

Interview: Stewart Copeland on recording the GRAMMY® nominated album *Divine Tides*

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BABY Audio TAIP

An artificially intelligent take on the sound of tape

Tape emulations abound. To coax out the nuances of a vintage reel-to-reel tape recorder, TAIP from BABY Audio employs a combination of machine-based learning and clever DSP. The stated goal: deliver a tweakable analog tape machine vibe based on the ideal emulation.

Reelin' in the years

The minimalist BABY Audio design aesthetic is on full display. A modern, graphic representation of spinning tape reels dominates the proceedings. The Drive reel controls the input level, with higher values producing more saturation. The Output reel controls output volume; an auto gain tab conveniently keeps the output level consistent. If you forego auto gain, you can drive the output levels into a brickwall limiter at the end of the signal path—effective on the two-bus or in a mastering chain. There is also a mix control for using TAIP in parallel mode.

Hiss and flutter...WOW

For all its charms, analog tape presents several sonic challenges. Though it can be masked by careful attention to levels, noise is endemic to the format. While tape hiss is part of the nostalgic charm, here a Noise slider lets you dial in the amount of 'charm' that best suits your needs. Interestingly, the noise is only present when there is signal. For example, you can hear the noise cut off with a gate-like effect on a percussive source after the transient. Note that BABY Audio lists this as an effect, and you only notice it when you emphasize it with the mix control and your source is intermittent.

Wow and flutter, usually the result of a worn or dirty capstan, introduces a woozy detuning effect. As with Noise, TAIP allows you to introduce as much of this sonic degradation as you choose via the Wear slider. If you use the Mix function and combine Wear artifacts with the dry signal, you'll get a pleasing phasing or chorus effect.

A gentle squeeze

The natural, warm compression of analog tape is also captured nicely in TAIP, and the Glue function sets the amount. It's decoupled from the Drive setting, so you can nicely achieve more compression without pushing the drive and saturation. BABY Audio achieves this by adding a supplemental DSP-based compressor to the signal path whose algorithm is based on tape compression characteristics. This means the effect stays true to the paradigm of the plugin.



The highs and lows

Analog tape typically rolls off a bit of the upper-mid and high frequencies—that's why aural exciters and enhancers were invented. On TAIP, a Presence function gives you complete control over those frequencies. You can boost them for more clarity or attenuate them for a warmer sound. Traditionally, driving analog tape hard can significantly alter the frequency response. For this reason, TAIP adds Hi and Low Shape filters that adjust the dry signal pre-Drive to help you preserve those frequencies that might get lost or accentuated when overdriven. You can also use these Shape tools to emphasize the distortion.

Baby, I love your way

I used TAIP extensively on a recent mix project. I found it to be really effective on the drum bus, where it added character and weight to some well-played but slightly sterile-sounding drum tracks. I also used it subtly on the mix bus to good effect, nicely enhancing the whole song. Though I have been around long enough to have an ingrained aversion to tape hiss and wow and flutter, I found that adding a bit of Wear to a Hammond organ part lifted that track from out of the weeds and into prominence in the mix.

Is it tape, or is it TAIP?

I've had a Studer B-67 in my studio for the past few months for a digitization project. My ears are very tuned to the sonic subtleties that tape imparts. I can confidently report that the AI baked into TAIP did a fantastic job emulating the nuances of the format. TAIP nails the complexities and subtleties of tape, and with its added flexibility and enhancements, it delivers on the promise to make it work beautifully in the modern context. 🍷

Price: \$69
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