

Plates of Legend Vol. 1X



General Info

Plate reverbs; legendary for their sound, originally conceived as an alternative to real echo-chambers, but still used well after the advent of digital reverb by many, for the magic that only they can impart. That's what this series of Nebula reverbs is all about. There have been at least a few makes and models of these reverberant beasts over the years, but there is *one* that has been hailed by some as the king of **all** reverbs, and that is the one we will kick this series off with. Not one, but in fact **two** of these plates have been sampled and recreated through the power of Nebula, and are now destined to be key tools in your sonic arsenal. Included is a custom skin that allows you to quickly switch between both plates and all the program variations.

Why two plates? Because no two of this particular model sound exactly alike, and even a pair maintained to be close still won't be exact. In fact there can be quite a difference in sound between them, due to almost countless factors, with just a few including:

- Tuning. That's right, just like you'd have to tune the strings on a guitar, the springs that hold the plate to the frame should be tuned for just the right amount of tension. Some studios/owners probably keep up on this more than others, and even if there are instructions available on how to do it, it's not an exact science. With so many springs, no two tunings are going to be the same. This will affect the sound.
- The plate itself. Even with a pretty consistent fabrication process, there will be minute or not-so-minute variations between different plates. Consider that this model was in production for a few decades and those differences may factor in a little more between a pair of plates made 20 years apart. Plates may also accumulate tiny dents and dings, rust, or other distinguishing blemishes over the years.
- Aging, maintenance, modifications. These factors are going to affect every plate and accompanying electronics differently, depending on the owner(s).
- Revisions, options. This model originally shipped with a tube amplifier which was at one point switched to a solid state amp. They were also originally mono, with stereo becoming a later option.
- Placement. These things are sensitive. They have been known to pick up sounds of traffic outside, or a person walking by the frame. Ideally they'd be placed in a room where they can be isolated. Who knows what environmental factors could affect the sound here? Temp, humidity, dirt, dust, etc.

- The Electronics. This ties in with the 'aging', 'mods', and 'revisions' points mentioned earlier, but the amps driving the things, as well as anything else in the signal chain (such as the mixing board, etc), will have some effect on how the plate reacts/sounds.

Because we are dealing with a mechanical/electronic hybrid monster here, there is probably more variation between your average two examples of this reverb, than there is between any two examples of a well known 'vintage' compressor or EQ. For us this is a great thing, because it means more possibilities/flavors for us to use!

Here, a stereo plate with solid state amplification (we'll call it "Olympus") was sampled, along with a mono plate with the earlier tube amp ("Styx"). They sound very different, and were sampled for use in Nebula to include a **fully functional, sampled dampening control**. It sounds and works great. You won't find too many other Nebula reverbs with sampled adjustable controls in them, besides some of the other ones I've done. There are also multiple extras including a stereo swapped and several mono versions of the Olympus plate as well as seven different reel to reel versions that were resampled to tape using various decks at different speeds. For the normally dark Styx plate I made an EQ'd version that gives it a flatter response, as well as six variations where I utilized an Orban 'stereo synthesizer' which uses comb filtering to produce stereo from a mono source.

Last there is a custom EQ program I've made using a custom built rack mounted stereo set of 'Stooder' 900 Series channel strip preamps/equalizers. So while I haven't sampled the high pass filters that are common in mods/addons to the plate system, I have created a program that combines a fully variable high pass filter with a high shelf with adjustable gain. The freq position on the high shelf is 'mostly' fixed, meaning you can't adjust it directly, but when you boost or cut the gain towards the extreme settings (+/- 12dB), the cutoff of the shelf begins to sweep downward, so that you get more of a boost or cut of the highs.

This EQ program is intended to be placed before the reverb so you can shape the results you get out of it, which requires you to set them up on a send channel. The use of the EQ is optional, but I definitely recommend using either it or any EQ you prefer before the plate programs, to get the most out of them. A method of adding in a predelay (and maybe even a nice chorus or other modulation) can also be very useful.

Installation

There are two main steps to the installation-

- 1) Install the programs/vectors. Just copy the .n2p files to your Nebula 'programs' folder, and the .n2v files to the 'vectors' folder. Before moving on to the skin install, check to see that the programs load properly in default Nebula, by loading them from Nebula's program finder. The programs are in the 'REV' category, then the 'PX4', 'PX5', 'PX8', or 'PX9' categories, for each sample rate. 'PX5' is for the 48khz rate.
- 2) To install the skin, follow the section of the skin installation manual relating to either Nebula 3 or Nebula 4, depending on which you're using. After installing the skin you will be loading these programs as a unique plug-in, so don't ever load them from the default Nebula and its program selection list again! The program buttons will not work if you do!

