

review

d16 Group Redoptor

a t o c l o a b k e a o b r o i

by Ginno Legaspi

d16 Group, the software developers known to emulate classic Roland beatboxes, are becoming increasingly popular by releasing affordable, yet good sounding plug-ins. They have added yet another effect to their Silverline lineup. This time it is in the guise of Redoptor: a software emulation of a vintage tube preamp. That is the official release description, but there's so much more to it that I see it as a multi-functional plug-in. d16's web page doesn't reveal if Redoptor is modeled after a specific piece of hardware, but they did mention that this plug-in is of high-quality and that it has a very precisely modeled tube distortion section. This got me curious, so let's take a look.

Redoptor costs 35 Eur and it comes in AU and VST formats for both Mac (OSX 10.4.3) and PC (Win 2000/XP). If you happen to buy the whole Silverline bundle or the Total plug-in bundle, d16 gives you a substantial savings of up to 26% off. Once you buy a license and install the product,

activating it is a piece of cake. Just copy the key file provided by d16 to your plug-ins folder. Once you start your host/DAW it is ready for unlimited use.

Launching the product for the first time reveals Redoptor's fantastic looking GUI. And like the other Silverline products, it looks like the GUI has been lifted from an 80's hi-fi stereo--really cool. I love it because it adds a bit of the fun factor to using the plug-in. I thought the little add-on tube image has some kind of function or hid an Easter egg surprise. But, it did nothing for me. Displaying it there is neat, nonetheless. Navigating is easy; the various controls are pretty much straightforward and it does what it's supposed to do.

Redoptor's various modules are broken down into different sections. It contains a Preamp Gain (which can be overdriven) complete with adjustable lo/hi-pass filter. This will allow for sound shaping of source materials

before it's amplified and fed to the next stage. The Tube Control consists of tone shaping knobs for Bias, Tone, and Brightness. These controls will sculpt the sound in terms of harmonics generated by the tube distortion. They can control the harmonics in a more or less subtle/noisy way, but testing Redoptor in Orion 7.6 definitely improved presence and warmth of the souce materials I tried. With highly usuable stock presets, I managed to dial-in the right one for an Industrial/EBM-style drum pattern I programmed to give it that "in-your-face-sound."

When you think of tube distortion effects, people mostly associate it with guitars. But non-six-stringed instruments such as synth basses, synths arps and percussive loops can also benefit from Redoptor as I have stated. If experimentation and tweaking is your game, slight parameter adjustments will give the distortion and rich harmonics you need. Finally, a 4-band parametric



equalizer section will further process the tone of your signal. It allows you to tweak the Frequency, Gain and Bandwidth (Q). d16 states that most typical amps available have a fixed graphical equalizer, with 3 or 4 bands and only allow gain of the signal. With Redoptor's EQ, the bands are controllable making it more flexible and unique.

As I come to expect from d16, Redoptor is a very high-quality tube distortion plug-in. It is capable of wearing different "sound masks." It can give digital instruments a vintage, older-quality sound. It can be pleasant, warm and clean one minute, yet it can distort your audio material like there's no tomorrow. One thing I learned in processing loops is that it is sometimes good to apply a bit of saturation or subtle distortion to make them "jump-right-out-of-the-speakers". Redoptor fits perfectly for this job because it imparts a good tube sound - giving new life to older drum and percussion loops. The results can be satisfying with this trick. And trust me, Redoptor is up to the task.



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PRICE: €35

(Silverline Collection and Total Bundle are also available)

COPY PROTECTION: Key file

FORMAT/SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Redoptor is available in VST and AU format for PC and Mac. It's a dynamic library (.dll file) for PC (VST only) and Universal Binary bundle for Mac (VST and AU). To use the product you need Windows 2000/XP or Mac OS X 10.4.3 or later. It is not a standalone program, so you need a VST or AU compatible host application to use it.