

# MIX

Professional Audio and Music Production



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The Tony Maserati Collection is the first in the Waves Signature Series of plug-ins. Each of these six plug-ins is a unique, preconfigured signal processor chain designed by New York-based mix-mäster Tony Maserati. Waves has combined, into task-specific plug-ins, all the different processors Maserati employs to achieve his hit-making sonic treatments of individual vocal and instrument tracks. While the default settings sound great, all the plug-ins have a huge range of processing power and many automatable macro parameter controls to conform them to your own style and aesthetic.

The six plug-ins are the VX1 Vocal Enhancer, B72 Bass Phattener, DRM Drum Slammer, GTi Guitar Toner, ACG Acoustic Guitar Designer and HMX Harmonics Generator. The GUIs look like bakelite radios from the 1930s and '40s--old Grundig Majestic shortwave receivers with huge knobs and buttons, ventilation slots revealing glowing "tubes" and round glass-faced radio dials for I/O VU meters. Visually, these plugs are pleasing to look at and are a definite conversation piece during mixing session breaks.

I tested them in Pro Tools HD3 Accel running Pro Tools 7.4 on an OS 10.4.11 Mac Quadcore PPC. This bundle is available in Native only--VST, AU, RTAS and AudioSuite--no TDM versions. Each plug-in includes both mono in/stereo out and stereo in/out versions. The Waves GUI provides for A and B setups for fast switching and comparing between two settings.

## VX1 Vocal Enhancer

The intuitive control sets on the six plug-ins vary, depending on the specific task, except for a Sensitivity control that drives the chain harder and harder, right into a cool, distorted sound much like a hardware's "blooming" tube stage. The controls on VX1 are: Sensitivity which drives the chain harder right into a cool distorted sound if you prefer, the Bass and Treble controls are fairly broad EQs like tone controls on a FM radio, and Compress is for applying more or less compression. The VX1's compressor has



vibey sound to it, and although WAVES is "close to the vest" about the details of the internal processors of these plugs, I'm betting the compressor section is based on a tube compressor's characteristics and sound.



VX1 has three "contours" or modes configured for the most suitable vocal treatment predicated on song tempo. Conceptually and musically, this is a good way to initially set up a vocal processing and treatment chain. Contour 1 puts a vocal in a small studio or room; a slow ballad vocal might sound better on Contour 2 with its larger chamber and many pre-delay choices; and Contour 3 uses a small room with shorter delay options for uptempo songs.

Running under Contour 3, Compress becomes an Air control for adding pleasant high frequencies to the sound. There are six additional controls for adjusting delay and reverb parameters.

When first inserting VX1 on my female lead vocal track, I noticed a low-frequency roll-off even though the Bass and Treble knobs indicated "0." The change in sound is instantly gratifying: None of these plugs come up flat or "swimming" in effects--delays and reverbs are dialed off but ready to add.

On a densely produced modern rock song, I liked switching through the three contours while listening to the whole mix. I saved presets of each contour after tweaking the FX, EQ and Compress controls--tweaks not saved (at least on an interim basis) when switching between Contours. Too bad because Contour changes can be automated and I would use this ability for separate verse and chorus treatments.

I liked Contour 2 for this vocal in the verses and went with Contour 1 for the choruses as its slimmer, denser sound was a better fit for the track. Used sparingly, the delay and reverb sounds were good; the delays were on the short side with regeneration and the reverb sounds were plate-like. All of these effects are married together within the plug, so vocals take on a more cohesive, focused and "produced" sound as opposed to the result of using send/return to effect processors.



### DRM Drum Slammer

The DRM is excellent for converting dull, lifeless R.I.P. drum sounds into punchy and bright drums. DRM's processing modes are Kick, Snare Top, Snare Bottom, Hat, Toms, Overheads and Room Tracks. Although I don't know exactly what's going on behind the GUI, DRM duplicates the sound of equalizer and compressor chains I often used for these tracks. I liked the Snap control because it works subtly on the transient portion of drum hits--harder sounding without being just brighter. I especially liked the hi-hat mode for bringing up lightly played eighth notes while not excessively lifting spill from the rest of the kit. I replaced all the plug-ins I had on all my drum kit tracks with DRM. Except for the snare track, which was comprised of six tracks (real and sample hits), all sounds were good and match well to what I would do using more time and many more plug-ins.



