PROCESSING
Dial in the four 'Standard' effects with the big knobs

SIGNAL PATH
ERA-D's two modules can operate in series or parallel

DE-NOISE
Dial in the noise reduction in Single or Dual mode

DE-REVERBERATION
Reduce the reverb to effectively dry out any source signal

AUTO GAIN
Reverb Remover can maintain consistent output levels

ADVANCED OPTIONS
Tweak ERA-D's action in detail

OUTPUT LEVEL
Cut or boost the output to make up for gain changes

FREQUENCY TARGETING
Hone in on particular types of noise

A/B COMPARISON
All five plugins feature two-state switching

DE-ESSER MODE
Focus the de-essing process on one of three bandwidths

NORMAL/EXTREME
Kick Plosive Remover into harder reduction when required

INTENSE
If De-Esser isn't working hard enough, click this...

Accusonus
PC MAC
ERA Bundle Pro $349

This accessible restoration and repair suite comprises five seemingly voodoo-powered plugins for fixing up your audio

> Rolling their ERA range of audio restoration and repair plugins (VST/AU/AAX) into a single package, Accusonus' ERA Bundle Pro aims to provide all the tools required for cleaning up dialogue and vocals, sketchy instrumental and location recordings, found sounds, etc. It comprises five plugins in total, four of them – Noise Remover, Reverb Remover, Plosive Remover and De-Esser – working their magic primarily through the operation of just one knob each. The fifth, the ERA-D reverb and noise suppressor (see *Keep a hand free for ERA-D*), is a more involved affair. The saving made over buying all five individually comes to $185, and for those on a tight budget, the cheaper ERA Bundle Standard ditches ERA-D (which sells for $299 on its own) to bring the price down to $129.

A new ERA
The developers make great claims as to the effectiveness of their patented reduction

algorithms, which enable complex and 'intelligent' behind-the-scenes processes to be governed by a single user-facing control. The obvious benefit of this approach is exceptional ease of use, while the potential downside, of course, is a lack of editability and depth. Accusonus would no doubt suggest that the latter isn't an issue, as the algorithms are smart

"Accusonus would suggest that the algorithms are smart enough to get it 'right' on their own"

enough to get it 'right' on their own; and with purely corrective/restorative plugins like these, where 'right' and 'wrong' could be seen as objectively meaningful terms (noise, reverb, plosives and sibilance are either present or absent, right?), they could conceivably have a point. However, it's the other stuff that the algorithms introduce as a by-product of their spectral filtering activities that we need to be concerned about. Neutralising sonic undesirables inevitably means adding audible artefacts at some point, so how well those two considerations can be balanced with so little in the way of adjustable parameters is key.

All four Standard plugins adhere to this 'one-knob' design, presented in a handsome standardised interface that uses colour to differentiate between them. The other common controls beyond that all-important big dial consist of a bypass button, an output level slider, an A/B comparison switch (for flicking between

"It works a treat, achieving supremely transparent results every time"

two independent setups) and a GUI scaling menu (100/150/200%). Each then has one or two bespoke control elements that play a part in its specific remedial processing. Let's start with an old acquaintance...

ERA Noise Remover

We reviewed ERA Noise Remover – under its original name, ERA-N – in **cm**242, where it scored 9/10. Nothing's changed since then, and this is still a superlative tidy-upper of vocal and speech recordings that can even take the filth out of instrumental material, as long as you can work around some shortening of tails and sustains. Focus the reduction on the High, Low, Mid or High and Low frequency ranges (or not) using the switches at the bottom, twist the Processing knob and marvel at the disappearance of all that hiss and hum, then back it off a touch when artefacts start to crop up.

ERA Reverb Remover

It's the same premise with the plugin previously known as ERA-R, but this time melting away reverberation and ambience – frequency-wide or targeted – rather than constant background noise. Reverb Remover comes across as even more miraculous than Noise Remover, doing a truly stunning job of drying out spacious signals. Again, sustains start to suffer eventually, but by the time the Processing knob reaches that point, enough reverb has usually been denied to more than make the point. This one also includes an Auto gain compensation switch.

ERA Plosive Remover

Dedicated solely to the removal of microphone air impact sounds (ie, the booming pops delivered by the letter 'p' when a pop shield isn't used or the vocalist is too close to the mic), Plosive Remover has two levels of processing 'depth': Normal and Extreme, the latter for really heinous offenders. It 'just works', smoothing out its target miscreants with impeccable transparency unless pushed harder than you'll probably ever need to push it, whereupon the levels can get very jumpy indeed.

ERA De-Esser

Last but not least, De-Esser flattens sibilance (excessive 's' sounds) in vocals and cymbals,

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ERA-D is on a different level altogether to the other four plugins

Keep a hand free for ERA-D

We awarded ERA-D 9/10 way back in cm225, and Accusonus' combination noise and reverb reduction plugin is every bit as impressive now as it was three years ago.

The De-Noise and De-Reverberation modules can be employed independently, or together in series (Cascade) or parallel; and as well as regular mono and stereo processing, each can incorporate the signal from a second microphone as a reference point for improving that of the main mic. In Cascade and Parallel modes, the two modules share "estimation" data, treating noise and reverb as related and intertwined, with the goal of simply delivering a clean, dry output.

Although the two main knobs serve the same noise/reverb reducing role as they do in Noise and Reverb Remover, here much more control is given over the particulars of the algorithms. The pop-out Advanced panel houses sliders for tweaking adaptation speeds (Time Constant), switching between three different noise reduction styles, and applying "musical" and "impulsive" artefact suppression. Further to that, ERA-D is a multiband device, with separate post-processing Intensity modifier knobs for each of its four fully adjustable bands. Powerful stuff for the professional audio-restoration maven.

focusing on either of two fixed frequency bandwidths (Normal and Narrow), or the whole signal (Broad), and with an Intensity switch for increasing the strength of attenuation. Once again, it works a treat, achieving supremely transparent results every time, even on the hissiest of singers.

In conclusion, the ERA plugins' couldn't-be-simpler workflow does indeed prove hugely effective, thanks to the accuracy, tight calibration and general smarts of the algorithms beavering away under the hood. Noise really does disappear; reverb really is pushed down; plosives and sibilance really are completely sorted. We did find ourselves wishing for a 'difference' monitoring option on De-Esser and Reverb Remover at times, so we could hear exactly what it was that they were taking away – as is standard on most alternatives – but that was all we missed.

For music production, where the finest details of individual sounds in isolation aren't as mission critical as they are with, say, voiceover production, we'd recommend the Standard Bundle over Pro. In that context, Noise and Reverb Remover are so good at what they do that ERA-D probably doesn't warrant the much bigger spend, superb though it is. **cm**

Web www.accusonus.com

Alternatively

iZotope RX 6 Standard
cm245 » 10/10 » £315
This surgical spectral audio editor includes a shedload of restoration modules and plugins

Zynaptiq Repair Bundle
NA » NA » €799
The acclaimed Unveil, Unfilter and Unchirp, all in one place. Costs more than twice as much, though

Verdict

For Foolproof one-knob interfaces
Lack of detailed editing rarely an issue
Excellent for sorting dialogue and vocals
ERA-D is amazing
Standard Bundle is a bargain

Against No 'difference' monitoring for the four Standard plugins

ERA-D is undoubtedly the star of the ERA Bundle show, but we love the simplicity and sound of its four one-knob siblings

8/10