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Issue 102  
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# REASON 6

## *first look*

Propellerhead has taken everyone by surprise with the release of a new version of Reason – but examine it more closely and you'll see that it shares some DNA with its closest relative... **Hollin Jones** looks under the hood.

**Y**es, you read that correctly: Reason 6. Propellerhead has taken the industry by surprise with a rather out-of-the-blue announcement that Reason is about to receive a major upgrade – and much sooner than its traditional product cycle would have suggested. You might also have noticed that while Reason versions 1–5 shared broadly similar looks, this is something a little different. What the company has done is fused its much-loved MIDI sequencer, Reason, with its newer audio recording and mixing software, Record. Anyone who had installed both applications on the same computer would have been able to use them as one – Reason's modules pop up and are available inside Record – and that is essentially what you get here, plus some extra goodies, of course.

In truth, it's a move that makes perfect sense. A lot of work was done on Record and much of it found its way into Reason 5 in terms of the technology underpinning the software. But the two were so good at what they did separately that it was clear a fusion of both would give Reason users what they had long called for – full audio-recording capabilities. That would be a real powerhouse of a program. →

→ And the results are indeed intriguing. This isn't a review – that will follow later – but a preview of what already feels like a near-finished product. We've been lucky enough to be involved during the beta-testing of Reason 6 and it certainly looks like it will revolutionise the way in which people approach their music-making.

### What's new?

Reason 6 looks more like Record than Reason 5 and there's a lot more going on visually thanks in part to the greatly extended functionality. Under the lid, the software is fully 64-bit, and this extends to ReWire, which is great news for the future of the protocol. All the modules from Reason 5 and Record 1.5 appear to be present and correct, which means everything from the venerable Subtractor and ReDrum through Thor, Kong and stuff from Record that Reason users may not be familiar with, such as the Line6 guitar and bass effects, Neptune pitch corrector and ID8 instrument module.

The Rack is now a little different, and you can queue up multiple parallel Racks rather than having everything in a very long list. The Sequencer looks much the same except that now it has audio tracks as well as MIDI, and instead of Reason 5's sampling audio inputs you get a much more comprehensive audio input section and a nice, big, clear recording meter to monitor input. There's also a new audio interface being released by the Props called Balance, which is designed specifically to work with Reason 6.



Above: the Alligator triple-filtered gate makes creating gating effects a breeze. Left: the Line6 bass amp module (from Record) and the new Pulveriser.

As is already the case in Record, audio input captured in Reason 6 is automatically analysed and is able to be time-stretched and transposed without incurring any artefacting. Indeed, this was a process we found to be very smooth and highly useful in Record 1.5 and we're glad to see that it's made its way into Reason 6. The Balance audio interface will feature a clever

## Audio is automatically analysed and is able to be time-stretched and transposed

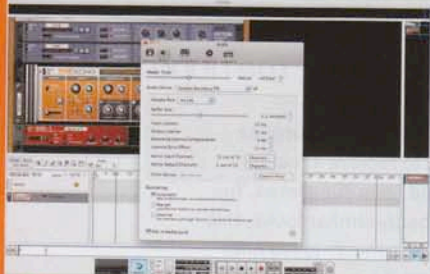
Balance is the Props' new two-in/two-out audio interface.



'Clip Safe' button that automatically records a second, quieter version of every take in case yours is accidentally set too loud (we look forward to testing this out).

Since recording audio is a bit different from recording MIDI, the Rack has changed a little as well, with modules now attached not directly to the main mixer, as in previous versions of Reason, but to a Mix module, which is in turn connected to the new, much larger and more powerful mixer section. These Mix modules have their own level meters and programmer sections from where you manage insert effects and modulation routing for each connected unit. It's as easy or complex as you want to make it – at its simplest, you don't have to do any manual

### MTM Step-by-Step Recording in Reason 6



**01** In Reason's Preferences you can choose your audio interface, set the buffer size and then activate as many simultaneous inputs and outputs as you would like to use. You can also choose to monitor automatically, manually or externally.



