Kurzweil KSP8

Multi-effects units are less frequent additions as new product releases these days, but even rarer is the appearance of a multi-effects processor from a manufacturer associated with samplers and synthesis, or more specifically Kurzweil. The KSP8 is a multichannel, multiprocessor, multipurpose, multi-effects processor. Sounds like a lot and it is. **ANDY DAY**

KSP8 IS A FAIRLY SUBSTANTIAL 2U unit with a bewildering number of front panel controls, which for those already familiar with other Kurzweil products, such as the K2500, will look familiar. The panel is divided into three main sections, basic metering, navigation (including a large display) and data entry. The rear panel has four analogue inputs and outputs, one stereo AES I-O, an I-O expansion slot and MIDI in/out/thru connections. There is also a remote connector for the remote control, which is a useful addition, making data entry easier, and allowing for multi unit control.

The RSP8 remote is quite substantial, despite the rather gritty data entry knob and plastic joystick panner. The best feature is the eight shaft encoders, which allow quick and easy editing of effect parameters. It's definitely worth getting the remote for this alone. The unit supplied for the review had an analogue expansion card installed, which takes the I-O capability up to 8 in, 8 out.

There is also a combined TDIF/ADAT card available for digital installations, with an AES card following soon. The KSP8 can operate as eight separate mono processors, four stereos, a single 5.1 or various combinations as long as they add up to eight. So, for example you can have four mono effects and two stereo or a single 5.1 and a stereo processor, the only limit being the amount of unit processing (or U) each effect takes up to a maximum of 16.

This is a system similar to high-end Lexicon and TC units such as the 480 or 6000. Each of the eight input channels has a two-stage digital EQ, with an amazing number of options from notches to shapers, which allow waveform distortion for some very unusual effects. Signals can then be routed and panned through internal buses to the effects processing and out to separate outputs or mixed internally with other effects processors to common outputs. This is all done in the configuration page, using various soft keys and menu options. When you first get the unit out of the box this can seem like a daunting task, but after a while and a couple of rereads of the manual things start to make sense.

On the subject of the manual, it's very comprehensive, with lists of all the presets, but I would suggest that a separate quick start guide may be useful in the future, as in my experience most engineers run a mile from large wordy manuals. Once the unit is configured things get easier and you can start to explore the effects.

Because of the various configuration options, I tried the unit in two basic modes, stereo and 5.1. Effects in stereo mode can be used individually (a preset) or combined (chains) for some truly bizarre sounds. The quality of the stereo presets and chains is very good, ranging from the usual suspects of reverb, flanging and delays, to the completely mad modulation effects possible using the in-built LFOs or external MIDI controllers. This is definitely the unique feature of the KSP8 and where Kurzweil's expertise in synthesis kicks in.

You can choose to control parameters externally via MIDI or other audio channels, resulting in some completely original sounds. The Kurzweil website has some examples of the kind of effects possible, and is well worth checking out. Editing presets or chains is really easy with the remote, because of the eight shaft encoders mentioned previously, whereas using the front panel can be a bit fiddly. There are 85 chains and 499 presets factory-installed with the option to store 999 of your own, so plenty to be getting on with. Plus a smartmedia card can be used to store your favourite presets and chains, which can be loaded onto other KSP8s.

5.1 mode is slightly disappointing, mostly due to the lack of effects. I'm sure this will improve with future software upgrades, but for now you're limited to 99 presets and no chains. This is because the number of Us required for 5.1 effects is too high to allow more than one preset, not that you would want to anyway as 98 of the 99 presets are reverbs with one compressor. It's a real shame that there are no 5.1 versions of the mad stereo effects, as these are the most exciting feature of the KSP8. But you can have three stereo processors with the same effect on each and mix the results externally for some interesting textures.

Another feature of 5.1 mode is some basic 5.1 panning, which will allow you to take eight mono inputs and pan each individually to outputs 1-6. Pan can be performed by using the data entry wheel on the front panel or, if you have the remote, using a nasty plastic joystick. It's a nice idea but not very practical, as the only way to automate pan moves is to record MIDI information into a sequencer, which can make editing clumsy. There also doesn't appear to be any kind of centre divergence control and that would be a useful addition in the future.

The KSP8 is an interesting twist on multi-effects processing, with some amazing sounds when used in stereo mode, with lots of scope for improvement in 5.1 mode. At £2499.99 for the unit and £499.99 for the remote (all inc. VAT) it represents a fairly large investment but it is well worth a demo. ■
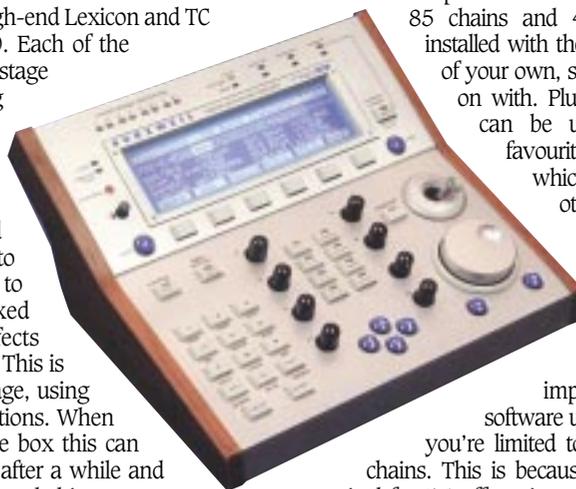
PROS	Stereo presets unusual and varied; lots of editing parameters and real-time control possibilities.
CONS	5.1 presets are slightly disappointing; quite a daunting manual and learning curve to get started; fairly expensive; joystick panning limited.
EXTRAS	The DMTi digital multitrack interface is designed for use with the Kurzweil

K2500 or K2600 Series instruments or as a standalone D-AC. The unit transfers data between the K2500/K2600 and ADAT lightpipe, Tascam TDIF, AES-EBU and SPDIF interfaces.

Converted data may be output digitally via four AES-EBUs (or three AES-EBU and one SPDIF optical), eight ADAT or TDIF channels, eight Kurzweil Digital Stream channels, or one stereo K2500/K2600 return.)

Contact