

# SUGAR BYTES Vogue

If your music's sounding just a touch amateurish, Sonic Bytes' new plug-in could be the one to give it the final polish it's missing...

## SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

None given

## TEST SYSTEM

Mac: G5 Dual 2GHz, 1GB RAM, OS X 10.3.9, MOTU 828 MkII, Ableton Live 6, Apple Logic Pro Audio 7

## ALTERNATIVELY

### Wave Arts TrackPlug 5

cm102 >> 9/10 >> \$200

Sounds great on everything you use it with. Also available in the Power Suite 5 bundle

### Metric Halo Channel Strip

N/A >> N/A >> \$349

This Mac-only plug-in has been around for donkey's years and can be found in many high-end studios

## On the DVD

### AUDIO DEMOS

There are three vocal snippets to compare – see their filenames for further details

## Channel surfing

We probably don't need to tell you that vintage synths and mic preamps are all the rage. High-end vintage mixing desks are also much-desired. However, those of us who work with computers in smaller studios (and even some pros who mix 'in the box') don't necessarily want such bulky (and costly) hardware.

A while ago, clever secondhand dealers realised that there was money

That elusive 'studio sound' – it's the Holy Grail for desktop musicians and home recording enthusiasts. While we computer musos have easy access to pro-quality software synthesizers and effects, getting that professional sheen can still be very difficult.

One of the costly secret weapons that all pro engineers have at their disposal is a microphone preamp. A bad pre can sound cheap and tinny, but a good one can elevate a signal to lofty heights. In fact, preamps torn from the innards of legendary mixing desks command vast sums when cleaned up and put in a new box, as do the channel strips from which they're culled (see *Channel surfing* boxout).

## Sweet as you like

The delectably named Sugar Bytes are now offering us the software equivalent of a channel strip in the form of Vogue. This cross-platform plug-in is designed to do the same job as those classic vintage outboard units and features a gate, preamp, EQ, compressor, filter, delay and simple reverb. With over 25 parameters at your disposal, you can use it to wrestle



▲ Analogue channel strips are very fashionable these days, and Vogue does a fine impersonation of one

just about any vocal into shape.

In use, Vogue offers both brilliance and bluster. When you call up the default settings or gently push at the sliders and knobs, it imbibes your vocal recordings with real presence and sheen. However, the presets that are designed specifically for vocals are disappointingly over the top. We just don't want to use a channel strip like this one to slather reverb or delay all over our vocals – it might sound kind of 'gee whiz' on first listen, but it isn't terribly practical. Oddly enough, our favourite vocal patch lies in the Electric Guitar menu.

To strike a cautionary note, it's worth saying that you shouldn't get too excited by the promise of a virtual mic pre. This thing isn't going to send phantom power down the line or bring your level up before it hits those A/D converters. Still, it adds gain and even some overdrive, and the compression is simple and to the point.

Some dodgy presets aside, Vogue fulfils its brief pretty well. It adds an

analogue flavour, brings tracks to the fore and sounds utterly convincing. Not everyone will feel that they need the sort of processing it offers – let's face it, most people's plug-in folders aren't exactly short on compressors and EQs – but Vogue does offer something extra. In fact, as you can hear in the audio example on the DVD, it can hold its own against a very costly hardware vocal chain. Quite some achievement, we think you'll agree. **cm**

## VERDICT

### FOR

- + Sounds a million dollars (or at least a few thousand)
- + Lots of control over the signal
- + Instant 'presence'
- + Easy to use

### AGAINST

- Do we really need more compressors, EQs and analogue warmers?
- Presets too overbearing for practical use

You might feel that Vogue simply replicates some of the plug-ins that you already own, but the bottom line is that it sounds the business

## RATING