**02** Choose Create>Audio Track and an Audio Track module will appear in the Rack and in the Sequencer. Press [F3] and you call up the floating Recording Meter, which gives you a clearer picture of the levels. You can spin the Rack around and manually patch your audio input using the extended audio input module.



**03** Hit Record and perform a part through the mic, from your guitar or other source. Double-click on the clip to open it in the Take Editor. The audio will adjust tempo to match any speed changes you make. If you have recorded in a loop you can use the take handles to composite a part.



Left: The Echo – modelled rather faithfully on the classic Roland Space Echo hardware.



Right: The mixer in Reason 6 is inherited from Record and has extensive channel strips for every module in a project.

routing if you don't want to, though you are still, of course, able to spin the Rack around and fiddle with cables in time-honoured fashion.

### Mix it like a pro

One of the biggest changes is in the mixer, which is inherited in version 6 from Record. This is infinitely more powerful than the old model, which hadn't changed all that much since version 1. Now, though, you get full channel strips for every module, a user-configurable signal path, the ability to drag

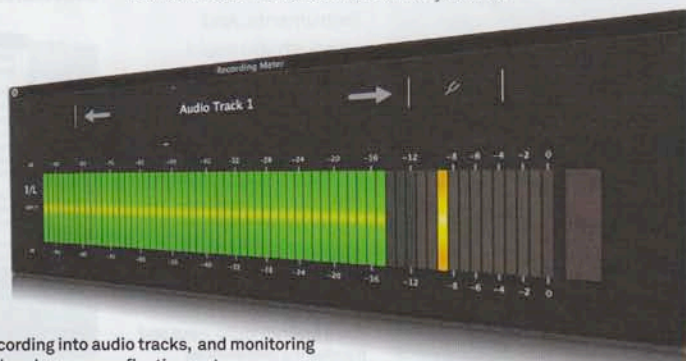
## /// You get some **new toys** in Reason 6, and this time it's the **turn of effects** ///

channels around to re-order them, eight send effects and full EQ and dynamics on every channel. The master section is also greatly enhanced, now including FX sends/returns and master inserts, plus an awesome-sounding master buss compressor that can be employed to glue your mixes together. There's also, of course, the MClass mastering suite, the Combinator and numerous other favourites carried over from Reason 5.

But the Props haven't just glued the two programs together, of course – you get some new toys as well, and this time it's the turn of effects. With full audio tracking, these and other effects can be applied to your vocals, guitars, drums and other 'real' sounds as well as Reason's own instruments. Pulveriser is for crunching and mangling sounds – a combined compressor, distortion, multi-mode filter and modulation unit with a suitably battered-looking

exterior. You know what to expect from dials with names like Squash and Dirt – and they certainly don't disappoint.

The Echo is modelled pretty clearly on Roland's classic Space Echo. It provides far better-sounding echo and delay than the now ancient DDL-1, though that's still on hand should you need it. As well as a ton of awesome-sounding delay patches, you can fiddle around with the knobs and dials to make them your own, using features such as Trigger and Roll to 'play' the effect as an instrument, creating stutter and repeat effects on-the-fly. And Alligator is what dance heads have been after for years: a



Audio recording into audio tracks, and monitoring with the handy onscreen floating meter.

### MTM Step-by-Step Master effects in Reason 6



**01** The new Mixer is considerably more complex than Reason 5's. Choose View>Main Mixer to see it; you might also want to detach the mixer from the main window for greater flexibility. Clicking on the title of a section will show or hide it. Click to show the Master Inserts section.



**02** In the Insert FX patch field, click on the name of the patch to view preset Mastering Combi patches. Select one to add it to the mixer. You will see that in the section above, the four quick-control dials have been mapped to parameters within your mastering suite. Use these to tweak the master effects.



**03** Click on the Edit Inserts button in the Master Effects section and you will be taken to the Master Section module in the Rack. Here are the MClass suite effects. You can add further insert effects to this Combi as you would any other. Click Show Programmer to control the routing of the quick-controls.

→ proper filtered gate effect that will doubtless become a trance music staple in years to come. Whacking this onto a synth part immediately livens it up, and like the other effects it can be applied to audio track as well.

