



Solid State Logic Blitzer

£96

PC MAC

SSL's latest plugin delivers a variety of classic compressor colours, but can it match dedicated emulations? **Jon Musgrave** finds out...

> Many SSL hardware compressors are already available in fantastic plugin emulations. But the company has also developed further compressor plugins from the ground up like X-Comp and X-valvecomp. That continues with its latest addition, Blitzer. A 'compressor with attitude', it looks conceptually similar to Empirical Labs Distressor. It aims to deliver everything from soft, saturating compression right up to brick wall limiting, and combines regular compression controls with dedicated Drive and Transient-shaping processors. Nevertheless, one-knob-style controls coupled

with a clear layout and dedicated gain reduction meter keep things easy to understand. Throw in a few convenient extras like output wet/dry mix, output Auto Gain, oversampling mode (HQ), undo/redo, context-sensitive tool tips, and a very well spec'd sidechain EQ section (see box out) and you get a great combination of sonic flavours all in one easy to use plugin.

Get in the spirit

Fundamental to Blitzer are the distinctive knee shapes found in analogue compressors and this creates many different attack and release

profiles and threshold offsets. These are baked into the Ratio and Blitz! mode settings, providing 10 unique behaviours. Look closely and you'll spot that these start with a 1:1 no compression setting. This adds a tiny amount of 3rd harmonic distortion and is ideal for warming up sounds. Then moving up the ratio dial you'll find wide parabolic knee shapes with a very gentle response followed by easy slope options with a narrower knee. At 10:1 and 20:1 you get two opto-inspired modes that closely emulate the non-linearities of these classic hardware designs. Rounding things off, Blitz! mode

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delivers an aggressive brick-wall-style limiting effect, with attack and release characteristics based on the classic 1176 all buttons mode.

Smash it up

Despite the name, Blitzer is very good at reasonably transparent compression duties, and bread 'n' butter tasks like vocals, bass, sub mixes and mix bus. However, it's the tougher stuff that grabbed our attention. For example, both opto settings deliver that squashy pumping compression that's great for adding energy to drums. Meanwhile Blitz! mode goes further, adding colour to pretty much anything you throw at it.

Of course, compression is only part of the story, with the Drive and Transient processors providing further flavours. On the analyser we found Drive added primarily odd harmonic distortions, with some even harmonics creeping in at higher settings. Its behaviour was also somewhat linked to the selected ratio. Either way, the effect moves from subtle saturation right up to trashy fuzziness at the aptly labelled setting 11. Transient meanwhile introduces a slower initial attack for sharp transients, creating a form of overshoot. Unsurprisingly we found this most obvious when using faster attack settings, as it allows you to wind some transient back into the mix. This works well across the ratio settings but is particularly effective in Blitz! mode and is ideal for drums, allowing you to enjoy the ambience-enhancing compression and keep your beats crisp.

Blitzer is clearly a plugin with a purpose and we like where it's coming from. The powerful sidechain coupled with tone and transient-shaping aspects achieve way more than a



The internal side chain includes extensive modification options

Would you like a side with that?

Many plugin compressors include sidechain tailoring, but the complexity on offer varies a lot. Blitzer includes both a dedicated high pass filter (up to 2kHz) and a single parametric EQ band. Decent frequency range (100Hz to 10kHz), adjustable bandwidth and powerful gain (+/- 36dB) mean you can achieve a multitude of frequency-conscious compression styles. With gain cut and boost both available you can approach things in various ways. A powerful cut in the upper frequencies,

say, de-emphasises these in the side chain, resulting in the mid to lower range getting more compression. Meanwhile adding a sharp narrow boost in the sibilance region turns Blitzer into a respectable de-esser. The only negative is there's no way to bypass the onboard sidechain EQ section so you can assess if it's benefitting the compression outcome. Still, it's great to see a powerful sidechain section incorporated in this flexible, flavour-packed compressor.

simple hardware emulation and bring everything into a simple clear interface. So, if you're open to a multi-function creative plugin and are bored of your existing hardware emulations, this could be what you need. **cm**

Web www.solidstatellogic.com



Blitzer's tool tips help make the plugin learning curve clear and quick

Alternatively

SKnote Disto
\$50

This affordable emulation extends its capabilities with four different core-processing algorithms

UA EL8 Distressor Compressor
£299

UAD's emulation of this analogue classic includes the renowned Nuke setting

Verdict

For Impressive choice of compression styles on offer

Powerful sidechain options

Excellent transient tailoring feature

Against No way to bypass the sidechain EQ

Blitzer is both powerful and easy to use and one of the best new compressor plugins we've seen in some time

9/10