

Lo-fi effects

Bring back the imperfections that engineers worked tirelessly to remove, with our plugin selection



RC-20 Retro Color €80

A cavalcade of various and useful sound-crappierisers, RC-20 Retro Color is a true dusty gem in your plugins folder. You get six modules – Noise, Wobble, Distort, Digital, Space and Magnetic – to imbue specific types of crusty audio effects onto tracks and buses. Each has unique settings to customise the effect it pumps out, and a further Flux slider to bring even more randomness to proceedings. The modules can be switched on or off, but one obvious omission here is the inability to change their order. The fixed signal path is a reasonable catch-all for most uses, but an option to swap things around wouldn't have been hard to implement. Best used sparingly on the master, although capable of being slapped across every track or submix on tamer settings, RC-20 Retro Color is a thoroughly convincing take on the tools needed for emulating old-school production. It's incredibly fun, nostalgic, and true to lo-fi life. Oh, and if it wasn't obvious already – it sounds awesome.

xlnaudio.com

VERDICT 9.4



Initial Audio Analog Pro £60

Emulating the sounds of tube, tape, vinyl, VHS, other circuits, and even some left-field environment-inspired sounds (Outside Club, Atmosphere...), Analog Pro is a slick plugin that pulls off most of what you need to get the dirt into your digital productions. You choose between Tube, Tape and Vinyl distortion types, and dial in the Amount with the unmissable big knob. Each distortion type shares the same Emphasis, Stereo and High/Low Filter controls, among a smattering more. But that's about it. Analog Pro sounds great, but there are few controls to customise your sound compared to the other plugins here. 23 presets tie them all together, but there feels like some missing depth here. initialaudio.com

VERDICT 8.2



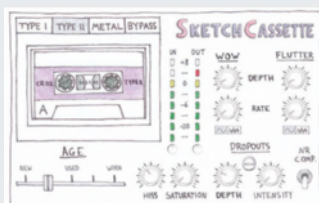
Psycho Modulation VectoMelt \$74

Extending their penchant for VHS-style sound degradation after their EchoMelt plugin, Psycho Modulation made VectoMelt to have a similar delay-meets-VHS feeling, although this time they added in an X/Y pad to modulate the movement of the effects. The result is a sometimes-subtle, sometimes-eerie, but always retro sound, with loads of tweakability. The charm of VHS comes from chorusing, EQ, and a tiny bit of distortion being introduced. But add that in with an echoing delay processor, and put in plenty of feedback taps between the two, and you've got a very unique and creative degradation effect. Both axes of the X/Y pad control Pitch, Chorus, Amp, Echo and Pan in the amount you set, and the Flex panel lets you modulate the position of the intersection in any way you can

imagine. VectoMelt is an idiosyncratic lo-fi tool. It's extremely powerful at what it does, although that means it takes a while to get used to. If you're willing to put the work in, it's endlessly rewarding.

psychicmodulation.com

VERDICT 8.8



Aberrant DSP SketchCassette \$20

A labour of love to recreate an old four-track recorder in a plugin, SketchCassette has a cute, hand-drawn interface, and while that doesn't always translate well to plugin form, in this case it works great, only adding to the experience of nostalgia. Choose your tape type between Type I, Type II and Metal, and crank that fader down anywhere between New, Old and Worn settings to instantly imbue your audio with that low-rent sound of tape. There are plenty of tape emulators out there, but few are geared towards the consumer cassettes that producers of a certain age will remember with fondness. This plugin is a touching tribute, though, and pulls the sonics off just right.

aberrantdsp.com

VERDICT 8.8



iZotope Vinyl FREE

A quick mention should be reserved for this venerable vinyl emulator, which helped to kickstart iZotope on its rise to plugin power. While Vinyl is heavily specialised in one type of effect (guess which!), its immediacy, its tweakability and its sonics make it an essential, and its lack of a price-tag makes it a no-brainer.

izotope.com

VERDICT 9.0



AudioThing VinylStrip

€55

In the same vein as RC-20 Retro Color, this is a one-stop channel strip plugin for all sorts of degradation effects, both analogue and digital: compression, distortion, reverb, EQ, vinyl and sampler. What's more convenient than RC-20 is VinylStrip's ability to drag and drop those modules into any order; what's less convenient is the paucity of presets – 15 in all here. When you load VinylStrip, it instantly degrades your sound, but unusually, switching off all six processing modules still affects the sound, reducing the perceived quality and taking out a lot of the lows. There's a bypass button here, so this needn't be a problem, but it's worth noting.

A dirty, worn Swiss army knife for bastardising your pristine digital sounds, VinylStrip is a hugely capable and great-sounding grungefest, specialising in vinyl treatments and very competent at others.

audiothing.net

VERDICT 9.2