

REVIEW

gear

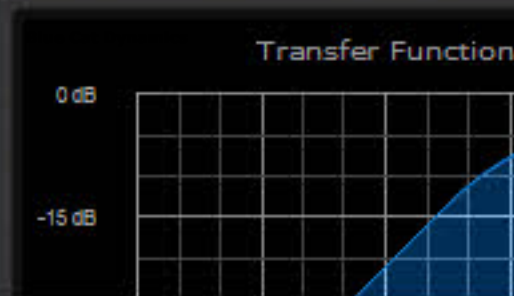
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Wusik Magazine

Blue Cat's Dynamics - Modeler

Input
Pre-Gain: -9.0 dB

Side Chain Filter
 Filter On
 Listen
 SC Low Cut: [Knob]
 SC High Cut: [Knob]



Blue Cat's Dynamics - Gate

Input
Pre-Gain: [Knob]

Envelope Detection
 Attack: [Knob] | Hold: [Knob] | Release: [Knob] | RMS average: [Knob]

Blue Cat's Dynamics - Xpert Compressor

Input
Pre-Gain: [Knob]

Envelope Detection
 Attack: [Knob] | Hold: [Knob] | Release: [Knob] | RMS average: [Knob]

Blue Cat's Dynamics - Compressor

Input
Pre-Gain: -9.0 dB

Envelope Detection
 Attack: 0.1 ms | Hold: 0.0 ms | Release: 700.0 ms | RMS average: 700 ms

Oversampling
0 stages

Mode
VCA-Opto | Peak-RMS

Compression
 Threshold: -14.0 dB | Ratio: 0.00 | Knee: 9.0 dB

Limiter
 Bypass
 Hard-Soft: 29 %
 Release: 476 ms
 Post Gain: +0.0 dB

Stereo
 -flip
 -max
 -min
 -average
 -none

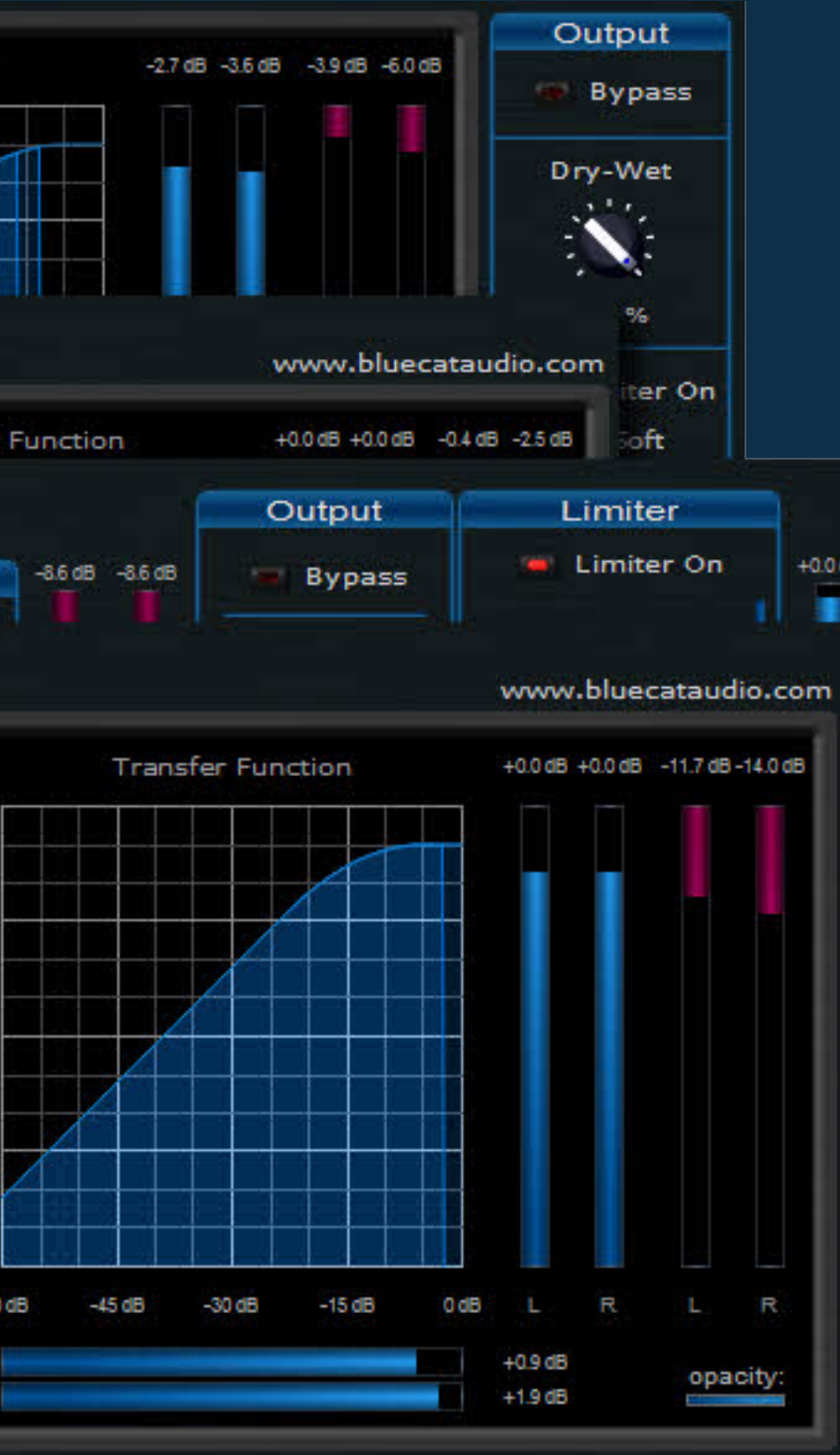
Auto-Gain
 Auto-Gain
 Makeup Gain: -5.0 dB

