



Elysia Mpressor Plug-in | €349

Two innovative German manufacturers join forces to create an emulation of a highly flexible hardware compressor. **Stuart Bruce** prepares to be Mpressed

So, what does it do? Well, to start with, you have a great straightforward compressor with controls for threshold, attack, release, ratio and gain make up. Attack and release times are very comprehensive, attack ranging from the ultra fast 0.01ms to 150ms which gives you plenty of options in shaping the front of a sound and release times varying from 5 to 1200ms giving lots of scope from pumping to smooth.

It will grab hold of and shape pretty much anything that you throw at it from buzzy synths to funky guitars and any kind of drums or percussion. But the real surprises are when you bring some of its more exclusive features in to play.

The first of these is the 'auto fast' switch on the attack time. When a sound is a mix of attacking and sustaining components its often hard to find an attack time that compliments both. Too short and the sustains suffer, too long and some of the peaks you want to tame slip through.

What auto fast does is to use the setting on the knob as the basis for all softer or more sustained program but when it gets loud or attacking it drops to

ON THE DVD

WHAT IS IT?
A plug-in compressor with some very novel features

CONTACT
Who: Elysia GmbH
Tel: +44 (0)20 8962 5080
Web: elysia.com

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- 1 One of the best auto attack functions I have ever used. Ever
 - 2 Negative compression ratios take you beyond the realm of standard compression effects
 - 3 A Gain Reduction Limit control that allows very precise manipulation of extreme compression settings

There are an enormous amount of hardware compressors available out there so it's pretty hard for a manufacturer to come up with something new. One of the few companies to have blazed this particular trail with any success over the past few years has been German manufacturer Elysia.

Their Alpha compressor has found its way into many a big mastering studio and that's where I first came across it. With its stunning audio quality and incredible range of control it has quickly established itself as a tool of choice for many a top mastering engineer.

Mpressive

The Mpressor has had the same kind of reaction from top recording engineers. Besides being a great straightforward compressor it has a few tricks up its sleeve that really help it to stand out from the crowd. However, the price for the hardware units does put them firmly

out of reach for a lot of potential customers so it seems like a wise move to get a software version out on the streets. Choosing to do this in partnership with the guys at Brainworx, currently the holders of their share of *Future Music Platinum Awards* meant that we were very keen to get our greedy mitts on it.



The Mpressor allows you to control parameters in the usual click and drag way but also gives you mousewheel support. Simply place the cursor over the parameter and adjust it using the mousewheel. Holding down shift puts it in to fine mode. Very useful and something more manufacturers should be doing

a much shorter attack time. The result is a very even feeling compression that never lets go, allowing you to sit an instrument in the mix without any unwanted peaks and troughs. Particularly useful for clean or crunchy guitars, basses and loops where you often have a mix of short transients and sustained elements.

Next you have the 'Anti-log' button next to the release knob. This applies an antilogarithmic curve to the release time which is normally linear. A linear curve allows for a smooth release of compressed signals which sounds more natural to our ears and less evident. Anti-log turns this characteristic on its head and makes it very audible indeed.

Pumping drums and quieter percussive elements in loops can be brought to the fore. Dry drums can start to sound ambient, and in combination with the attack time you can really stick some energy into a groove.



The Mpressor also has a sidechain function so you can trigger it from any other track, input or buss in your DAW. Very useful especially considering all the weird and wonderful shaping possibilities it already gives you

would so that the characteristic of the Mpressor is based around heavy compression but you can tailor how much dynamic range you lose. In practice, this means that although you have the excitement of hitting the circuitry hard, the sound doesn't choke,

Filtered through

The bottom left of the Mpressor has the two knobs and switches of the Niveau Filter. This is an EQ that balances its cut and boost around a centre frequency which can be set anywhere from 26Hz to 22kHz. As you turn the

knob clockwise you boost above the centre frequency and simultaneously cut below it. Turning anti-clockwise boosts below and cuts above. This

very simply alters the character of the sound from dark to bright and is surprisingly effective. At its most extreme settings it becomes a high- or low-pass filter. I can imagine using the plug just for this EQ.

So, putting it all together with those negative compression ratios, you have a pretty useful bag of tricks here. From subtle but controlled compression to radical pumping, tonal shaping to complete changes in the feel of a groove, the Mpressor will certainly make a mark on your music. Add to that great sonic quality and this is a very powerful and musical tool that you'll find yourself reaching for every day. **FM**

Although you have the excitement of hitting the circuitry hard, you can allow the sound to breathe more

GRL Control

Below the release knob sits the Gain Reduction Limit control. This allows you to set a maximum amount of gain reduction independent of the threshold control. 'What is the point of that?' you ask. Well, it means that you can set your threshold higher than you normally

you can allow it to breathe more. The overall effect is a bit like mixing a compressor on another pair of groups, but still holding the peaks back. It's very useful, especially when it comes to balancing a complete kit or a loop into a track once you have found the sound that you like.

To Infinity and Beyond!

How compression affects the dynamic range of a signal is defined by the compression ratio. Once the threshold is passed, the ratio determines how much the output signal will be reduced.

A ratio of 2:1 means that for every 2dB above threshold at the input you get 1dB at the output, so the higher the compression ratio the more you contain the

dynamic range. At ∞:1 any increase in level above the threshold results in no gain change at the output.

That is what a limiter does, but once you go beyond infinity into negative ratios the higher the input level the more the output gain reduces below your threshold point. This may seem like a daft idea but when you try it you start to get the

point. On percussive sources you can change the groove around, pianos and guitars can lose their attack and start to sound almost reversed.

With judicious use of the Gain Reduction Limiter and some of the other specialised parameters on the Mpressor, it's possible to radically alter envelopes as effectively as their excellent hardware.



SPECS

Available in VST, AU, RTAS and TDM

System Requirements
Mac: Intel or PPC (recommended 1GHz or more), 256MB Ram, Mac OS X 10.4 or higher, Pro Tools 7.0 or higher or a VST or AU compatible host
PC: Intel compatible CPU (recommended 1GHz or more), 256MB Ram, Windows 2000 or higher, Pro Tools 7.0 or higher or a VST compatible host
 iLok USB dongle

ALTERNATIVES



Eventide Omnipressor
\$1,195

Originally a hardware unit that first appeared in the '70s, the Omnipressor is a wonderful device. With negative ratios and an attenuation limit control, it must have partly inspired the Mpressor. Sadly the software version is only available for Pro Tools. Begging e-mails for native code versions should be sent to the website.

eventidestore.com

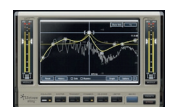


Waves C1 Parametric Compressor

From \$130

A comprehensive strip which also gives negative ratios, sidechain and equaliser. Split into three separate processors, which can be used independently or together, the C1 is a really useful addition to any setup at a great price.

waves.com



iZotope Alloy

\$249

With six stages of processing including EQ, compression and transient shaping Alloy is a big complex beast. Definitely worth a look.

izotope.com

FutureMusic VERDICT

STABILITY [Progress bar]

VALUE [Progress bar]

EASE OF USE [Progress bar]

VERSATILITY [Progress bar]

RESULTS [Progress bar]

With the reputations involved you'd expect something special and the Mpressor doesn't disappoint.