

review

EQ Rangers' SPL Vol. 1



★★★★★ out of ★

by Trusty

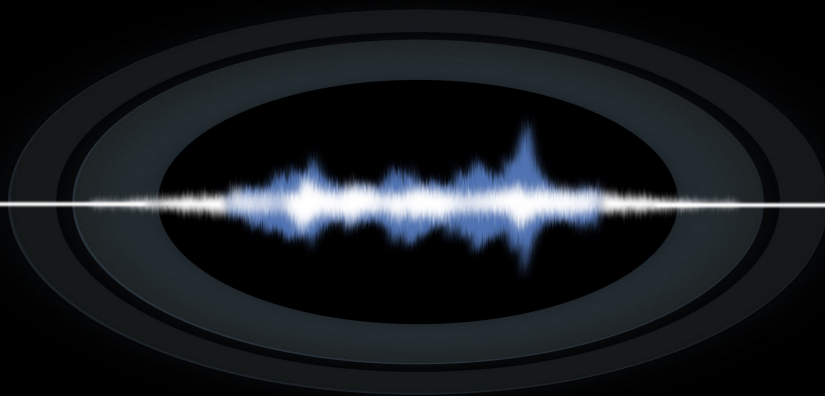
Overview:

SPL, while being solid for decades now in the analog hardware gear, being carefully crafted and made by hand has helped engineers craft and shape the perfect mixes and masters. The quality is not in dispute for anyone. That same craftsmanship and quality has been delivered in their software products as well. Modeled after the same hardware units, with superb sound quality and ease of use to match, the EQ Rangers' Vol. 1 delivers on the promise that comes

bearing the brand name SPL. Software companies love to put labels on their coding, whether to describe the sound engines of synthesizers or to describe (or rather evoke) a sense of class surrounding their effect processors. Sometimes the labels deliver, sometimes not. With SPL, their "The Analog Code" tag is no gimmick, it truly describes the character and quality of the three EQ plug-ins that are included in this package.

User-able:

Each of the EQ's included have the same design, resembling their hardware siblings, is very well laid out, simple and effective. The EQ's, as the name implies, has eight bands with frequencies that are specific for tasks. In this case, there is the full frequency spectrum for the Full Ranger and the Vox and Bass Rangers have eight bands tailored to the needs for those specific, targeted ranges to maximize usage. The manual is not only well written but it



Full Ranger Bands: 16kHz, 10 kHz, 4.7 kHz, 1.8 kHz, 500 Hz, 150 Hz, 90Hz, 40 Hz

Vox Ranger Bands: 4 kHz, 2.8 kHz, 1.6 kHz, 800 Hz, 560 Hz, 420 Hz, 330 Hz, 220 Hz

Bass Ranger Bands: 2 kHz, 800 Hz, 500 Hz, 230 Hz, 170 Hz, 95 Hz, 65 Hz, 30 Hz

is also both mercifully short and very informative. The section at the end called "EQ Principles" is a nice touch, as are the tips given for each individual plug-in in their sections of the manual. Also, inclusion of the diagrams for filter responses is both helpful and, amazingly enough, honest. Honesty, an odd choice of a word to be sure, is something that can be lacking in many EQ plug-in's when it comes to the curves of the filters, and this applies to EQ products of any price range. With these plug-ins, one can be confident of what they are getting when they tweak the sliders

"It's Musical!":

It is at this point where the typical reviewer covering EQ products sounds off with the cliché "it's very musical" (for those reading EQ reviews wondering what that meant). This is merely a way to express how the curves effect the nearest frequencies when you begin to shape your sound using the EQ and how it gives off an instantly good sound that works in a mix. The cliché definitely applies here with the passive filters but that isn't the only reason why these EQ's are

"very musical." The main reason suggested here as to why these EQ's are "very musical" is because of the sonic characteristics that really come to life from your instrument and vocal sources when applying these EQ's. The word "colorization" doesn't do them justice. As from before, the word honesty also comes back into view. This is not meant in the sense that if there is a flaw in the mix, especially with a vocal track, this will make it more obvious; on this count, quite the opposite. These EQ's can actually fix things. How these EQ's matter most is that they don't just help one get the vocals or lower frequencies to cut through the mix, with a nice sheen and gloss to go with it, but they also deliver that most sought after air around the sound, giving it presence without disturbing the rest of the mix.

