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Har-Bal Visual Mastering EQ
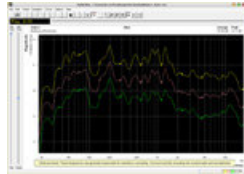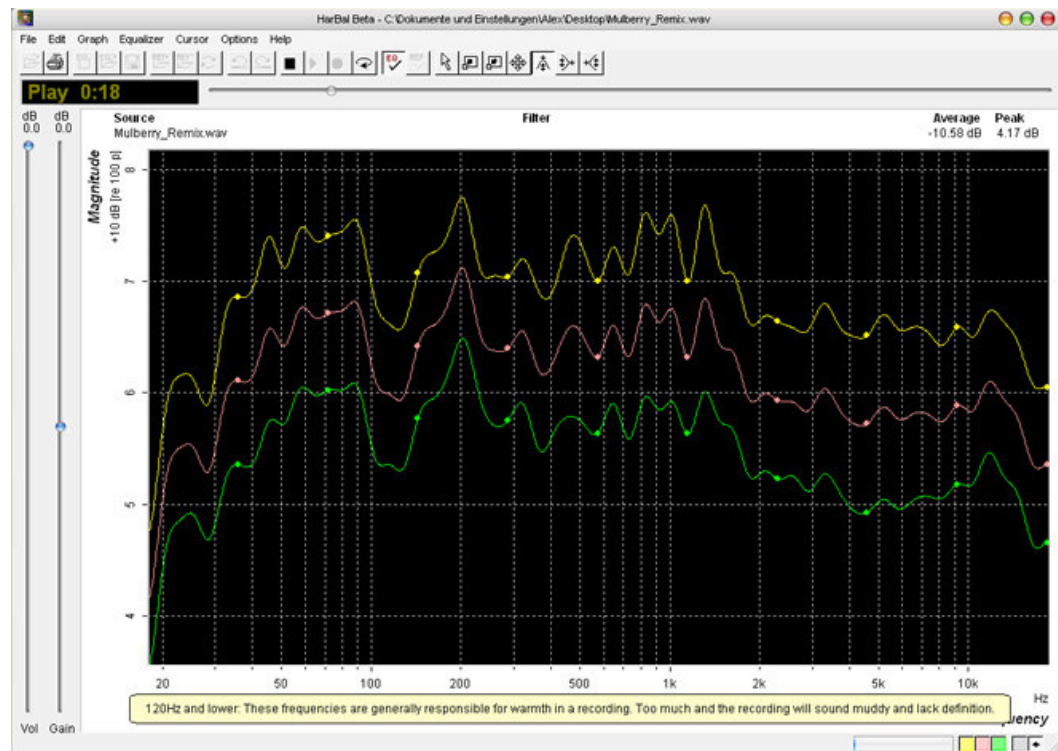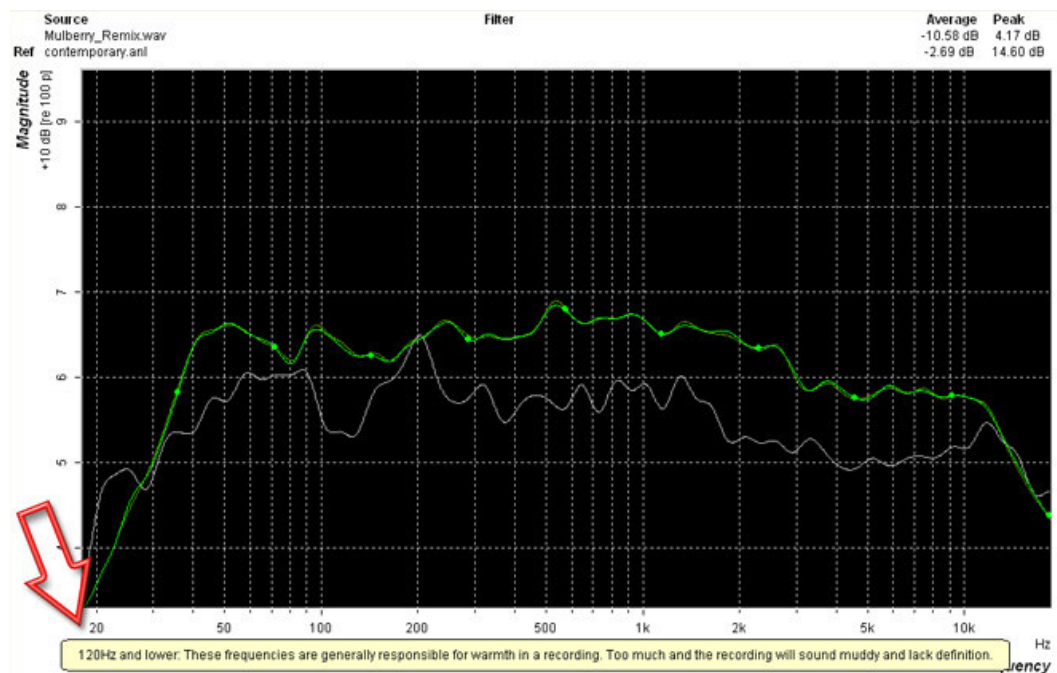
Har-Bal

When Craig Anderton mentioned the Har-Bal mastering equalizer in our interview with him I needed to check it out. The installation process was hassle free and Har-Bal was up and running in no time. Unfortunately it's not a plug-in, so you need to render your audio tracks to a stereo file (Har-Bal accepts every given bit-depth) before the equalisation process, and put it back into your wave editor / sequencer for further mastering (limiter, saturator etc.) afterwards. But since Har-Bal is so easy to use and offers awesome results in no time it's really not a big issue.

Okay now, how does it work? You load your audio track into Har-Bal and the program shows you three graphs, which indicate the given frequency ranges. You can now simply drag those lines to eliminate certain frequencies and boost others, or you can load an audio track which sounds very good to you and compare the frequency lines. Although there are, other products offering EQ matching I found Har-Bal way better (meaning easier to use) and more pleasing to my ears. But the best thing about Har-Bal is that it changes the overall volume dynamically so that you don't bust your ears or speakers.

I wouldn't use this EQ to simply match your songs to the analyzed spectrum of another song though. It's more like a guideline, and you should still use your ears. Nonetheless Har-Bal is a kick ass mastering tool if you know how to use it in the right way – and the users-guide is pretty good.

One of the TOP features for the non-pro user definitly is the frequency guideline shown at the bottom of the Har-Bal window, indicating which frequencies are responsible for the desired changes.

The only negative thing I can say about Har-Bal is the limitation of the demo version. How are users supposed to know what it really sounds like, with an 8-bit playback resolution? Disabling the record function and a nag-screen would've been enough in my opinion. But in the days of pirated software it's more than understandable that a developer wants to protect his products from being cracked.