

Effect Rack Plugins

These all-in-one effects processors give you the tools, the work surface and the results in a single package... but which is the right one for you?

FM | MUST HAVE!

kiloHearts Snap Heap

Free – €299

With Snap Heap, you get 27 processors (also known as Snapins) to load into a hosting shell, where they can be routed in serial or parallel configuration. Modules include 3-Band EQ, Compressor, Delay and Reverb, as well as more unusual processors such as Hass, Trance Gate, Phase Distortion and Formant Filter. 27 of the Snapins are also available individually as plugins in your DAW, and available for multiband fun in kiloHearts' Multipass plugin.

As well as setting up routing, you can get jiggy with modulating their parameters, with two LFOs, two envelopes, a detected pitch control and MIDI input onboard as sources. These work well, with

good visual feedback, although they can be fiddly to assign on larger screens, and the pitch detector is a bit hit or miss.

Despite the price, there's a free version of Snap Heap with seven basic Snapins, and you can buy elements individually, too.

kilohearts.com

VERDICT 8.9



Soundtoys 5 \$499

You may well already be a fan of the Soundtoys plugins, and for good reason, but version 5 of the package added an entire rack system – the Effect Rack – letting you use all of them together in one instance to route and tangle with all at once.

All the full-version Soundtoys plugins – EchoBoy, Decapitator, Filter Freak – are available to drag into the main rack from the right-hand bar. The smaller, 'Little' edition plugins are absent, however. There are also global controls for the rack itself, such as global tempo and syncing, Input and Output gain, and a Recycle parameter that acts like a feedback control.

The famous Soundtoys quality of processing is on show here, for sure, and there are plenty of preset formulations to get you started, but there's little flexibility for signal routing or modulation in Effect Rack. All said and done, it's still a great bonus when included with the rest of the set.

soundtoys.com

VERDICT 8.4



Propellerhead Reason £299

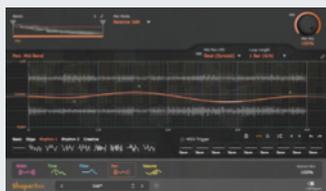
Thanks to JACK Audio Connection Kit and Soundflower, with a bit of routing know-how, you can pipe any sound into Reason with the use of a virtual input device. Getting the audio back to your DAW can be done in the same way or via ReWire, but however you do it, Reason can act as a dedicated effects processor, with access to

the classic effects in the rack and a lot more.

This gives you the processing power of your favourite classic Reason effects from the past – M-Class EQ, Stereo Imager, Maximizer, PH-90 Phaser, etc – as well as the Propellerhead effects released in the last few years – Softube Amps, Audiomatic Retro Transformer, RV7000 MkII, Pulveriser and Synchronous, depending on your licence. There are plenty more Rack Extensions created just for Reason, and even VST 2.4 plugins, depending how you're running the software. It's a faff to set up, but having your effects in one place is undeniably useful... and even fun.

propellerheads.se

VERDICT 7.8



Cableguys ShaperBox \$170

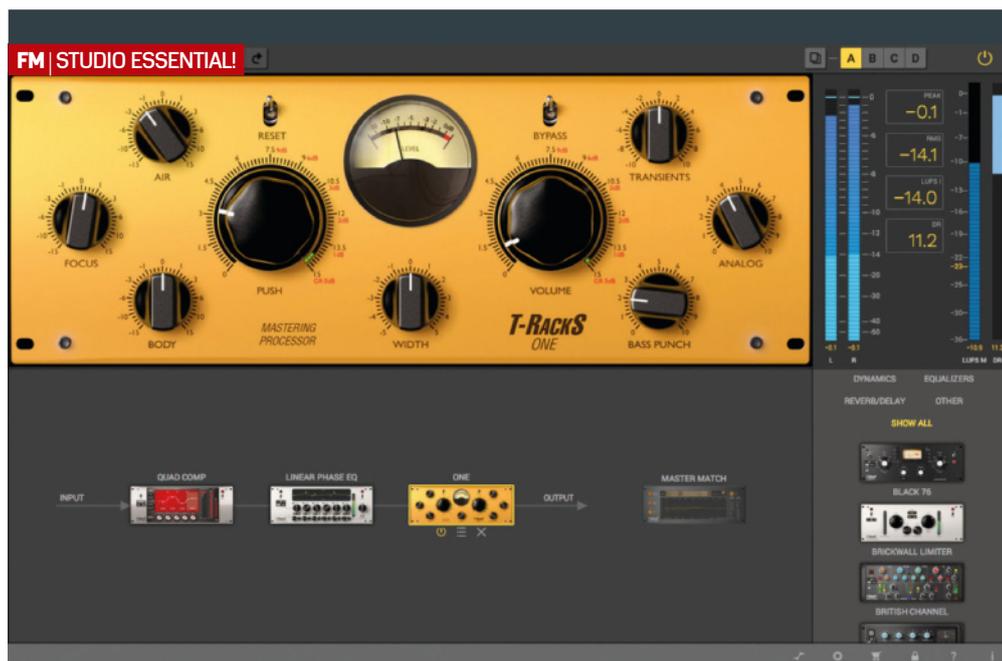
ShaperBox lets you combine up to five 'Shaper' processors – TimeShaper, VolumeShaper, PanShaper, WidthShaper and FilterShaper Core – in a unified modulation toolbox; one plugin is all it takes to get rhythmic panning, width, level, filtering and time-bending effects all together.

From here you can draw separate patterns for each processor using curve or step tools, and assign patterns to input MIDI for on-the-fly or programmed sonic animation. Each effect gets its own timebase, and can be split into two or three bands with a Mix parameter for each.

ShaperBox is a creative tool par excellence; while a little goes a long way, restrained effects aren't the only option. The five Shapers aren't available as individual plugins, but can be purchased separately, so you can pick your favoured rhythmic audio processors or opt for the complete ShaperBox 'pack of five'.

cableguys.com

VERDICT 8.9



IK Multimedia T-RackS 5 Custom Shop Free – €180

T-RackS [somehow pronounced 'Tracks'] is a mixing and mastering workstation with a selection of processors to get the job done in almost any situation. With a selection of versions from the free 'Custom Shop' edition (extra modules are paid upgrades), through the standard, Deluxe and MAX packages, you can choose your toolkit based on your budget.

To add to the rack, you can get emulated channel strips, reverbs, delays, EQs, compressors and limiters, each with its own processing bent for specialty processing – creative, musically rich effects for mixing, against clean, precise tools for mastering. The plugin host is custom-resizable, there's pretty comprehensive metering, A/B/C/D variations, and plenty of presets. Routing can be done in serial or parallel, although you can only view one effect's controls at a time.

At the end of the chain is the Master Match module, which helps you reference other sources and bring your material up to scratch with them. You can also use T-RackS standalone as a mastering editor, trying different chains for different audio clips. These useful additions make T-RackS a great candidate for amateur or pro mastering setups.

ikmultimedia.com

VERDICT 9.1