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Top Hollywood Re-recording Mixer Tom Marks Chooses NUGEN Audio Halo Upmix And MasterCheck Pro For Netflix Series



Hollywood based re-recording mixer Tom Marks has chosen NUGEN Audio's [Halo Upmix](#) and [MasterCheck Pro](#) for his mix on the hit Netflix series "Sense8," which has just wrapped production of its second season.

Tom has many popular television and cinema movie titles to his credit, including just this year, 6 Below, Geostorm, Every 40 Years (Documentary) and The Valley. Tom started off as a teenager...

Tom: I grew up with music in my family, listening to live music & albums as a kid. When I was 15 in high school, I got a job at a local TV station near St. Louis. I worked there for three years until I went to college to study Electronic Engineering. A few years after graduating, I ended up going back to school at Full Sail in Orlando, Florida. I graduated in 2003, and three days later I was living in Los Angeles. My previous background got me work in television, and then I transitioned into films. About 5 years ago, I started doing some freelance work at Warner Bros. and it's been going pretty strong since. More recently I have been working on some very cool TV projects with a few feature films mixed in.

On the Netflix series Sense8 using Nugen Audio's Halo Upmix, to deliver a 5.1 mix and the MasterCheck Pro loudness, dynamics, and codec toolset enables Tom to "audition" a mix in real time and determine how it will sound when streamed online.

Tom: I've been a fan of NUGEN Audio for a while. Their products are extremely stable, and the sound quality is terrific," said Marks. "For 'Sense8' we're handed a wide range of source materials — anything from orchestral 5.1 stems to stereo stems to songs from every genre. I'm able to dial in a sound pretty quickly and then check the stereo downmix to make sure it's folding down correctly.

One technique Tom uses to create a 5.1 upmix, he will bus several stereo tracks to a stereo auxiliary track and put Halo on the aux.

Tom: As I get different versions of a song, I can keep all of them on their respective tracks and mute them so I can listen only to the current version. When a client wants to hear an older version, I can do that by pressing two mute buttons. Meanwhile, only one instance of Halo is being used. And if I change the setting on it, the changes will apply to whichever version gets picked.

What about your experiences with MasterCheck Pro?

Tom: MasterCheck Pro is really valuable on 'Sense8,' which is likely to be watched on many different types of devices. As I'm mixing the show, I can switch over from the 5.1 mix on big speakers to the LtRt mix on small TV speakers as I'm listening through the MasterCheck Pro plugin. That way, I'm able to replicate what an average viewer's experience will be. From a creative point of view, my favourite tools are those that are so straightforward that you don't have to think about them, and NUGEN products allow me to do that. Also, the NUGEN team is extremely accessible and open to my suggestions in shaping future product upgrades.

Exponential Audio Reverbs Are Tom's Favourite Too

Exponential Audio products are also in that group of favourite tools too. As a mixer, reverb is an essential part of his toolkit and soon the discussion turns to reverbs.

Tom: I owned a TC6000 hardware box and really fell in love with it. When they came out with their plug-in, I purchased it immediately so I could run multiple instances. I used Lexicon 480Ls which several studios still have today. I also owned a Bricasti, which sounds amazing, but was too expensive when you need 10 of them.

Then he discovered the work of Michael Carnes from Exponential Audio reverbs.

Tom: I started using the Lexicon reverb plug-ins when they were released and would see Michael on some of the forums.

Tom feels it is important to strike up a dialog with companies to make sure they are better informed on the needs of the audio community.

Tom: I try to reach out to a lot of companies whose products I like. You're never quite sure if they know what we do and how we use their products. I often say, hey I love using your products for these reasons. And then say if you could tweak this feature, it would really help us. Over time, I've developed a lot of good relationships with the companies. So I reached out to Michael about localisation ideas with surround reverbs that eventually ended up in the surround versions. I was an early adopter of his stereo reverbs and was very excited when we started talking about the surround versions.

As an Exponential Audio user too I was interested if Tom has a favourite?

Tom: I mostly use R2 Surround, but I will give both plugins a shot. Especially if I'm trying something new and want to experiment. I'll put both reverbs up [Phoenixverb and R2] on two separate tracks and load a similar type preset like a small room. Then I'll switch between the two and tweak the settings. I have found that the R2 sits in the track better for me. There are times when I'll try several different reverbs to see what works best. It comes down to the sound in your head and trying to get that to come through the speakers. A lot of times, the Exponential reverbs win. On top of everything else, what I do wish more people would talk about, and partly because I know how hard Michael works at it, is how efficient the plug-ins are CPU wise. In post production, we are using a lot of 5.0 and 7.0 reverbs. On the effects side of the console, I have hard effects, foley, backgrounds and sound design stems. For each of the four stems, you can have four or five reverbs going. So that's sixteen to twenty multi-channel reverbs you may have to run on one system along with over two hundred tracks which can have EQs, filters, and compressors.

What about the fact that the Exponential Audio plugins are native only, does this bother him

Tom: One issue people have is when the application runs out of processing power, which stops the playback, and opens an error window. But because Exponential reverbs are very efficient, it has never been an issue. A lot of times, I'm working on a Pro Tools HDX2 system with the DSP cards handling the voice count. I can have 16-20 Exponential reverbs running, look at the CPU usage, and it's not even sweating.

What tools do you use for upmixing, loudness and reverbs in audio post production?. Do share your experiences in the comments below.