



REVIEW

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Ambience, Non-Linear, and Spaces (outdoor and large cavernous spaces). Each of those is available in original Version 1 with 12 editable parameters, or newer Version 2, which features vintage-inspired modulations and 15 parameters in all. Bricasti is working version 3 as we speak, but it's still a year out!

The parameters include: Reverb Predelay, Reverb Time, Size, Diffusion, Density, HF RT mult, Reverb HF xover, LF RT mult, Reverb LF xover, VLF Cut,

Bricasti Design System 1

There's reverb, and then there's THIS reverb...!

Bricasti Design is based in Shirley, MA, and is responsible for the Model 7 Stereo Reverb Processor, which since 2007 has ascended to the rarefied heights of world-class reverbs, among the very best of the best. Its latest incarnation is the System 1, consisting of the Model 7 Mainframe version and M10 remote; even after several weeks of working with it in my studio, I'm still convinced that I'm dreaming...

Old school parameters, new school sound

The Model 7 is a 24-bit/192 kHz algorithmic stereo reverb box with both analog and digital connectivity. It is quite old-school in function and programming, but the sonics are something else.

It's based on the Analog Devices Blackfin DSP chip, which isn't as powerful as the SHARC chips used in Strymon pedals or Universal Audio UAD-2 engines. However, a Strymon pedal uses one SHARC and UAD-2 engines have between one and eight SHARCs, whereas the M7 dedicates six dual-core Blackfins to *one stereo signal!*

Features and specs

The original M7 is a single-space 19" rack device with a 1980s-style 2-line red LED display that includes a stereo level meter. It has 11 buttons for programming, navigation, and preset recall, a large continuous control/navigation knob, a stepped analog input pot, and a rotary power knob. The chassis is made of thick black aluminum and the knobs are textured matte silver for a beautiful audiophile look.

The M7M I'm reviewing has a blank front panel, with only the stepped input knob and power switch. All editing and control is via the M10 remote, or the newly-developed Exponential Audio M7 control plug-in (see sidebar).

Around the back are stereo balanced XLR ins and outs, AES digital I/O on XLR, 5-pin MIDI I/O, and 9-pin serial port I/O for connection to the M10 remote and for daisy-chaining multiple M7 and/or M7M units for use with the M10 (including surround setups). The M7 is designed to self-clock and correct from incoming AES signal; there's no word clock I/O.

A few specs: under 20 picosecond jitter, dynamic range over 116 dB, THD+n under 0.001% (A-weighted), frequency response from 10 Hz to 20 kHz flat to ± 0.05 dB, maximum input and output levels of +24 dBu, and minimum input level (0 dBFS) of +4 dBu.

The M10 remote is a modern reimagining of the vintage Lexicon LARC desktop remote control units of the past. It connects via a serial cable and contains all of the controls and buttons from the M7's faceplate, including the 2-Line LED display, plus six side-by-side stereo level meters. The navigation control dial is a hand-sized domed control wheel, nicely counterweighted and silky smooth. The M10 is a thing of high tech, modern design beauty, and feels as good as it looks... and as good as the M7 sounds.

Parameters, algorithms, and updates

There are seven reverb algorithms: Halls, Plates, Rooms, Chambers,

Modulation, Early/Reverb, Early Rolloff, Early Select, and Reverb Rolloff. The unit comes with over 200 presets, and you can create and store 100 of your own. Any four of your most-used reverbs can be saved to one of four Favorite buttons on the M7 or M10.

In use

The M7 and M7M can only use analog or digital I/O, not both in parallel. I worked with both, and while I am happy with both, I think the analog sound has a tiny tad more 'life' to it. Since its arrival, I have been using the M7M on darn near every mix I have done. Only having one (rather than unlimited plug-ins) meant that I needed to pre-plan my reverb use. I typically found myself printing the all-wet Bricasti reverb to its own track so I could free it up for use on more sources... I know, first-world problems.

Having spent over a decade as a professional sound designer, I have become a reverb snob; I am addicted to deep, engulfing, Lexicon-style reverbs. The Bricasti is not that, nor is it the ultra-clean, crisp, pristine reverb of TC Electronic. The sound of the M7 is both somewhere in between, and at the same time beyond... and I'm not just being poetic!

