

Equinox 13

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CRMT150

Aim

To produce a Progressive House/Hard House/Techno track that investigates restoring the sound of core genre instruments which have been used in various genre defining compositions (Eon 1995) (Minimal Man 1994) (Wink 1995) (Hardfloor 1992).

Discussion

As part of my research into emerging trends in electronic dance music I started examining the history of the primary instruments in Techno/Rave/House music which has been the Roland TR-808, 909 and 303. For a period in the 1980's these were affordable devices when Roland first released the 303. The price became even lower after the device was deemed to have "failed" by Roland. No new devices were made but the 303 "*ended up in pawn shops and second-hand musical instrument stores*" (Tjora 2009) and could be picked up for an affordable price. This was much like the affordable nature of one of the primary instruments for Rock and Metal, the electric guitar. However where electric guitars continued to be made the 303 had ended production in 1984. As the device became more and more popular heading into the 1990's the price started to sky rocket leading to a peculiar situation. Where Rock had firmly established its sound based on the electric guitar (Jameson 2015), Techno, House and Rave was increasingly left without access to one of its primary instruments, the 303 which has been left as being defined as an "era defining" instrument simply because of its historical scarcity ('The Roland TB-303' 2022). This was remedied somewhat in the mid 2000's when Roland started releasing hardware re-releases of the 808, 909 and 303. But it was not until very recently that musicians had affordable access to a real 303 ('303 Software Versions' 2022). This is the plugin version available through Roland Cloud. This is a complete modelling of all the analogue circuits and quirks of the original device (especially its

sequencer that produced the classic slide effects). Originally only available through a somewhat unaffordable subscription service, the 303 can now be purchased outright for £179. We have come full circle and I wanted to investigate a possible rebirth of not just the 303 sound but the use of what so often accompanies it, the 808 and 909 drum machines. Apple fully licensed samples of those drum machines and they are included in this track. As I do not



Propellerhead ReBirth Rb-338 in Sheepshaver

currently have access to the Roland Cloud 303 I decided to go back to the former “gold standard” of 303 emulations, Propellerhead ReBirth RB-338 to use as comparator for a future reproduction of this sound using Logic built in instruments as well as the Roland Cloud plugin. This involved installing a Apple Macintosh Power PC emulator (SheepShaver) and installing the final release of Rebirth for the Mac that had been released legally and for free though the Rebirth Museum (Rebirth Museum 2009).

I began to create a track by using Logic Pro Drummer as I wanted to try a different approach to vanilla MIDI note composition. I altered the sound of a starting preset. I also added some piano synth sounds. I put the 808 and 909 drum tracks through a compressor as well as adding Pedal Board, Overdrive and Reverb audio FX. The synths are not compressed. I constructed a sequence on ReBirth RB-338 in the emulator. This involved using “Song Mode” to record changes in Cutoff and Enveloped Modulation controls. The 303 sequence was also put through the ReBirth “PCF” (Pattern Controlled Filter), delay and distortion. This sequence was then rendered as a WAV file using ReBirth itself and imported into Logic. I side chained a Compressor on the imported 303 to the 808 drum track.



Track Layout

The synth line had been constructed in another piece of software and exported as a MIDI file. I had to solve a problem of a program change message constantly reselecting settings in the Surge synth. I used the Logic MIDI Event List to isolate these program changes and remove them. I also went through the track and substantially changed the 808 and 909 sequences bringing percussion elements in and out. I also used Logic’s Pitch Correction plugin to slightly alter the pitch of the imported 303 sequence.

References

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