

Softube Tube-Tech CL 1B Plug-in



The original Danish-made Lydkraft Tube-tech CL 1B hardware compressor is my favorite all-around compressor—great for vocals, bass guitar or anything because of its super-clean, uncolored sound and solid natural operation. So when TC Electronic offered it as a plug-in for both *Pro Tools* TDM systems and their TC PowerCore platform, I was on it fast. It turns out that Sweden-based Softube coded that first plug-in emulation and now is offering it as a Native plug-in for the rest of the world.

The native version features the same meticulously constructed modeling algorithms, but adds additional features such as a phase-linked stereo mode. The new plug-in also supports an external sidechain input for triggering the compressor from another audio track.

On bass I found Softube's *CL 1B* to be fat and warm sounding with good adjustability. Like the original hardware unit, it is impossible to get an actually ugly sound even when pressed into pinning VU meter gain reductions but unlike the hardware, the plug has added compression range to process with more grit, personality and attitude. I found this especially true when compressing lead vocals.

On a stereo snare drum mix, the *CL 1B* works wonderfully—anywhere from very subtle leveling to over-the-top compression effects. Both the attack and release controls have wide ranges for dialing in the exact amount "hit" with the attack and the right amount of ring out with the release knob.

The *CL 1B* is perfect for any individual track from bass to vocals to drums because it is precisely adjustable and able to operate perfectly for any kind of dynamic control from transparent and subtle to more typical compression chores. It works great for 2dB to 6dB of peak compression and then all the way to major audio clamping with a striking, and colorful character. It's a big winner for me and is a major player in all my mixes from now on!

The *CL 1B* plug-in is designed for use with Mac and PC, and with VST/AU/RTAS-compatible host DAWs. It sells for \$399.99 and a 10-day trial version can be downloaded at www.softube.com. Much more info at: www.mvproaudio.com



Blue Microphones enCORE 100 and 200 Dynamic Mics

Blue Microphones, noted for their cost-effective studio quality microphones, has launched a new line of live microphones with the enCORE 100 (\$99MSRP) and 200 (\$149) dynamics and the enCORE 300 (\$199) handheld condenser model. I received both the 100 and 200 dynamics and was surprised by their build-quality versus price point.

Both these elegant-looking microphones will instantly dress up your stage and both use Blue's Aria Dynamic cardioid capsules with proprietary internal shock mounting for very low handling noise. Frequency response is stated at 50Hz to 15kHz for the 100 and 50Hz to 16kHz for the 200 and both have a maximum SPL rating of 147dB. The 200 is more sensitive because it uses Blue's active dynamic phantom power circuitry and I would recommend this one if you sing quietly and want to provide a good hot signal to the front of house mixer.

I tested the 100 and 200 against the venerable Shure SM57, Bob Heil's PR20 and the Audix i5. Sonically both the 100 and 200 seemed close together with the 200 being slightly more open in the high frequencies. The Heil has a very 'carved' sound heavily weighted in the low frequencies while the i5 has less bass boost (than the Heil) and more treble boost. Both the 100 and 200 were good at rejecting off-axis sounds but not as well as the i5—the best of the five tested here.

The 100 and 200 beat all the others with the least handling noise. Even if I violently shook these mics, the resultant audio output was very minimal. Blue Microphones is on the right track with these great sounding and ruggedly made mics. Check www.bluemics.com.

Alesis DM10 Pro Electronic Drum Kit

The DM10 Pro Electronic Drum Kit is the result of intense research and development by Alesis and it includes the new DM10 sound module and 12, 13, and 16-inch Surge electronic metal cymbals with chokes and 12-inch hi-hats. But the features don't stop there because you also get both eight-inch and 10-inch Alesis' RealHead dual-zone drum pads with Mylar® heads and a solidly built ErgoRack mounting system.

