

The Man Behind the Music: An Interview with Chuck Surack

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sonible pure:limit

An effortless, dynamic AI-powered finisher

Austrian-based sonible has added a new end-of-chain processing tool to its popular smart series of plugins. Built on the same core algorithms and AI-informed processing found in the smart:limit plugin, the newly released pure:limit boasts a slimmed-down feature set designed for content creators who crave professional results with less need for deep-level tweaks.

pure simplicity

With the push of one virtual button, pure:limit tames peaks, balances dynamics and sets the optimal output level. Between that button push and your ears resides a ton of intelligent behind-the-scenes processing that tailors the results based on genre-based profiles.

Users of previous sonible smart series plugins will be in familiar terrain. The top of the display features a drop-down menu where you select the audio genre to be processed. Most common genres are covered, as is speech—great for video, broadcast and podcast creators. There's also a universal setting for any audio that falls outside the preselected genres.

A Fast Learner

To begin, pure:limit needs to “learn” your source material. Select a genre and press the Learn button, and within a few seconds, the plugin will self-adjust to the appropriate parameter settings. It's good practice to start with the loudest portion of your audio segment, as this gives the software a better understanding of how to manage the dynamics overall. A display showing the waveform and the applied dynamics provides visual feedback.

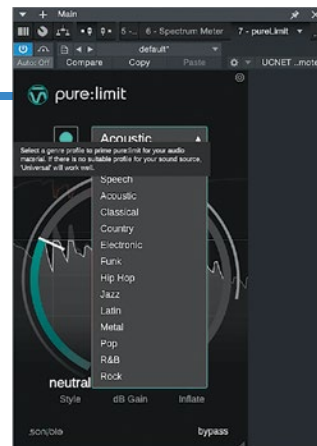
To Tweak or not to Tweak?

While pure:limit does all the heavy lifting, and the suggested results will usually be more than acceptable, there is a small selection of parameters for further fine-tuning.

You can choose between three styles of limiting. Soft is the most transparent and appropriate for genres that benefit from a more natural sound (country, classical and jazz as examples). Neutral works well when you want a tighter finished result that still maintains some transparency. Hard is best when you need a punchy, dense aggressive sound—great for metal, hard rock, punk and hip-hop.

Raising the Gain

A Gain control increases the input level, which causes the limiter to work harder, audibly reducing dynamics. The trick



is to find the sweet spot where you achieve the desired level without squeezing the “breath” out of your track.

By default, the limiter's threshold is set to -1dB true peak level, but you can change that value on the Settings page. Exercise caution when changing this setting, as too little headroom may create issues when and if your audio gets processed through a streaming codec.

Lastly, you can affect the overall level with the Inflate control. Along with increasing the level, turning up Inflate enhances low-frequency energy resulting in a more saturated, warmer signal.

Take It to the Limit

I was more than impressed with how well pure:limit managed a dense ballad mix on which I was working. The tune's dynamic range builds from verse to verse culminating in an anthemic out-chorus with stacked vocals, guitars, keyboards and hard-hitting drums. The Universal setting with a Neutral limiting style gave me release-ready results after I tweaked the Inflate control to add some rich and warm saturation.

On a fingerpicked, guitar-dominated singer/songwriter track, the Acoustic genre selection using the Soft Style of limiting and a touch of Inflate was just the ticket. The track's natural dynamics were gently tightened, and the tone attractively warmed. The mix plays back beautifully on a wide range of systems.

The lack of dialogue intelligibility due to too much dynamic range compression in many current dialog scenarios (online videos and podcasts) is a pet peeve of mine. Blame that on my many years working in broadcast audio. I deliberately recorded a voiceover with a variety of inflections to imitate the kinds of dynamics that happen naturally when you record spoken word. pure:limit smoothed the variations effectively without sounding overly compressed. Intelligibility improved immensely, indicating how useful pure:limit will be for video and podcast producers.

Final Thoughts

This simple yet effective limiter will be of particular interest to content creators who want to get things out the door quickly and have no desire to fiddle with a complex multi-tool dynamics chain. Despite its simplicity, sonible pure:limit delivers pro-sounding finished tracks, making it an attractive addition to any plugin folder regardless of your use case scenario. ➡

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