

Z&H Designs Z&H VCA Compressor



As a UK-registered pro audio equipment design studio with a global footprint, Z&H Designs announces the availability of its Z&H VCA Compressor as a flagship dynamics processor formulated for engineers engaging in modern production workflows wanting both precision and versatility at their fingertips - duly delivered as an ear- and eye-catching 3U rack-mount professional product meticulously manufactured with premium components, perfectly pairing classic British-style VU (Volume Unit) meters and tactile push switches with the same high-gloss paint process used on BMW sports cars to stand out both sonically and visually as a centrepiece in any self-respecting rack - as of August 4...

As a contemporary compressor, Z&H VCA Compressor offers all the modern sidechain filter options - originating from the secondary audio signal path that controls the compressor's behaviour on a primary audio signal to essentially allow one sound to influence the processing of another, often creating a 'pumping' or 'ducking' effect - that could conceivably be expected by any discerning engineer engaging in modern production workflows. While drawing from decades of analogue heritage, Z&H VCA Compressor unites the iconic 'glue' characteristic of British-style bus compressors with the forward, transient-focused response of classic American VCA (Voltage-Controlled Amplifier) designs. Indeed, its GLU (glue) mode effortlessly enhances cohesion and smoothness on a mixbus - a way of sending or 'routing' one or more selections of audio to a particular place, with mixbus compression being one of the most used processing techniques for engineers looking to get better-sounding productions - while FWD (forward) mode precisely captures transients for a more lively, energetic sound when working with drums or pianos, for instance; it can also achieve an exceptionally solid and full-bodied lift when placed on a mixbus and combined with Z&H VCA Compressor's flexible MIX control that enables user-friendly, precise parallel compression, allowing users to push the VCA to more extreme settings while retaining the original punch and detail by blending it back in

- a must-have feature for any modern compressor. It is possible to use GLU mode with that MIX control to tame overly-lively-sounding tracks without flattening them, dialling in transformer harmonics to find the 'sweet spot' where clarity meets rich warmth, while adding a touch of Boom - introducing weight at 120Hz - or Spark - introducing air at 10Hz - subtly enhances lows or highs with an organic shift in tone that is a result of feedback from the transformer windings themselves - something surely lacking in the arguably more sterile-sounding world of plug-ins - to refine control further still. Switch to FWD mode when wanting sharper transients and striking punch, shaping sound with precise attack settings and sidechain filtering.

It is fair to say, though, that Z&H VCA Compressor's namesake Z&H module is where the real musical magic happens, however. Being bypassed, it delivers ultra-clean compression with distortion below 0.005%, but by engaging its services users can smoothly dial in transformer saturation from 0.001% up to 1%, adding subtle harmonic flavour as desired - driven by a pair of classic American transformers working their magic inside a carefully engineered Z&H circuit.

Although 'auto fade' functionality - streamlining the process of creating smooth audio transitions between different states, such as silence to sound (fade-in) or sound to silence (fade-out) - used to be standard on British mixing consoles, today it is much missed by many who have experienced it in action. Thanks to Z&H Designs, it is now back, built directly into Z&H VCA Compressor - one switch (AUTO) and one knob (RATE) working in perfect harmony to create elegant outros, so no need, necessarily, for any automation. At least any reliant on being DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) driven, that is! It is also fair to say that Z&H VCA Compressor's ATTACK and RELEASE controls provide a wider range of settings compared to classic British VCA-style compressors. Also, a Soft (knee) toggle switch is included for smoother, more musical dynamics control. All allow users to shape dynamics with precision and ease.

Engineered to mastering-grade standards with a frequency response of +/-0.5dB from 15Hz to 30kHz, Z&H VCA Compressor uses premium modern VCA chips, carefully matched to achieve ultra-low distortion better than 0.005%. It features a meticulously designed modern power supply and high-quality PCB (Printed Circuit Board) layout, ensuring a consistently excellent noise floor better than -95 dBu. Essentially, every component is carefully selected for optimal performance - think top-tier BC resistors and Panasonic capacitors.

Come to think of it, Z&H VCA Compressor clearly represents a must-have modern compressor from a sonic standpoint, but benefits also from Z&H Designs' decision to upgrade to the same high-gloss paint process used on BMW sports cars, whereby each unit is sprayed by hand over eight times to result in a smooth, lustrous finish that elevates the visual experience, ensuring it stands out as a centrepiece in any self-respecting rack.

Reality dictates that all Z&H Designs products are actually handcrafted and tested, the signatures of the two working engineers who tested the unit in question will be

Z&H Designs introduces the Z&H VCA Compressor

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applied to each and every Z&H VCA Compressor that ships. Speaking of which, the name of every craftsperson involved in its creation is also applied, proof positive that Z&H Designs prefers to take the boutique-grade craftsmanship route rather than becoming another faceless mass-manufacturing operation.

Shipping from Shanghai, China, where units are handcrafted and tested, Z&H VCA Compressor is available to order directly from Z&H Designs via its dedicated webpage. Shipping is free for orders above £208.00 GBP/\$250.00 USD to wherever in the world is deliverable by FedEx, UPS, or other legitimate courier companies; full import duty charges into the UK and EU are covered by Z&H Designs itself, while orders destined for the US will not be charged customs duty by default -check out Z&H Designs' FAQ webpage for further information.

www.zhdesigns.audio