

FabFilter Volcano 2 £94 PC MAC

Those fabulous folk from Holland erupt back onto the scene with the follow-up to their acclaimed filter plug-in

> Exciting filter plug-ins don't come along that often, but Volcano 2 is one of the most inspirational effects we've used in a long time. On a purely aesthetic level, it looks far nicer than the garish blue and orange of the original version, but the differences are more than just skin deep...

Volcano 2 is a much more flexible beast than its predecessor. At its core are four multimode filters that can work as low-, band- or high-pass types, with a 12dB, 24dB or 48dB per octave roll-off - ideally, we'd have liked notch and vowel filter types, too. Each has its own Characteristics setting, which offers 11 sonic styles, ranging from Gentle to Extreme. The filters self-oscillate too, though this can be automatically muted.

Three routing modes are available: Stereo, where the signal is run through the four filters in series; Left/Right, where the left and right channels pass through independently configured filters, and Mid/Side, where the signal is split into mid and side components, each of which are filtered separately. The latter is pretty unusual for a filter plug-in, providing great potential for stereo image manipulation. The filters can be linked so that adjusting or modulating the cutoff frequency or resonance of one affects any others it's linked to - useful when creating stereo effects.

Blow your top

The host-syncable modulation system is superficially similar to that of FabFilter's Twin synth; however, rather than being given a fixed number of modulators, you can add or remove them as you see fit. Volcano 2 displays them on a scrolling panel, and it's possible to have up to six envelope generators, four envelope followers, and six LFOs, or as Volcano 2 calls them, XLFOs. XLFOs can have up to 16 steps, with global and per-step glide settings, and each step can use a Sine, Linear or one of two Square curves.

All this offers a heck of a lot more control than the original's LFOs, which couldn't manage a sine LFO. Each modulator can be routed to one or



more parameters by dragging and dropping, and each connection has its own slot in which you can manage the source, destination and polarity of the modulation.

By applying a little know-how (or using the supplied presets), you can also go far beyond the usual resonant filter sweeps. For example, every filter has a Delay setting ranging from 0-50ms - by modulating this, chorus and flanging can be achieved. Similarly, overdriving the filters can create distortion, and the envelope follower can be used to achieve compression.

Overall, Volcano's interface works beautifully, making it a snap to create anything from simple roll-offs to complex rhythmic effects and textures. Thankfully, with FabFilter's famously tasty filter algorithms under the hood, the sound is as slick as the graphics, and the broad range of options only sweetens the deal.

With a stonking sound and incredible flexibility, Volcano 2 is a must for anyone seeking a characterful all-in-one filter solution. **cm**

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System requirements

PC SSE-capable CPU, Windows 98/2000/XP/Vista, RTAS/VST/VST3 host

Mac G4 CPU, OS X 10.3, AU/RTAS/VST/VST3 host

Test system

PC Intel Core 2 Duo, 2GB RAM, Windows XP, Cubase 4

Alternatively

PSP Audioware Nitro cm74 >> 9/10 >> \$149

Flexible filter effect, though it looks a little dated next to Volcano 2

Schwa Oligarc cm128 >> 9/10 >> \$60

Multieffect with myriad modulation possibilities and a great filter

Verdict

For Sounds gorgeous

Attractive, clear interface

Useful sidechain capabilities

11 different filter characteristics

Sophisticated modulation routing

VST3-compatible

Against No notch or vowel filters

Aside from the lack of more exotic filter types, Volcano 2 is hard to fault

9/10

Chain reaction

Volcano 2 actually comes in five different versions: Stereo, Stereo Sidechain, Mono, Mono Sidechain and VST3. The sidechain inputs allow the user to trigger the envelope generator and envelope follower modulation sources from an external audio source. So, for example, you could use a kick drum to activate the high-pass filter on a drum loop, ducking out the low frequencies, enabling the kick to punch through the bottom-end. There are a plethora of possibilities, and the

sidechaining, combined with Volcano 2's mid-side processing abilities, makes it one of the most flexible plug-ins around.

Only Cubase 4 users will be able to appreciate the convenience of the VST3 version of the plug-in, as currently this is the only DAW to support the standard. While the VST3 version doesn't offer any extra features as such, the ease with which the sidechain can be configured via Cubase's mixer makes it much less hassle to set up.