### GTi Guitar Toner

After VX1, GTi is the most complex of the bundle. The it has five modes or guitar types: Clean, Clean Chorus, Heavy, Thick Rhythm and Soft Flange. As with all these plugs, the most important initial control is Sensitivity to set gain staging--the right

amount of "hair" for clean to not. GTi has a great sounding chorus and vibrato with plenty of adjustability while the Tame control acts like a limiter to contain peaks resulting from extreme tone boosts or flanger resonant peaks. In general all guitar sounds will emerge fatter and broader sounding through GTi and, although not a guitar amp simulator, even direct guitar recordings will improve through it. I used the Thick Rhythm contour to "beefed up" a direct-recorded R&B rhythm guitar making it sound amp-like-- I ran the Sensitivity nearly wide open and although I liked that the vibrato sounds (that sound like an Univibe pedal)--for this song, I went with the chorus. I got clean guitar sound much like a Roland Jazz Chorus amp. The Presence 1 control, besides adding a mid-range boost, breaks up on chords when cranked. Sensitivity, when wound up, brings up low-level ambience recorded along with the amp--room tone I had not heard before. Amazing!



### HMX Harmonics Generator

The HMX is a brilliant chain of processors that stereophonically spreads mono-sounding pads, synths and electric pianos. In addition to adding delays, it makes the pitch center ambiguous and spatially wide by way of a beautiful and watery-sounding chorus/flange effect. This was the one plug-in I used as a send/return effect for several tracks that comprised a stereo pad. Used judiciously, HMX fattened and widened keyboards, backing vocals or strings.

### ACG Acoustic Guitar Designer

There are two acoustic types of treatments in ACG Acoustic Guitar Designer that sound finished. Type ACG1 it was so "dialed in", I was hesitant to change it! I found acoustic guitars to be trimmed in the low frequencies in a very particular way that somehow retains a big bottom without boominess. There is also a kind of harmonic exciter: compression and a short ambience happening--all tweakable, of course. The ACG2 type adds more compression and a wider ambience width--a lovely treatment for any acoustic guitar fighting for solo space in a busy track.

## B72 Bass Phattener

The B72 worked well on a "flat-footed" bass track that had no wrong notes, just sub-zero personality. B72 has two modes or bass types: DI and Synth with DI generally the most useful. It's easy to get a slightly overdriven bass amp tone with plenty of squash and treble spank with DI. The Synth mode adds a buzzy stereo filter effect and a cheesy-sounding delay/reverb that was perfect for adding a mysterious backdrop to simple arpeggio guitar part. It also makes a cool vocal-trasher effect. It's important to remember that any of these six plug-ins can be used for any track. The B72 fixed up a DI bass quickly, and I liked it.


## Brilliant Chains of Command

What might at first seem like a dumbed-down, inflexible interface is actually an ingenious design that let me react musically and emotionally and less analytically. My left-brain was craving to know technically exactly what's going on inside of the Maserati Collection plug-ins, but my right-brain is telling me it all sounds great.

Barry Rudolph is an L.A.-based recording engineer. Visit his Web site at: [WWW.BARRYRUDOLPH.COM](http://WWW.BARRYRUDOLPH.COM)



PRODUCT SUMMARY	
<b>COMPANY:</b> WAVES	
<b>WEB:</b> <a href="http://www.waves.com">www.waves.com</a>	
<b>PRODUCT:</b> Tony Maserati Collection	
<b>PRICE:</b> \$800 Native-only; also included free in Waves Mercury	
<b>PROS:</b> Six ready-to-go processor chains specifically designed and tweaked for "hit record"-sounding vocals, drums, guitars, bass and more.	<b>CONS:</b> Changes to any Contour's parameters returns to the default settings when toggling between Contours.

 [musiciansfriend.com](http://www.musiciansfriend.com) Buy The Waves Tony Maserati Collection

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