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A day with the Elysia Mpressor plugin

November 25th, 2009



Each year the audio plugin market seems to reach a new all time high. There's a lot of people in the pro audio business that more and more start using precise digital plugins and analog emulations over real hardware, why? Several reasons for sure, price, ease of use, recall-ability for example.

It's simply easier to just press the save button in your DAW and open the same project with exact settings a year later, than go searching for the recall sheets in the archive and start tweaking all knobs on a whole mix to the right value.

The same goes for price point, when a hardware compressor costs 4000€ one can get a really convincing emulation of the same gear in form of a plugin for 400€ or even less. Both sound more or less the same, with the hardware unit being slightly ahead. The question stands though, on the final result... will the listeners hear and appreciate the difference that justifies spending ten times more of my cash on the hardware unit, most likely not. And add to that, a plugin most often offers instances ad infinitum while the hardware unit is only one.

Still an audio enthusiast as I am, I have to admit that it would be mighty to own a couple of top-notch hardware units!

The German based company, Elysia, released their hardware Mpressor on the 2007 MusikMesse Frankfurt. With a MSRP at \$4999 this was not an option for the humble home producers. This was the compressor for the professional studios who can afford investing at these price points.

2007 is now two years ago and a lot has happened on the plugin market. With each year and each new release plugins take a step up in quality, getting closer and closer to their hardware equivalents, I even dare to say that in some plugin cases we are almost there. Is the Mpressor a plug in as good as it gets? Well, let's find out!

On the development process of the plugin Elysia has worked with the much acclaimed coding company Brainworx, who also write and release their own plugins.

The Mpressor plugin, being an emulation, has the exact same adjustable parameters as the hardware version. The standard compressor controls, threshold, attack, release, ratio and gain as well as external side-chain are present and in addition the unique features of the mpressor including:

- Negative compression ratios
- Anti Log alternative release curve
- Auto Fast attack
- Niveau Filter EQ
- Gain Reduction Limiter

Some thoughts on usability of these special features

Negative compression ratios give one endless opportunities in carving out groove from a track as well as using the plug as an effect more than for traditional compression.

Anti Log release curve could be put into the same creative category. It instantly gives you pump and an breathing by, what first hit me when I tried feels like turning compression inside out or reversing it in some way (though technically this probably isn't the correct explanation for it).

Auto Fast works awesome for catching loud and fast peaks that otherwise can be problematic, when using the compressor for increasing level of the material it can also come in quite handy.

Niveau Filter EQ is an easy to use feature that I'm certain I will find myself using at many coming occasions, basically you pick a point on the frequency range and choose amount of dB on EQ gain parameter. Everything above the chosen freq is boosted and everything below is cut with the chosen amount of dB. Alternatively you can have it work the other way around so that everything below chosen frequency is boosted and above cut. Superb for brightening or warming up a track just a tad.

Gain Reduction Limiter is exactly what the name says, you can stop gain reduction at dB value. Say you really squash your track having gain reduction reading -10dB, engage the limiter at -4 dB and it goes no further. So the loudest parts of your tune can retain its dynamic while you still going nuts squashing the quiet parts. *Useful? You bet!*

Conclusion

Maybe you've already come to the same conclusion that I have indirectly mentioned above, this seems to be everything a standard compressor is and beyond. It's modern and versatile, it's clean and tight, when you want it to be breathy it breathes, when you tell it to be subtle and transparent it obeys and if you throw it out there to be whacky and angry it does that just as well... all while retaining stellar quality. It can work anything from a single vocal track to drums to bass to a full fledged rock mix and most often it does a very very good job.

It's easy to work as it has the basic hardware compressor layout (worth noticing though is that the graphics just reassembles one side of the Mpressor hardware unit, even though the plugin of course works both on stereo or and mono).

People often categorize compressors to clean or colorful and most often also terms like vintage, modern, tight, loose, hifi and lofi pop up in the same discussions. If one is to categorize the Mpressor it, in my opinion, defines a versatile, modern, tight sounding unit that can be used on a wide array of material and at the same time it has an second side presenting experimental sound shaping using features like the negative ratios.

Is it worth the price?

As mentioned earlier in this review when it comes to prices of plugins this one is on the steep side, with a MSRP of 349€ it isn't something that one buys as a beginners package bundled with a DAW. This is as professional it gets without going OTB.

Does it justify such a price? Well that's something that everyone has to decide for themselves, but if you are looking for top quality sound shaping without going to expensive hardware this is among the best there is.

If you want to try it out you can download it [HERE](#), but you need an ilok. During the trial period prepare to isolate yourself from the world, do some extensive testing and then decide if your ready to invest. I'll guarantee you one thing, you'll be impressed by it!

Currently the Mpressor plugin is available in RTAS, VST and AU formats and with TDM coming in December it's going to be accessible for the whole DAW market.

We're going to round this review off with some sound clips to give you some listening material. Vocals are recorded with an vintage Neumann U47 and the acoustic guitar with an AKG C451 B, both into the preamp of an SSL G8000 console, with some reverb and EQ applied in Logic. There's three versions of each clip:

- Unprocessed

- Mpressor compression: You're eager to hear aren't you?

- Logic 8 Compressor: Not a bad one by any means, but a little less impressive.

Worth to be noted though is that there's no way that these clips show the versatility of the Mpressor, it only touches the surface of the basics that it can do on Elysia's webpage you'll find some more aggressive on-off clips of the Mpressor working different kinds of drumloops and rhythm sections. But you really need to download the *demo* and explore it yourself!

Vocals & Acoustic combined



Uncompressed: [listen](#)

Logic Compressor: [listen](#)

Mpressor: [listen](#)

Vocals only



Uncompressed: [listen](#)

Logic Compressor: [listen](#)

Mpressor: [listen](#)

Acoustic Guitar only



Uncompressed: [listen](#)

Logic Compressor: [listen](#)

Mpressor: [listen](#)

Drumkit Bus-compressed



Uncompressed: [listen](#)

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Wednesday 25. Nov 2009

Poll

Is it worth upgrading to Logic Studio 9?

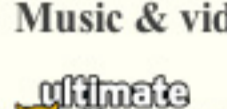
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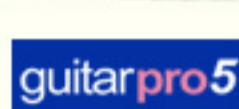
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