Intelligent Design:

The interface is fantastic and easy to navigate. There are very few controls but some nice features as well. Each instance of the plug-in's can hold up to four different settings. These settings can also be automated so that different settings can be applied

to different parts of the song. This is magnificent...and easy to set up. The CPU usage is surprisingly low for plug-in's of this quality but that is a testament to the craftsmanship applied to the sound, as well as code efficiency.

Full Ranger:

This EQ is great no matter the task, whether it is slapped into the mastering chain, on a bus (or two) in the mix, or even for tweaking a complex instrument patch. Especially when a person becomes more accustomed to the filter curves, this can be the "go-to" channel insert equalizer as well, if needed. For using it to mix a bus of like instruments, the four settings come in handy, considering how transparent these plug-ins can be. Having four slightly different settings, as opposed to drastic differences (unless that is the musical goal, of course) is where this feature works best. That is because for each part of the song the vocals, or some other part, may need certain frequencies out of the way temporarily, but just to give way when the vocals are present. When



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Product: SPL EQ Rangers Vol. 1

Available Formats: RTAS, AU & VST

Price: 239.50 €

TDM (includes Native versions) 385.00€

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working with these EQ's in various situations, it becomes more and more obvious why they come in a package and why they were designed the way they were.

Vox Ranger:

The tips included in the manual with this element were most helpful. Everything possible was thrown at it. Vocoded vocals, sampled and heavily filtered vocals, mutilated vocals from every possible combination of the awesome Antares' AVOX 2 and Autotune EFX processors, rap vocals, sung vocals, spoken word audio recordings, etc. With the exception of some heavily pitched down vocal samples (I used Bass Ranger for this one), this EQ performed like a champ. Clear, crisp, and warm are accurate terms to describe its performance. Because of the specific nature of the design, it is a most welcome change of pace from having to start from scratch and "re-twiddling" general purpose EQ's to get to the starting points with vocal tracks. Given its frequency range, it has other uses as well besides vocals. I was particularly amazed at how well is smoothed out

a high frequency whistle-like synth sound that riffs up and the higher the note played...well...one can imagine. It did a job, for sure.

Bass Ranger:

Bass Ranger is perfectly great for working with lower frequencies. So great, in fact, that side-chain compression has become less and less necessary since working with this EQ. Thank goodness for the low CPU, because it won't be uncommon in DAW's for a person to want to inset this thing anywhere lower frequencies are present. Bringing up the "very musical" thing again, working with this EQ on several different sounds in the same mix is great. The filter curves allow for everything to be heard and sound even better, without sacrificing the desired presence of each sound, be it the thump, rumble, growl, or knock in the lower end of the spectrum within the context of the whole track.

Reckoning:

EQ Rangers Vol 1 represents a new standard in quality and usability for

EQ plug-in's. An ingenious idea in hardware brought to the software realm. The "bells and whistles" of some other EQ plug-in's are not missed in EQ Ranger, as they aren't needed to enhance the quality of these EQ plug-in's. These EQ's simply have no need for bells and whistles to compensate for a lack of actual sonic power like others may need. For those needing quick and easy EQ's designed for specific tasks, and needing outstanding sound quality to match as well, these are a "must have." The usability and versatility will probably cause people to clean out a lot of the junk EQ's clogging up their effects folders. One of the best things about this set of EQ's is in the product's name...Vol. 1, in which case it follows there will be more. So SPL, bring on Vol. 2!!!

Keep watching for the next issue. Some cool articles on using EQ Rangers Vol 1 will be well worth reading...and expect some unique uses for these outside of their specified "range".

