

Universal Audio

EMT 250 \$249

PC MAC



The world's first "Electronic Reverberator" is reborn for the UAD-2 platform - is it headed for the plug-in hall of fame?

> German plate reverb masters EMT unveiled the world's first digital reverb device, the EMT 250 Electronic Reverberator, way back in 1976. This mighty chunk of hardware had 16KB of RAM, now-comical control levers to set parameters, three fans and a huge heatsink. As well as reverb, it offered digital delay, echo, chorus, phaser and 'Space' effects. The input was mono but the unit gave out four channels, for quadrophonic effects (quad audio was thought to be 'the next big thing' at the time).

Incredibly, the EMT250 is still held in extremely high regard by many world-class producers. But with only 250 ever made and prices now reaching around \$10,000, you'll need to rack up a few gold records of your own before you can afford one...

Running on EMT

All is not lost, though, as Universal Audio have created an official plug-in emulation of the EMT 250 for their UAD-2 DSP platform. It even uses the original's algorithm, implemented with assistance from its designer, Dr Barry Blesser.

In true UA style, they've stuck very closely to the original design, and this extends to the interface, with its four levers controlling the parameters of the currently selected effect (you can only use one effect type at once). It might be novel, but it's a waste of screen space and hardly intuitive, either. An alternate compact GUI with 'normal' controls would be very welcome.

It's a warts-and-all reproduction, then, with the old school, character-building AD/DA stages modelled too, complete with soft background hiss and inputs that clip if pushed too hard - heed the metering lamps! Unlike the original, there's a Front/Rear switch to select a stereo pair from the quad output, and a Dry/Wet slider (the dry signal bypasses the virtual AD/DA stages).

Switches select the active effect, and the stereo Delay mode gives up to 375ms delay per side. The mono Echo, meanwhile, has adjustable



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predelay, delay time and HF damping, while Space is basically a really long reverb. See our boxout for details on the Chorus and Phaser.

The main Reverb's parameters are decay (0.4s to 4.5s), bass and treble damping (four options each), and predelay (0/20/40/60ms). The sound is very lush, with some pleasant modulation going on and a dark tonality. There are no in-your-face early reflections as such - it's almost like a plate reverb in this sense.

When mixing, the EMT 250 provides a most pleasing 'cushion' of reverb, almost as though its enveloping, supporting and enhancing source sounds, rather than getting in their way. It's easy to mix with and sounds 'right' on a variety of material - we tried it on drums, percussion, vocals, synths and guitars. It won't necessarily make your other reverbs redundant, though, as it only really has one sound. But what a fabulous sound it is! It has a 'magic' to it that few others can touch, and when you factor in the EMT 250's five funky extra effects, it all adds up to one outstanding plug-in. Great work, UA! **cm**

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Chorus of approval

The EMT 250's Chorus and Phaser modes are not to be ignored. The first of these has four preset chorus types and control over predelay time. We liked the subtle Mode II best, which is capable of a convincing double-tracked stereo effect, a little like the Cooper Time Cube plug-in (also for UAD-2). The chorus is also good for '3D-ising' drum hits and faking early reflections (with the predelay turned up). Its only drawback is that the strong pitch modulation can

sometimes bend sounds out of tune.

The Phaser program is even simpler: the fourth lever controls predelay, while the first manipulates phase, and the Front/Rear switch changes the phasing 'flavour'. There's no LFO, though, so you'll have to use automation of the handle to get it moving! This is actually a pretty cool feature, and the phaser is also useful in the static position - eg, for softening up overly sharp percussion or shifting the timbre of instruments.

System requirements

PC 256MB RAM, Windows XP/Vista, UAD-2, VST/RTAS host

Mac 256MB RAM, OS X 10.4.x, UAD-2, VST/AU/RTAS host

Test system

PC Core i7 920, 3GB RAM, Vista Ultimate 64, UAD-2 Duo

Alternatively

TC Electronic DVR2
N/A >> N/A >> \$495

This TDM and PowerCore plug-in is said to be based on the EMT 250

Audio Damage Eos
cm142 >> 9/10 >> \$49

For vintage digital 'verb that won't break the bank, look no further

Verdict

For Fantastic classic reverb
The other effects are great too
Do-it-yourself manual phaser!
Simple parameter set

Against A 'modern' GUI would be nice
Background hiss - just like the original!

This superb effort from UA only loses out on top marks due to its clunky GUI, but sonically, it goes hall the way to ten!

9/10