Eventide UltraTap $79

PC MAC

The doyens of DSP have converted one of their oldest and best-known hardware effects algorithms to a software plugin. Lucky us!

> There's no shortage of excellent and innovative delay plugins on the market, but a new one from Eventide – one of the most respected developers of high-end hardware effects in the world – is always big news. The New Jersey-based company have ported a fair few of their sought-after processors to software now, and the latest, UltraTap (VST/AU/AAX), is an emulation of the algorithm of the same name originally found in the classic SP2016 rack mount multi-effect's Factory Program Suite, then their various Ultra-Harmonizers, and most recently the H9 Harmonizer stompbox. In fact, UltraTap is the first in a new range of H9 algorithm plugins from Eventide – the H9 Plug-In Series, no less.

Spread 'em

UltraTap can, of course, be synced to host, set to the tempo of your choice (by dragging the tempo field or repeatedly clicking the Tap Tempo button), or run free with timings expressed in milliseconds, seconds and Hz, rather than BPM and note values.

The Taps knob sets the number of delay repeats from 1-64, while Pre-Delay holds off their onset by up to 1s. Length sets the duration over which the taps are spaced, from 0ms to 10s, and Spread tilts the spacing bias of the taps towards the start or end of the delay line. With Spread at 0, the taps are evenly distributed, each following the preceding one by the same amount of time. As the Spread parameter is positively increased, the taps being to bunch up at the end of the series, creating a sort of speeding up effect as they progress. Turn Spread anticlockwise and the taps start to group at the beginning, resulting in a slowing down effect. The distance the knob is turned affects the shape of the grouping, too. From 0 to +/-50 the spacing increase/decrease is linear, and beyond that – +/-51 to +/-100 – the progression of spacing becomes exponential, ramping up more steeply the further the parameter is pushed.

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The Taper control applies the same operation to volume. At the 0 centre point, all taps output at the same level. Turning Taper clockwise dials in an increasingly deep fade-out through the taps, while turning it anticlockwise causes them to fade in. As with the Spread knob, the shape of

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the fade curve varies across the parameter range – linear from 0 to +/-50 and exponential from +/-51 to +/-100.

Ribbon and stealth

Panning of the taps is handled by the Width control. At the centre position, all taps come straight down the middle, but twisting it in either direction alternates them between left and right, starting on the side to which the knob has been turned, and ultimately resulting in hard panning at either extreme.

The Tone and Slurm parameters shape the character of the delay line. Tone is a one-knob EQ/filter – turn clockwise to brighten the sound and anticlockwise to darken it. Slurm combines feedback-based (we assume) slurring, stereo pitch modulation and filtering, for gentle chorusing, smearing and high-frequency blunting – all very effective when using UltraTap as a reverb.

At the bottom of the interface, the Ribbon slider – first seen in Eventide's stupendous Blackhole (9/10, **cm**181) – is a macro control that morphs between two complete plugin states. The left/right range of each knob is defined by dragging the two dots around its collar, or clicking the button at either end of the ribbon to put it into 'learn' mode, and moving knobs to capture their positions at that end of the range. Dragging the 'electric arc' left and right transitions all knobs smoothly through their set ranges, and clicking anywhere in the Ribbon jumps them instantly to their interpolated positions at that point.

The Hotswitch button is similar in concept, jumping between two parameter states. Hold it down til it starts blinking, position your knobs as desired, click again to return everything to the pre-blinking state, then click to toggle between the two states.

The Ribbon and Hotswitch open UltraTap up to experimentation and live manipulation, particularly when hooked up to the Tone, Slurm and Length controls. They're both quick to set up, fun to play with (hardwired to MIDI CCs 1 and 3) and frequently inspirational.

UltraTap's preset library includes the full H9 factory bank and loads of artist setups

Strange delays

UltraTap was clearly built for deployment at the more experimental end of the delay usage spectrum. The lack of per-tap delay timings make it comparatively inflexible as a regular multitap delay, but the sheer number of taps it generates, the adjustment and modulation of their distribution and gain, and the fabulous Slurm control, define it as a splendid generator of wilder echoes, 'bouncing' effects, ping-pongs, crescendos, reverbs and weird spatialising treatments. The Chop section (see *Chop shop*), meanwhile, lends it enthusiastically to tremolo, stuttering, time-bending and all sorts of 'micro-edit'-style processing. The sound is rich, clean and expansive, and a well-stocked library of presets, including the full H9 factory bank and plenty of artist submissions (Sasha, Chris Carter, Headsnack et al), does a great job of demonstrating the possibilities.

A unique, versatile and powerful plugin for sound design and creative mixing, UltraTap brings Eventide's classic effect to the DAW in style, and at a very fair price. **cm**

Web www.eventideaudio.com

The Chop controls are the keys to unlocking UltraTap's rhythmic potential

Chop shop

The Chop section – comprising the Chop knob and the contextual knob to its right – offers four modes of input volume modulation, serving as an LFO, envelope generator (Swell) or gate (Trigger), or reassigning the Ribbon as a delay input level controller. Turning Chop clockwise switches through the modes. The first half of its travel sweeps through triangle, saw, ramp, square and S+H LFO waves; the centre point activates Ribbon mode; the third quarter enters Sweep envelope mode and raises its input sensitivity; and the final quadrant does the same for Trigger gate mode. The knob to the right jumps accordingly between adjusting LFO Speed, Swell Rise time and Trigger gate release time.

The LFO ranges from 1-20Hz, and is ideal for wobbling sustained sounds – although with no sine wave option or depth control, the titular 'Chop' cap certainly fits. Swell mode applies a controllable volume ramp, while Trigger mode pulls slices out of beats, vocals, etc, ripe for turning into buzzes and glitches with the delay engine.

Chop adds another layer of rhythmic and dynamic interest to UltraTap. We'd prefer a mode switch or buttons, though, with the Chop knob just selecting the LFO waveform and setting input sensitivity.

Alternatively

EAReckon EARebound
cm192 » 9/10 » €99
Brilliant 16-tap delay with saturation, filtering and modulation galore

D16 Tekturon
cm246 » 9/10 » €69
A Pandora's box of rhythmic and spatial delay possibilities

Verdict

For Unique architecture
Wide range of effects
Beautiful sound
Ribbon macro and Hotswitch
Mix Lock for auditioning presets without losing wet/dry mix

Against Chop knob would be better with a mode switch

Mad delays, far-out reverbs and more, all with that signature Eventide sound

9/10