlety either. Again, only three controls – Frequency, Intensity and Gain – transform ordinary bass lines into a punishing, trouser-flapping experience. Lower the frequency, raise the intensity and the familiar sound of bass cabs on the verge of breakdown can be heard. It's a marvellous emulation, made all the more strange by the fact that you can enjoy this convincing harmonic distortion effect at low volumes, yet in the back of your mind, something tells you that the neighbours are complaining. More than just a bass booster, though, Renaissance Bass also has a number of possible uses emulating club and dub scenes on film soundtracks.

### The Bedsitting room

For years TrueVerb has held its own as a versatile reverb plug-in, but spend a few minutes with the Renaissance Reverberator



**RenBass:** Simple but effective – Renaissance Bass emulates extremely convincing bass harmonic distortions.



**Ren Rev + Channel:** Cubase SX utilises the OS X-compatible VST plug-ins Renaissance Reverberator (middle) and Renaissance Channel (right). Each has interactive graphic displays.

TEST • WAVES PLATINUM NATIVE BUNDLE 4

and you'll wonder what all the fuss was about. Where TrueVerb has transparency, Reverberator has character. A quick flick through the presets takes you round the houses, halls, chambers and churches. Nothing sounds out of place; it just sounds right. There's even a preset called Bedroom that sounds so convincingly intimate you can almost smell the socks.

As with TrueVerb, it has a wealth of parameters which can be tweaked, including the click and drag graphic alternative to the function sliders. Like all Waves 4 plug-ins, these controls can be automated.

Created using processing elements from the Renaissance EQ, Compressor and De-Esser is the new Renaissance Channel. To some it might appear to be a well-heeled version of the Waves stalwart Audiotrack. However, like all Renaissance plug-ins, its CPU demands are much higher than run-of-the-mill equivalents. At the top is a four-band EQ with interactive graphics. Below this are two rows of sidechain filtering for compressor and gate. Bringing this into play overlays brown and blue masks on the graphic display, helpfully revealing the bandwidth that these sidechains are operating on.

The idea is that you can treat specific areas with compression or gating, such as configuring the compressor to work on high frequencies for de-essing. A Listen function enables you to hear precisely what spectrum of the audio is being treated in this way.

**Switch to manual**

The Renaissance Channel manual fails to explain the sidechain operation, referring to the Readme documentation which says nothing. An enquiry to Waves revealed that it actually works in the same way as the C1. Tinkering with a stereo Renaissance Channel on Digital Performer to produce ducking effects (where one signal triggers the gate to act on the other) failed to work. Eventually, Waves confessed that the External triggering option present on both sidechains isn't implemented in the Native version and is currently TDM-only.



**L2 Ultramaximizer.** The Waves Ultramaximizer is a real crowd pleaser, increasing the loudness of a mix with no obvious unwanted artefacts. Unlike the L1, the L2 features an Automatic Release Control (ARC).



**C4 solo DP:** Digital Performer's own MasterWorks is a useful multi-band compressor, but the C4's graphics go one better. Here the display reveals the frequency spectrum affected by a solo'd compressor band.

Below the sidechain section is a compressor and gate. The compressor can be toggled to work as the Renaissance VOX plug-in and, consequently, loses its compression ratio function. It has an Automatic Release Control (ARC) too, which can be switched to manual. Likewise, the Gate can work as an Expander. Such flexibility enables Renaissance Channel to function as a swift solution or with pinpoint precision.

Sidechain grumbles aside, Renaissance Channel provides a multi-purpose toolkit with an ever-friendly sound. Just keep an eye on those performance meters as there's no free lunch with this style of processing.

**Band of Gold**

Bundled with Gold is the C4, a four-band compressor operating on user-defined frequency bands. A graphical display reveals how each band interacts, aided by individual bypass and solo functions. Although a likely contender for some mastering situations, the C4 can also transform the sound of synths and loops when thoughtful attack and release times are applied to select frequency bands.

There's no escaping the fact that Waves plug-ins require a considerable investment. To help, Waves 4 has iLok, a USB hardware dongle allowing users to run Waves on different machines. Upgrade policy has also changed and now lasts for a year, entitling the user to any upgrades that might appear during that time slot.

For example, buy or upgrade now and the release of Audio Units plug-ins in the summer will be free. Annoyingly, Waves refuses to give an indication of how much annual upgrades will be, insisting that they are now on a

bespoke basis. However, costs are believed to be around ten per cent of the original purchase price. Whether this licensing appeals to users remains to be seen, but there's no escaping the fact that Waves plug-ins remain just as attractive and as versatile as ever. [MTM](#)

**MTM summary**

**Key features**

- Digidesign Audiosuite, RTAS (Real Time Audiosuite) and TDM support
- MAS (MOTU Audio System) support (Mac only)
- VST (Virtual Studio Technology) support
- DirectX support (PC only)
- Mac OS X support (VST only)
- 192kHz support on most Native and TDM plug-ins
- Automatable parameters

**Why buy**

- Excellent dynamics and EQ for mixing and mastering
- Creative modulation, pitch and delay effects
- Renaissance plug-ins are easy to use and sound good
- New, versatile Renaissance Channel included

**Walk on by**

- No Audio Units support
- Renaissance Channel external sidechain unimplemented
- No pitch correction or de-noising plug-ins
- Version 4 demands G4 processor for Macs

**Verdict**

Waves 4 Platinum delivers throughout the recording, mixing and mastering process. A comprehensive, professional bundle, it has a price to match.

