FabFilter Timeless 3

The innovating Dutch plugin developers are back with another upgrade to one of their range, and this time it's the out-of-favour Timeless delay that gets to go up a version number.

Version 2 of Timeless was something of a hit back at the time of its first release, but, alas, its knob-heavy interface has been starting to make it look and feel a little bit dated as the years have gone on.

Timeless 3 completely re-imagines the concept, putting the easy Delay (time) control front and centre, with its outer ring determining the delay time difference between the left and right channels, should you want it to.

Delay controls >

The usual delay controls are easy to make sense of. Delay and Feedback control your delay's timing and the amount it repeats in the same way as ever. Your delay 'taps' are represented very nicely in the graph display in the top left. Changing the feedback makes subsequent taps closer to the level of the original spike (and you can even apply Feedback levels above 100%). Meanwhile, to show how the graph represents left and right channels, tweak the Delay Time Pan control (the ring around the Delay knob) to watch the channels' tap spikes separate in time.

< Feedback

With decent feedback and the Wet Mix turned right up, it's time to check out the Feedback effects. These are processes you can apply to the wet (delayed) signal while keeping your dry signal unprocessed. Drive applies a nice analogue-style distortion to the delayed signal; Lo-Fi, meanwhile, applies bitcrushing with a combo of both sample rate and bit depth tailor made for you. The Diffuse parameter is something approaching reverb, smearing the delay's wet signal into an epic, cavernous sound.

Dynamics >

Dynamics lets you either compress or gate the delayed signal, depending on which way you turn it. The difference is easier to hear with Diffuse turned up: the gating and expansion side act to bring back the original timing of the signal, while compression turns it more into a smeared wall of sound. The Pitch control shifts the delayed signal higher or lower up to 12 semitones, and has two more options: to place it inside or outside the feedback path; and to pitchshift the opposite direction in the two channels.

Meanwhile, a nearby Cross slider determines the extent to which each channel should feed back into itself or the other.

There's a lot more to it too, of course. With feedback path effects, easy visualisation of delay timing, mid/side stereo mode, and some out-of-this-world modulation options, Timeless 3 goes further than most delay plugins while still remaining accessible to casual users.

Let's take a closer look…

INFINITE MODULATION

Timeless 3's modulation section uses the same upgraded mod interface (and visualisation style) as the recently upgraded Saturn 2 plugin, which in turn keeps things pretty similar in spirit to FabFilter's original ideas.

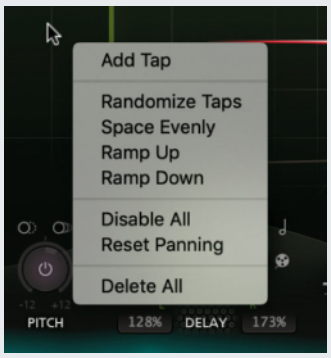
The modulation section can be hidden completely, but when activated offers a choice of LFOs, envelope generators and followers, MIDI sources, XY controllers, and the lovely new Slider widget which basically acts as a macro control with a scalar value. All can be renamed, which makes them pretty helpful when looking to control complex patches from the presets. Further delightful features include LFOs that turn into full sequencers (with pitch snapping available), presets on the envelopes, and MIDI functions including Mod Wheel, Aftertouch, Velocity and CC.

EQ >

Let's look at the EQ, a very recognisable part of the plugin to anyone who already uses any FabFilter plugins. You can call up a band by clicking on the display, and select its type from the usual suspects: bells, low- and high-passes, shelves and a notch. EQ bands can be applied in serial or parallel configuration (which may help with modulation setups, as we'll see soon), or in Per Channel to service either left and right sides separately, or alternatively, mid and sides channels separately.

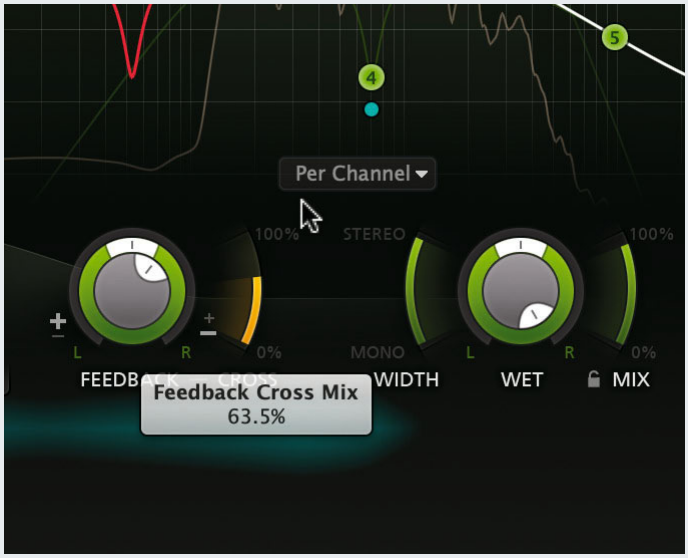
< Modulation

The filters are so visible that we can grasp the modulation controls easily. On the lower interface, we instantiate an XLFO, and send its signal to two places: a notch on the right channel and a bell boost on the left. As per a longstanding FabFilter staple, we can change the frequency and 'Glide' (ie waveshape) of the LFO here, and assign more destinations through drag 'n' drop. Clicking the XLFO's source node opens a display to set depths and polarity for each routing.



< Taps

Back to the delay graph, we can select the Taps view to add extra delay stages into our setup (by default it's just an input and a signal tap). You can double-click to add new taps between 0 and 100% of the selected delay time, and change levels and timing of any tap (you can have up to 16 taps here). What's more, you can right-click to set the taps in predefined shapes such as ramped and randomised, and you can modulate any tap's level, frequency or panning with any of your modulators.



< Further features

The best of the rest include the Cross control, which has the different channel feed back into each other, and the Ping Pong control, which lets you feed the channels into each other alternately, and disables crossfeed. There's Stereo Width for the delayed signal; tape-style or sampler-style handling when you change the delay time, and delay buffer freezing onboard too. The design of the delay plugin is truly the last word in its category… at least for now. FM