

Eventide Reverb 2016 by Princeton Digital

The relentless rush towards the reissue of outboard classics leads eventually to some that are perhaps less well known than others.

GEORGE SHILLING feels his shoulder pads growing and his hair getting big.



HAVE A VAGUE RECOLLECTION of a rented Eventide SP2016 in my early studio days. I seem to remember it being almost dead on arrival, very noisy, and it froze and expired on the job after only a short time. However, others have fonder memories of this early 1980s reverb unit. The original designer Tony Agnello has formed Princeton Digital and reworked the design into something more current, a version of which is available as a TDM plug-in, and this hardware unit that Eventide manufactures.

The original 2U SP2016 was a clunky looking box with sliders on the front. Here, everything is compacted into 1U (except the box is wider than average and struggled to squeeze into most of my racks and cases). On the front, input and output levels are simple damped pots, while all other knobs are rotary encoders that include a surrounding LED display and additional functionality by pushing the top of them.

The rear panel includes analogue stereo inputs and outputs on XLRs and jacks, a button to switch between +4dB balanced and -10dB unbalanced operation, plus useful SPDIF phons. The digital output is always operational; a front panel button selects the input. MIDI In and Out sockets enable program dump, while a footswitch socket is wired TRS to operate the Bypass and Kill functions.

There are six reverb algorithms to choose from, the original three Plate, Room, and slightly confusingly named 'Stereo' (a Room algorithm with a stereo input for respective positioning of just the early reflections), plus three 'New' variations of these.

There was a 'Generation II' SP2016 with extra features such as sampling, gated and reverse reverbs, flanging and so on. I am not quite sure why these weren't incorporated into the new design, but maybe just these original reverb algorithms were deemed worth reviving. Or perhaps there will be further developments in the future...

All parameters are shown on the large 3-digit LED display. This defaults to showing the currently loaded preset, but most of the knobs can be pushed to display their current setting for a few seconds. The input is mono except when using Stereo or Stereo New. The input source can be selected as either or both of the

inputs with a System routing feature. Two LED input meters give an indication of what is reaching the inputs following routing. Kill defeats the input, allowing reverb tails to finish, while Bypass does what you'd expect.

There is a dedicated Wet/Dry Mix knob, and on the first 59 of the 99 presets, this is set to completely wet. I like being able to see that and to make sure it's in the right place.

The next knob controls Pre-delay and has a dual 'clock-hands' style outer display. Normal rotation notches it in steps of one millisecond, while pressing it in and turning advances it in steps of 31ms up to 999ms. Decay ranges from 0.2s to very long indeed — 100s on the New settings.

The Position control simulates being nearer or further from the sound source and is active on all algorithms apart from the original Plate. As it is increased, the reverb can become more like a short delay around the half way mark, especially with low diffusion settings, but towards the higher settings makes the reverb sound rich and smooth. Diffusion and useful 2-band EQ have been added to the 'Stereo' setting and are also included on the 'New' settings. The large Preset knob scrolls through the 99 presets, the knobs displaying the setting of each program as it scrolls through but without actually loading it until the knob is pressed. If the knob is not pressed the display reverts to the current set-up after two seconds. A Save button stores settings into any of the preset locations with a press before and after selecting the desired memory location.

Rather than using modelling technology to recreate the original SP2016, Agnello has reverse-engineered the design, so it retains the same algorithms at the same 40.0kHz sample rate but with the benefit of 24-bit oversampling converters. The original used simple 16-bit converters, requiring complex anti-aliasing filters that affected phase at high frequencies. So, in theory, it should sound better.

Whatever the theory, this is indeed a great sounding reverb that is eminently usable. I dialled up the Plate at the beginning of a project of tracking, overdubbing and mixing five different tracks, and it

was the only reverb I used. All I did was vary the pre-delay and decay times for different songs, and then forgot about it. It sounded great in the tracks.

The 'New' settings take advantage of the extra DSP available and include wide-ranging Diffusion settings and longer decays. However, they remain obviously related to the originals, if a little smoother and richer sounding. Room settings are particularly good when used on percussive instruments, and the plate is good for just about any sound source.

Some settings have a slightly brash 1980s clanginess to them when heard in isolation, but in a track, the sparkle and richness of the 2016 is often more interesting than more recent 'realistic' reverberators.

There is still a lot to be said for having a dedicated reverb unit in the rack, and although quite expensive (UK£1395 + VAT), this one sounds great and has a refreshingly straightforward interface. ■

PROS

Classic 80s reverb; pushbutton encoder functions; very simple operation.

CONS

Case wider than my rack.

EXTRAS

Eventide's Reverb plug-in for Pro Tools TDM is said to bring the best reverbs from the flagship Orville processor to



the desktop. A multi-effects plug-in that incorporates a pair of delays, pre and post stereo 3-band parametric EQ, a compressor, and Lo-Fi effect, it includes halls, chambers, plates, and rooms.

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