Bypass

0 dB, -15 dB, -30 dB, -45 dB, -60 dB, -60 dB, In (L), In (R)

Blue Cat Dynamics

by Wouter Dullaert



Reviewing plug-ins sometimes feels like travelling the world. This issue I'm visiting Russia, Belgium and in this review: France. The reason for this journey is the dynamics plug-in by Blue Cat.

Dynamics is, as the name implies, a single band compressor plug-in, but with a twist. It is windows only and comes in both DirectX and VST formats. In this review I'll be covering the VST version.



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Blue Cat Dynamics

When you first launch the plug-in, you are greeted by a much fleshed out compressor GUI. All the controls you expect from a decent compressor are there, and then some. In the center of this knob-laden view there is also a nice display which visualises your compression curve and has some very helpful input, output and gain reduction meters. This display is not as informative as the modern waveform views found on Fabfilter's Pro-C and Imageline's Maximus, but it still provides tons of useful visual feedback when tweaking all the controls. This expert view provides all the functions you could ever want from a single band compressor.

A lot of buttons and features sure is nice, but very often it's overkill. Sometimes you just don't want to make something sound like it's made by aliens; sometimes you just want a limiter, or a good old fashioned compressor with five knobs. Of course your big multifunctional effect can do this, but it's often easier, faster and more satisfying to just use a dedicated effect. The fine lads at Blue Cat noticed this and therefore created a very deep skinning system. This system goes far beyond your regular skinning system: it doesn't only allow you to change the colour scheme, or alter the way the buttons look, it also allows you to reorder or even hide entire parts of the GUI.





The power of the skinning system does have price: it is not that easy to create your own skins. It's more of a programming language based on xml, so there's quite the learning curve for the uninitiated.

To offset this learning curve, Blue Cat has included a whole bunch of factory skins: there's a limiter, a normal compressor, a compressor with display and the big kahuna expert view with all bells and whistles. You can download even more skins from their website. Some of these are really pieces of art. Each of these skins feels like its own separate instrument. Even when you compare two "compressor" skins to each other: the different layout and workflow will lead to different results.

Like every self-respecting compressor these days, Dynamics offers sidechain control. Dynamics' way of implementing this does differ a bit from the competition. Dynamics has a midi out port to which you can assign various signals within the plug-in, such as the output volume or the gain reduction. You can then use your host's midi capabilities to route this signal to whatever it is you want to sidechain. Of course this opens up a whole lot more possibilities than the traditional sidechaining. You can even write the midi information out as automation data in your host.

The ease of use of this sidechaining system greatly depends on your host, but this is also the case for "traditional" compressors which use a separate sidechaining input.

On their website, Blue Cat has put up a whole lot of tutorials which show how all these hidden features of Dynamics can be used, often in combination with their impressive (freeware) gain suite. They show you how to do dynamic ducking, or how to create a wah-wah effect and more. The manual itself is 25 pages long and explains every inch of the plug-in in great detail. It also contains some tips on how to achieve some common effects; nice.

Sound-wise, Dynamics is very good. I tried a whole bunch of source material with it and it never failed to give me satisfying results. Dynamics also ships with a set of presets. There's a reasonable amount of them, but it's by no means a preset machine. The presets themselves are good, and nicely varied. They often were a nice starting point for tweaking.

Dynamics is also a very stable plug-in. I tested it in a lot of hosts, and I only encountered a very rare problem in FLStudio, which the latest update fixed.

Anyone in the market for a good single band compressor should seriously consider Dynamics. For €89 it is not the cheapest on the market (how can it be in this age of freeware), but it offers a very high value for money rating. It will easily become your to-go to compressor. The skinning system makes it usable in both simple and complex situations, and eases the learning curve. It also has enough tricks up its sleeve to keep the creative compression freak happy. Strongly recommended!

