Get with the programmers

We talk to the company who made it their business to emulate others while still breaking the mould

Softube

Henrik Andersson Vogel

cm Tell us how Softube began and how it's grown...

HAV "It all started as a research project when the founders, Oscar and Niklas, were studying digital signal processing at University. They thought it must be possible to do a better job at modelling guitar amps than what was on the market at the time. When they founded the company – this is 2003 – the idea was not to release products under the Softube brand name, but purely to help other companies develop new products. That changed over the years, and the first Softube plugin was released in 2007: Vintage Amp Room. We still work for other companies, though, and we've developed for Fender, Marshall, Native Instruments, TC Electronic and others."

cm You recently launched your first hardware product, Console 1, an integrated software/hardware mixing solution. What aspect of Console 1 are you most proud of?

HAV "I think that we're most proud of the fact that it really does what we intended – it doesn't only give you the analogue sound from the SSL 4000 E console, it also gives you super-fast and intuitive workflow."

cm What was Softube's greatest challenge in analogue modelling?

HAV "Probably the super-famous tube opto limiter we modelled for Native Instruments' VC2A. The light source doesn't only vary in intensity, but also in colour, and the opto resistor reacts to that. So the unit's response was very difficult to model, and it took a lot of trial and error to get it right."

cm You've just formed a strategic partnership with Marshall. Will there be Marshall-branded amp plugins some day?

HAV "It was fantastic creating the JMD:1 series amps with Marshall. They're probably the most well-known company in our entire business, so it's a fantastic honour that they chose to work with us. There are a number of products in the works, and you'll see them all in due time!"

> "There's no difference in sound between our native plugins and their UAD-2 equivalents"

cm You've developed plugins for Universal Audio's UAD-2 platform. Why? And does the UAD-2 version of a plugin sound "better" or "different" to its native equivalent?

HAV "We've released some of our native plugins on the UAD-2/Apollo platform. We think the UAD-2 users are loyal to the platform and prefer to buy UAD-2 plugins rather than native ones, so releasing our products there doesn't cannibalise our native sales. To settle the debate: There is absolutely no difference in sound between our native plugins and their UAD-2 equivalents."

cm What's coming next from Softube? Any piece of hardware you'd love to model some day?

HAV "We've been working on another console emulation for Console 1. It's not what you'd expect, but after that, we'll do two that people have been asking us for. We also have a very cool plugin coming out that I'm quite sure will raise an eyebrow or two..."

www.softube.com

Eisenberg Vier

Eisenberg's new synthesiser plugin for PC and Mac (VST/AU/RTAS) models the Doepfer MS-404, which itself is said to ape Roland's TB-303, making Vier something of a meta-emulation. The German developer of Einklang has gone further, though, giving you four such units stuffed into one plugin.

Multiple layers of synth goodness means cross-modulation – LFOs and envelopes from one voice can be patched to other voices' parameters, and there are macro controls so you can group parameters together for more complex and interesting movement. It's out now for €99.

READ MORE bit.ly/eisenbergvier

Sinevibes Molecule

The latest plugin to roll off the Sinevibes Mac Audio Units production line is a multiband processor that enables you to split your sound into three frequency bands – low, mid and high – and then process each of these with different effects.
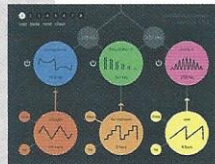
The list of included processors features the likes of comb filter, chorus ensemble and frequency shifter, as well as barber-pole phaser, circuit-bent filter and digital- and analogue-style distortion.

Each band is also equipped with its own tempo-synchronised modulator with multiple waveforms and real-time randomisation. Molecule is available now priced at $39.

READ MORE sinevib.es

PluginBoutique VirtualCZ

Designed for pad, lead, bass, percussion and rave organ sounds, VirtualCZ (AU/VST/AAX) models the Casio CZ-101's synth engine (it can actually load and transmit CZ SysEx patches) and offers simpler editing controls, switchable envelope generators and Unison modes.

It's got two Phase Distortion oscillators per voice, six loopable envelope generators per voice (switchable between easy-to-use ADSR and powerful CZ-style eight-stage MSEG modes), a tempo-syncable LFO for vibrato, with 7 shapes, Ring Modulation and Noise Modulation, 32 voice polyphonic/mono/legato modes and loads more. It's £60.

READ MORE pluginboutique.com

TBProAudio GainRider

Designed foremost for vocal signals, GainRider (AU/VST/RTAS) lets you dial in level-adjustment rules to smooth out signals in a transparent manner.

By setting Sensitivity, TargetLevel and Range parameters, you can basically tell GainRider to compensate for any changes in volume in real-time, ideally bringing the output level to hang closely around a consistent average. There are also some potential creative uses.

Judge for yourself over at the TBProAudio website, where you can download a demo or get GainRider for €59.

READ MORE bit.ly/TBGainRider