"LOW END TRICK"
Cut and boost the low frequencies for bass enhancement

DIP
ME 1B's cut-only filter partners with PE 1C perfectly

POWER
Each module in Classic Channel can be turned off

MID/SIDE
New in Mk II, Classic Channel can work in M/S mode

PE 1C
Mirrors the classic Pultec EQP-1A passive tube EQ

LINK CHANNELS
Edit both stereo channels together or independently

ME 1B
A clone of the Pultec MEQ-5 'midrange' EQ

DRY/WET MIX
Apply parallel compression with this new knob

CL 1B
This compressor draws on the LA-2A design

ATTACK/RELEASE
Set Fixed or Manual timings, or a bit of both

SIDECHAIN BUS SELECT
Choose internal or external keying

PRESET BROWSER
Huge and annoying. We're not big fans

Softube PC MAC

Tube-Tech Complete Collection Mk II $449

The originals are long gone, and the hardware clones will break your bank – but that Pultec and Teletronix magic can still be yours in software...

> Almost a decade after the launch of their trio of native Tube-Tech valve EQ and compressor emulations, Softube have collectively upgraded and tweaked them to take advantage of today's much more powerful Macs and PCs, and their higher-spec displays, and thrown in a couple of completely new features to sweeten the upgrade deal.

As was the case with its predecessor, Tube-Tech Complete Collection Mk II centres on plugin (VST/AU/AAX) virtualisations of Tube-Tech's PE 1C (which originally scored 8/10 in *cm* 156) and ME 1B (8/10, *cm*167) EQs, and the CL 1B compressor (9/10, *cm*150).

The first and most obvious of the bigger changes, however, is that the EQs now come combined in a single plugin rather than being provided as two separate ones. As before, you can buy the MK II plugins individually, bundled with their older 'legacy' versions as the Tube-Tech EQ Collection ($199) and Compressor

Collection ($299); but grabbing the full Tube-Tech Complete Collection Mk II not only lowers the price of both together but also nets you the Tube-Tech Classic Channel, which unifies the three Mk II processors in a single channel strip-style plugin.

The second obvious change for Mk II is in the graphics department. The whole lot has been given the Retina/Hi-DPI treatment, and made much bigger for easier mousing, while the dual EQ simply stacks the two previous plugins on top of each other. The pointless brown borders and overly realistic 'lighting' on the stepped knobs have been ditched, too, and that, thankfully, gives the GUIs a cleaner, more contemporary look.

Existing owners of the Complete Collection can upgrade for $99, incidentally, and for those unfamiliar with the original Tube-Tech hardware, a quick history lesson can be found in *On the Tube-Tech*.

PE 1C and ME 1B EQ
Just like the real Tube-Tech boxes (and the Pultec originals before them) the idea behind the PE 1C and ME 1B 'passive' EQs has generally always been to use them in series, with PE 1C handling high and low shelving and mid-range boost, and ME 1B following up with high and low boost, and its sweepable mid-range 'Dip' bell. It's perfectly reasonable, then, that Softube have stuck them together in a single plugin, with each section including its own power button, facilitating individual usage. Strangely, though, the two EQs can't be reordered, so the only way to run ME 1B before PE 1C (unconventional, we know) is to load two plugins and bypass one of the EQs in each. Not a great chore, but a routing switch would be preferable nonetheless.

Softube's PE 1C sounded the business already, and with its improved engine, Mk II feels perhaps a touch silkier, but it's a very subtle difference, if any. Dialling in the 'low-end trick'

> ## "Mk II is smoother, punchier and more responsive, and less prone to distortion with fast attack times"

(boosting and attenuating the Low Frequency band simultaneously) is a good test of any EQP-1A or derivative thereof, and PE 1C Mk II handles with aplomb, bringing the best out in kick drums and basses. Again, though, the difference between it and Mk I is anything but profound – upgraders be aware.

