

Test: elysia xmax

Insiders have been waiting for a while, and now it's finally here: The multiband mastering compressor with Mid/Side processing for xmaximal loudness and stereo width - and all with an analog touch. Sounds like the perfect hardware solution, right? Whether it meets expectations, we'll see and hear in the test. **by Marco Scherer**

Right away: Our colleagues at professional audio are testing the xmax in parallel with this issue. You can find the test report for free as a PDF in the magazine downloads and on our sister magazine's website [1]. Accordingly, we take a less technical look at the device here and instead focus more on musical scenarios.

What can the xmax do?

The xmax can be seen as a 3-in-1 device in two ways: On the one hand, it combines a soft-clipper with multiband compressor and mid/side functionalities. On the other hand, it processes the three bands with independent compressors. Mind you, all in stereo, which is not a given in this league.

The xmax dissects the input signal into middle and side signals. The middle is further split into low and mid bands. The former can be set to mono with the lowmo button, and the three areas can be compressed separately. Finally, the level is processed with a soft clipper.

The compressor speed ranges from 10 to 800 milliseconds, from snappy short to almost a second. The frequency is also adjustable.

How does the xmax sound?

So much for the technical part. The available options are quickly internalized, and a look at the manual reveals everything important about the signal flow. Everything is very straightforward - the xmax is not meant for artistic tinkering or sound design, but for making things louder. So let's move straight on to practical.

As mentioned, the xmax sees itself at the end of the processing chain, so we fed it with several tracks - and not just one, because the Mid/Side options in parti-



The xmax is available for 19" racks, API consoles and in Qube format for mobile and standalone applications.

cular are also too tempting for loops and single tracks. You can find the results of the tests in the magazine downloads or below via the QR codes.

Scenario 1: Whole Tracks

Applied to whole tracks, the xmax shows what it can do. An existing stereo field could be almost doubled with hard side compression. However, it's advisable to stay below the extreme settings, as the sound can otherwise become tiresome and aggressive.

The bass area becomes wonderfully full with minimal compression and a slight boost, and with the soft clipper, you can gain plenty of headroom, leading to a louder overall mix. All tracks - from Psytrance to Techno - sounded decently loud, compact, and full afterward.

It's worth noting that the xmax tends to be more moderate and clean - it's not responsible for massive pumping and roaring results. While it can distort at loud sources and maximum settings, it doesn't sound good.

Scenario 2: Single Tracks

With single tracks, the xmax scored primarily as a kind of broadener and softener. We tamed transients that were too loud from synths and percussion using the Clipper and added missing volume to lows and mids with Low Gain Boost (and x-freq at 470 Hz). Even duller mate-

rial could be made crisper with the Tone Control, without becoming too harsh.

Verdict

Although the xmax has its limitations in terms of parameter offerings, it does, on the other hand, combine multiple devices in one and, therefore, only offers access to the most important settings. We found this well thought out because the focus is on getting straight to the point and the goal quickly. Nonetheless, the xmax is very flexible in its areas of application.

If you are used to working with many plugins, you'll need a moment to get into it. The impact of the parameters is rather subtle individually and only gains significant weight in their interplay together. The xmax is a solid and serious tool for making tracks loud, increasing stereo width, and achieving a punchy, crisp, and transparent sound. Everything with analog sound and hands-on, so that your ears can also help decide. ::

Features

- Multiband compressor
- Mid/Side processing
- Soft clipper (from the Alpha Compressor)
- Shelving EQ (Tone)
- Mono-maker for bass

Facts

Manufacturer: elysia
Web: elysia.com
Distribution: Retailer
Price: 1,329 Euro (Qube), 1,729 Euro (Rack), 1,129 Euro (API)

- ▲ Many functions
- ▲ Clean sound
- ▲ Operation
- ▲ Mono bass option
- ▼ Reduced parameters

Sound: ██████████
Operation: ██████████
Price/Perf: ██████████
Rating: ██████████

Alternatives

SSL Bus+
1,949 Euro
www.solidstatellogic.com

Tube-Tech CL 1B
Cranborne Carnaby HE2
2,249 Euro
cranbourne-audio.com



01 Psytrance Master



02 Techno Master



03 Drum loop 01



05 Percussion



06 Vocals 01



08 Melody



09 Modular Loop



10 Hang Drum