### Six appeal

Having explored Reason 6 for some considerable time and having actually made some tracks with it, we're really excited about this latest version. Although it will seem a little unfamiliar to Reason users who haven't come across Record before, the learning curve isn't all that steep and the new features look likely to take Reason into new territory. It's not trying to be an exhaustively catch-all DAW – the feature set is not as rigidly aimed at 'pro' users as Logic or Cubase, for example – but our experience suggests that it is going to appeal to a lot of people who don't need things like scoring, surround sound or other stuff that you tend to pay a lot for. The plug-ins issue remains – they are not supported – but there's still ReWire and it's now 64-bit, which means it looks likely to stay relevant as a technology.

In terms of Propellerhead's product line, it has been largely the case that Reason was a favourite of people who made electronic music, broadly speaking,

and Record was aimed more at bands and the kind of users who wanted to track drums, guitars and other instruments. And although you could install both programs, it was more expensive that buying just one or the other. In combining the two into a single application, the company seems to be saying that

**You'll find full audio input and monitoring preferences in Reason 6.**

Reason Essentials offers many of the features of Reason 6.

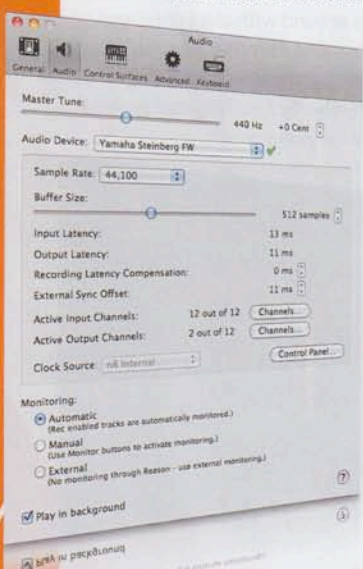
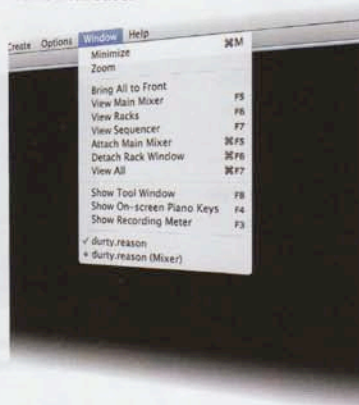


**You know what to expect from dials with names like Squash and Dirt – and they don't disappoint**

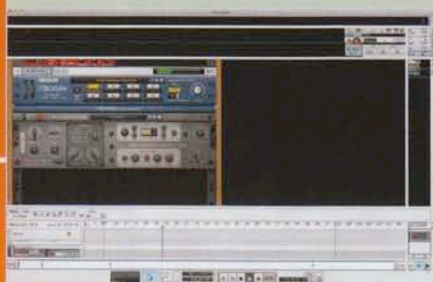
both sets of users will now be equally well catered for, and perhaps guitarists will now be more likely to play with beats, and beat-makers might be more inclined to put down a bass line from a real bass guitar.

There really doesn't feel like much left to do in terms of ironing out bugs, and thanks to the company's legendary quality control, by the time the software is available at the end of September it will certainly be bulletproof. In early tests we have been able to get a much fatter sound out of Reason 6 than we ever managed from 5, and together with the combining of the best of Reason and Record plus some new toys, our first impressions are very positive. Keep your eyes peeled for the full review. **MTM**

The Window menu lets you flip between views with ease.



## MTM Step-by-Step Exploring the Pulverizer



**01** The Pulverizer is a powerful filter and sound-mangler. Try adding one as an insert to a Dr. OctoRex. Using the Squash control on the left, set the extent to which the signal is crushed. This can sound really good on drums. Then, using the Dirt dial, add some warm distortion to the signal.



**02** The Filter section can be used to cut out specific frequencies. Experiment with the filter type – some will give you a nice, muffled and boomy sound, others a more insistent signal rich in mid frequencies. Adjust the Frequency and Peak dials to taste.



**03** Finally, move on to the Tremor section. This can be used to add wobble to the signal, which again works really well on rhythmic sources. At the bottom left of the module you'll see a switch that enables you to alter the processing order of the sections inside the effect.