The Bricasti reverbs definitely live in the "real spaces" arena, but unlike the crisp TC style reverbs, these have a smoothness and a gentle warmth to them that does nod to classic Lexicon in tone. Overall it's a sound that tucks itself into the mix. I'd call the Bricasti reverbs hyper-real in a very romantic way!

The Plates are silky smooth, and their metallic tone is round and thunky, devoid of ring and ping. The Halls are reverberant with a natural, slappy, unpredictable bounce. Kick drum in the Small Hall is magical; it makes you feel the floor of the space. This is a real treat found in many of the Bricasti algorithms. It's especially noticeable on kick drum, thick acoustic guitars, and even bass guitar; you feel like you are standing on the same floor space as the instrument. Part of this comes from the smooth and rounded pre-delays.

While Rooms are smaller and tighter, their adjustable 3-dimensionality is diverse and sublime. From subtle to exaggerated, they are great on drums, electric guitar cabs, and acoustic guitars. Chambers are also big and slappy, but more like miniature halls. I like the A & M Chamber B and Old Chamber a lot for vocals, drums, and even gently peppering over a whole mix.

Ambience adds dimension, fullness, and width, but not space; you can really highlight specific instruments and their specific frequencies. Bass XXL is magical on a whole drum mix to bring out an anemic kick in gelled conjunction with the whole kit.

Spaces are as close as you are going to get to large cavernous round deep spaces, especially with the V2 algorithms, which were made to offer greater and more obvious 1980s and 1990s-inspired modulation in the reverb tails. Gated Space is instant '80s pop drums at their best.

Non-Linear has four choices of slap-back for snares, drums, and toms. There is also a style called SM Interiors, a kind of an extra eighth bonus reverb type. It's meant for post production, with tight hyperreal simulations of bedrooms to wells to locker rooms and more.

I did my best to tweak out the M7M to get big expansive 17-second swimming verbs, like the Blackhole preset on the Eventide H8000FW or the big effected reverb from a Strymon Big Sky pedal. While I could get some nice big droning spaces, the feel and tones were quite different.

Conclusion

Is there a drawback to this amazing reverb? Only the price, which will give many studio owners pause. But what you get is amazing!

The spaces created by the Bricasti M7 and M7M reverb have an uncanny ability to be run hotter and wetter than most reverbs I mix with. They create a space that sounds like part of the music and the environment, without drawing attention to themselves... until you bypass them. Unlike cheap, ringy, rattly, and metallic reverbs, the Bricasti is smooth yet clear, natural and believable, with fantastic reflections and some of the gentlest pre-delay I have ever used. It's a work of reverb art. ➔

Prices: M7, \$3695; M7M, \$3200; M10, \$2295; System 1, \$4995

More from: Bricasti Design, www.bricasti.com



Exponential Audio's Bricasti M7 Control Plug-in

Late last year, plug-in manufacturer **Exponential Audio** (www.exponentialaudio.com), maker of reverb plug-ins like Phoenixverb, created the **M7 Control** plug-in (\$99). It's available for Windows and Mac in AAX, VST, VST3, and AU formats, 32 or 64 bit, and uses an iLok USB key.

In simple terms, this is a standalone software control interface for the M7 and M7M for use in your DAW. It's like a simplified M10 "in the box", with all parameters instantly visual and adjustable in a resizable single-window user interface.

To use it you will need to run MIDI cables to the Bricasti from the MIDI interface of your choosing. Once you do, you can adjust and tweak every parameter of the Bricasti just as if it was a plug-in and you can save the info with your session. It makes editing and tweaking the Bricasti very fast and intuitive, especially for those of you raised on DAWs rather than 2-line hardware interfaces.

The communication between hardware and software, while instantaneous, is not bi-directional. Tweaks made on the plug-in will update on the unit, but not vice versa. In fact, I found that after using the plug-in, I had to reboot the M7M to regain M10 control.

That aside, it was a joy to use, and since it can replace the M10 controlling the M7M, it does lessen the Bricasti price by a fair bit.—PV