Sugar Bytes
Effectrix €99   PC MAC

You may think you've seen it all before, but this plug-in multieffects processor offers something altogether new

> Sugar Bytes are keeping them coming fast and furious these days – it seems like the company trundles out a new plug-in nearly every time we go to press. With a handful of effects devices and even a synthesizer or two, they're nothing if not thorough. More than that, they have a sense of adventure, as displayed by the MIDI-savvy Artillery 2 'effects keyboard'. With Effectrix, they take effects control to the next logical plateau, in the form of a cross-platform VST and AU multi-effects plug-in with a built-in sequencer.

A pile of processing

The idea behind Effectrix seems obvious: pile processes up 14 high and tie them into a grid-based pattern sequencer that allows the different effects (see *Effect tricks* for a rundown) to be activated at various steps. Effects can be layered and synchronised to the host's tempo.

The sequencer itself is pretty simple, and even familiar. The steps in the grid can be divided into quarter-notes, quarter-note triplets, eighth-notes, eighth-note triplets, 16th-notes or 32nd-notes. We wouldn't mind seeing 16th-note triplets and dotted figures too. The delay effect is likewise devoid of dotted figures, though it has a lot more divisions.

Effectrix is, to our way of thinking, best when used live. Real-time processing with it is a blast. You can create multiple patterns and assign them to different keys on your MIDI keyboard for interactive pattern changes. Additionally, playback of the sequencer can be triggered by a MIDI note-on message. Oh, and there's a MIDI learn function, too.

Our favourite feature might be the Modulator Tracks. Each effect gets four of these, and they can be assigned to parameters specific to that effect. Modulation is drawn into the track per step, and a Smoothing option rounds off any abrupt changes. You can also avail yourself of the Random button, which can be clicked to conjure up freeform patterns in the Modulator Tracks.

Even pedestrian passages can spawn a legion of interesting new rhythms with very little effort when

Paint 'em in and stack 'em up! Effectrix presents an exciting new way to use effects

Effectrix is applied. If you don't want to put the work in, you can draw upon the wealth of factory presets. They run the gamut from single-processor sweetening to complex, multilayered freak-outs.

Effectrix is an inspiring plug-in, and ideal for those making glitch, IDM or any form of music with an experimental edge. It's downright addictive, in fact – once you fire it up, it's hard to wrench yourself away from it, and when you do, you'll probably come away with a head full of new ideas. The only thing that might spoil a good time is that the effects are always processed in series, from top to bottom, and while a full-on routing matrix is a pretty big ask, it would be good if there was a way to alter this routing somehow, if even just to change the order in which they modules are arranged. **cm**

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System requirements

PC 1GHz, 128MB RAM, Windows XP
Mac 1GHz CPU, 128MB RAM, OS X 10.4

Test system

Mac 2.16GHz Core 2 Duo, 1GB RAM, OS X 10.4.11, GarageBand, Cubase 4

Alternatively

Novuzeit Sizzle Spine
N/A >> N/A >> $20
Sequenced filtering and distortion

Electronisounds Ubergate
N/A >> N/A >> $30
Multi-effects with pattern-based gate

Verdict

For Brilliantly executed concept
Good effects, especially when combined
Reasonable price
Modulator Tracks!

Against More note divisions, please...
Fixed routing of effects

Effectrix offers both inspiration in the studio, and an intuitive tool for jamming and live performance. It's simply addictive!

8/10

Effect tricks

Taken on their own, Effectrix's effects range from run-of-the-mill to way out and wild. So what's in the box? There is, as you might expect, a reverb, along with delay, chorus and phaser effects. A multiband filter is in tow, accompanied by a 'tonal' delay for pitched echoes. A trio of excellent looping effects are included too, among them a superb scratch looper. Stuttering is supported, and you get a vinyl simulator as well. Further lo-fi treatment is provided by the bit-crusher. There's a cool
reverse effect here, too.

That's a lot of stuff! Each effect sports a smattering of parameters to play with, along with a selection of presets. Better still, a handful of parameters for each process can be assigned to those nifty Modulator Tracks, which work much like the controller pane of your regular sequencer. This kind of power and flexibility is often accompanied by a hit to user-friendliness, but not so with Effectrix, as it's a snap to get around.