The Reverbs

The Olympus plate's main programs are in stereo, and it has a naturally brighter sound, typical to the later plates with solid state amps. Styx's main programs are mono and it has a naturally darker sound, typical of the earlier tube driven plates. As far as I know the amps were originals and there were no mods to the pickups or other electronics. You can alter the tonal balance of either plate using the included EQ (or any other EQ).

The reel to reel tape versions of the Olympus plate were 'resampled' to tape to give the reverbs some tonal variation. They are all contained in one program, and you use the 'mode' knob to choose between them. Most of them only include the fully dampened samples, but the last two do have less dampening. Just try them all out because they sound different. The end of this manual gives the info about what tape decks were used.

There are also 4 bonus alternate versions of the Olympus plate. One is called 'stereo swap', and has the left and right impulses swapped. Then there is 'mono L' which uses the left impulses (from the main program) for both the left and right sides. 'Mono R' does the same but using the right channel impulses. Lastly, 'mono mix' uses a 50/50 mix of both the left and right impulses, applied to both channels, which provides a slightly thicker sound than either of the other mono programs. Styx also has a bonus- I used an old Orban 'stereo synthesizer' unit to create 6 stereo effects (selectable within one program) out of the original mono source. I think the 'stereo' effects produced by the Orban are well suited for processing reverbs to get very unique results.

User Interface/Controls, Reverb:



- 1 – Dry Mix** – Turn this up to bring some of the dry signal back into Nebula's output. It's turned down all the way by default because the best way to use my Nebula reverbs is in a send slot in your DAW (as opposed to as an insert).
- 2 – Reverb Mix** – Adjusts the level of the reverb itself. You can think of this as a combination of your input and output gain. All you need is this one gain control. These 'Full' programs are dynamic and will react differently if you boost the gain to higher levels, but it is subtle. 'Lite' versions have no dynamics so there is no change in sound when gain is adjusted.
- 3 – Dampener** – Adjusts the sampled dampener control. More dampening means a shorter reverb. Also alters the tone significantly.
- 4 – Feedback** – Introduces some feedback. Be careful with it.
- 5 – Input Meter** – The meter is a peak dBFS meter, not VU.
- 6 – Output Meter**
- 7 – Mode control** – Unused in most of the programs. It's only used in the 'pseudo stereo' and 'taped' programs, and lets you switch between the different reverbs contained in each.
- 8 – Program Matrix** – Here's where you pick the program you want. The 'L' column are the lite versions, and 'F' are the full versions. Olympus plate programs are on the left, Styx on the right.

User Interface/Controls, EQ:



- 1 – Input Gain**
- 2 – High Pass Filter** – Fully variable. 0Hz setting is OFF, filtering ranges from 50 to 330 Hz.
- 3 – High Shelf Gain** – Range of +/- 17dB. Extreme settings also adjust the cutoff point downward into lower frequencies, boosting more of the high end.
- 4 – Output Gain**

General Use

I strongly recommend you use these reverbs as sends in your DAW as opposed to inserts, and they are set up with that use in mind, for several reasons. If you really want to use them as inserts I recommend using your DAW's built-in wet/dry mixer control for the Nebula plugin, instead of trying to mix between the 'dry mix' and 'reverb mix' controls in the programs. If you do use the 'dry' control on the GUI to add dry signal back in, don't use the 'feedback' control because it will also feedback the dry signal.

Using the reverbs on a send track is the only way you can also use the included EQ and have it only affect the reverb. Another benefit to using these programs in a send slot in your DAW is that you can also then apply a delay to the signal with whatever means at your disposal to get a pre-delay for the reverb effect. Nebula doesn't have this ability built in. I also recommend adding a really nice chorus plugin.

Lite, Full

The lite versions use less CPU, have no dynamics, and only have 1 kernel, so you don't get any harmonic distortion. The full programs have the dynamic response and some sampled harmonics. You can use the lite versions while mixing and then switch to full just before rendering. With the included custom skin, the controls won't reset when you switch.

Tape Program – More Info

#1 on the 'mode' selector was resampled onto and off of reel tape using a MCI-JH-24 deck at 15IPS. #2 used the same deck at 30IPS. #3 = Studer B67 at 7.5IPS, while #4 was the same deck at 15IPS. #5 was an Otari MTR10 at 7.5IPS. #6 = Otari MTR-90ii at 15ips, and #7 was an Otari MX5050ii at 15ips. #6 and #7 both used less dampened samples and have longer reverb. #7 came out sounding almost identical to #6, so I mixed the left and right channels down to mono, giving a very different option. The full range of the damper control was not resampled to tape for any of these, only one position. To achieve the dampened settings I applied a fadeout to the impulses.

V2 – use this version number to keep track of updates. If the manual posted at my site has a higher version number than the one you have, your set probably isn't up to date.

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Thanks to Max for the skin! Check out his patreon, which helps him continue doing all the great graphical work (and other help) he's been doing with Nebula!

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