The DM10 module has 12 inputs for triggering real, multi-dynamic layered samples of studio-recorded drums and cymbals. All the good ones—acoustic drum sounds from the best manufacturers include rim shots, rim clicks and different stick-placement sounds on the cymbals. The elusive hi-hat is fully covered with the DM10 knowing how open or closed the pedal is, how hard it is struck and other variables controlling 40 different sounds including foot chick and heel splash.

There are huge collections of snare drums, real American, Canadian, Chinese and Turkish cymbals, and electronic beat-machine sounds. Any new third-party sounds upload to the unit via the USB jack and interface.

The DM10 allows for custom configurations and the top-panel mixer is right on the mark for creating any mix you'd like. Drummers can also use the DM10 as a USB trigger-to-MIDI interface for performing and tracking with software drum kits such as BFD™, Toontrack™ and Reason™. Drummers can play along with the tracks using the DM10's internal sequencer and mix in a track coming from an iPod.

The DM10 Pro Kit sells for \$1,799 MSRP. For more information, visit www.alesis.com/dm10prokit



Tascam DR-08

Tascam's DR-08 portable digital recorder captures sound directly at 44.1kHz/16-bit all the way up to a 96kHz/24-bit WAV level of fidelity or back down to MP3 (32k to 320 kbps) to save space on the MicroSD media card (2GB card included).

The DR-08 is small (37mm x 137.5mm x 15mm), slips into your pocket and goes anywhere. Looking like a "Micro-Transformer" but the unit has two, built-in cardioid microphones mounted on an articulated mechanism that allows for changing the width and angle of the stereo pattern audio pickup. Weighing 2.72oz, it has features borrowed from the DR-07 including a savant-like auto level control and a low frequency roll-off to cut obnoxious room tone.

As a journalist, I liked that a 1/8-inch jack lets you plug in your own microphone for close miking interview subjects. And line-level sources go into the same jack—thoughtful I reckon. Also popular for us cub reporters is the loop and variable speed on playback—slow down the recording's speed without changing its pitch. I suppose this feature could be a life gig saver for musicians trying to learn new songs for an upcoming show.

Other good features for such a small unit are: a cool-looking 96x96 backlit LCD display; noise canceling and EQ; auto record start based on an adjustable sound level; a two second pre-record buffer, so you won't miss the first moments of audio, a built-in kickstand for positioning the recorder a table for the best sound pickup, a pair of AAA batteries run it for hours and the ability to transfer all recordings using the mini USB 2.0 jack. This is a solid unit and will sell for about \$199 street price.

Check www.tascam.com for more.



C.F. Martin M-30 Jorma Kaukonen Custom Artist Edition

After his friend David Bromberg let Jefferson Airplane's Jorma Kaukonen play his Martin M-42 Signature, he knew he had to have one just tweaked for him and his playing style. A 1996 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame member, Jorma kept the same M body style (jumbo width, 000 depth and 25.4-inch scale) and went with a top made of rare Italian Alpine spruce with forward-shifted scalloped braces for a full, saturated tone and good dynamic range. The top is paired with East Indian rosewood back and sides for a rich, warm bass and strong projection and good midrange and treble response by way of an enlarged soundhole.

The extra wide modified V neck has a diamond volute and is carved from genuine mahogany. The guitar has a Style 45 rosette in select abalone pearl that encircles a large soundhole. There is also a polished and beveled Delmar tortoise-color pickguard.

The polished East Indian rosewood headplate frames the familiar "C. F. Martin" logo that arches over a slightly modified Martin "torch" inlay. Both are in abalone pearl with nickel Waverly tuners and oval ivory buttons completing the headstock.

Other niceties are an African black ebony fingerboard with Maltese "diamond and squares" position markers in abalone pearl and Maltese crosses or diamonds at the third, fifth, seventh and ninth frets, a square flanked by cats eyes at the 12th fret and a cat's eye at the 15th fret. Each Martin M-30 Jorma Kaukonen Custom Artist Edition guitar is delivered in a vintage-style Geib™ hardshell case, and bears an interior label personally signed by Jorma Kaukonen. For more, visit www.martinguitar.com.