It's the same story with ME 1B, which models the Low and High Peak filters, and all-important overlapping 0.2-7kHz bell-shaped cut filter of the real thing beautifully.

Softube claim that nothing major has been changed with the EQs apart from their repackaging as a single plugin, which may have a minor effect on the sound. Ultimately, then, these are the same wonderfully musical, warm and natural sounding Tube-Tech EQs we've known and loved since 2010.

CL 1B and Classic Channel

While the two EQs are basically unchanged, the LA-2A-inspired CL 1B opto compressor has been rebuilt from scratch, and now includes a sidechain low-cut filter (80 or 220Hz), and a dry/wet mix control for parallel processing. The remaining parameters are unchanged, including the option of Fixed or Manual Attack and Release settings (the former no longer paralysing the two knobs, confusingly), or a combination of both, which simplifies timing adjustment; compression Ratios up to 10:1; and an external sidechain input.

With its fast attack and smooth release, and rich, colourful sound, this has long been one of the best software compressors that money can buy for vocals, basses, guitars and the (largely non-percussive) like, but Mk II is noticeably smoother, punchier and more responsive, and less prone to distortion with fast attack times. It's fabulous.

Finally, Classic Channel piles all three processors up in a single plugin, giving you the further option to place the EQs pre or post compression, a choice of left/right or mid/side processing, and the ability to unlink L/M and R/S for independent parameter adjustment of each. Handy, indeed.

PE 1C and ME 1B: software clones of Tube-Tech's hardware clones

On the Tube-Tech

Danish manufacturers Lydkraft have been building pro audio equipment since the 70s, but it wasn't until the mid-80s that the Tube-Tech brand for which they're now primarily known came into being, with the release of a pair of vintage EQ clones and a compressor inspired by another classic box. In 1991, the three were updated to house the transformers and tubes on printed circuit boards, and they've remained true to that design ever since, as the PE 1C, ME 1B and CL 1B.

The PE 1C and ME 1B are essentially remakes of Pultec's revered EQP-1A and MEQ-5 passive tube EQs. The PE 1C is all but indistinguishable from the American original, while the ME 1B broadens the MEQ-5's three frequency bands for an even smoother response. The CL 1B, meanwhile, has become a legend in its own right, standing as a similar but more modern sounding, controllable and thus versatile alternative to the Teletronix LA-2A compressor/limiter, and selling more units than anything else in the Tube-Tech catalogue.

Happily, Softube's virtual versions of these incredible but prohibitively expensive processors were developed in conjunction with Tube-Tech themselves, so their authenticity certainly isn't in doubt.

Soft sell

While CL 1B is awkwardly expensive on its own, we'd describe Tube-Tech Complete Collection Mk II as reasonable value, since the quality of all four plugins is truly exceptional. However, we do think the upgrades from the previous versions should be free, as while the new CL 1B modelling and mix control, and stereo configuration options are great, they're not gamechanging.

Economics aside (and disregarding Softube's intrusive, overblown new preset browser), this is a fantastic set of vintage-style, 'tube'-powered mixing effects, easy to work with and fair dripping with musicality and analogue soul.

Web www.softube.com

Alternatively

IK Multimedia White 2A
cm168 » 9/10 » €120
Stonking LA-2A emulation, but obviously lacking the control of Tube-Tech/Softube's successor

Waves PuigTec EQs
NA » NA » $299
Replications of Jack Joseph Puig's personal Pultec EQP-1A and MEQ-5

Verdict

For CL 1B compressor is so, *so* good
Dual EQ configuration makes sense
All three sound fantastic
M/S option and dry/wet mix on CL 1B
Console 1 compatible

Against Intrusive preset manager
EQs can't be reordered

Existing users might feel a little short-changed, but the definitive virtual Tube-Techs look and sound better than ever

9/10

CL 1B is the only one of Tube-Tech Complete Collection MK II's plugins to have been fully remodelled