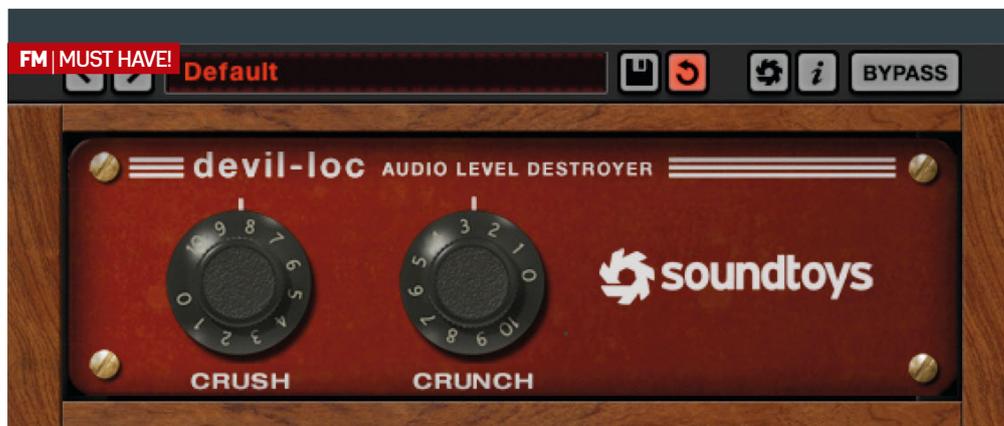


One- and two-knob plugins

Whether it's one knob to rule them all, or just an impressively skant set of controls, we test out some of the plugin world's more minimalist offerings



Soundtoys Devil-Loc \$79

Actually an emulation of Shure's Level Loc when pushed to its extremes, Devil-Loc works great at bringing out the low-level sounds in recorded material – especially drums. Just inserting Devil-Loc onto a track is enough to bring out the nuances of a performance and then start pushing them to extremes, adding loads of character to proceedings. Give it a swizz on drums with a nice room sound to start with, and then move onto wind instruments and even pianos, which have a lot of 'incidental' sounds to them such as hammer noise, breath noise and so on.

When you're done a-levellin' by bringing the bottom parts upward, push up the Crunch control to start doing the opposite – bringing the tops down to create extreme distortion. It's a two-knob plugin, but two knobs are all you really need to add new life to recorded parts.

soundtoys.com

VERDICT 9.1



Accusonus ERA Noise Remover £47

A quick little gadget that does away with electrical noise, hum, and background noise of basically all forms using its proprietary tech, ERA Noise Remover seems to do the impossible in solving most common audio problems with just a couple of controls. The main knob to head to is the Processing one (yeah, that's right, the big one), which cleverly separates the wanted and unwanted sounds, and makes a damn good go of doing so. There are also emphasis controls to weight the reduction. Hovering the Processing knob at around 60% is usually plenty of reduction, but cranking it up – and playing with the output gain – can be necessary for more heavily soiled audio material. Yes, there aren't many settings on ERA Noise Remover, but what it does is almost always dependable, and better than many other de-noisers. We really don't know how it does it, but hearing is believing. If you've got hum, noise and hiss that's beyond reproach, you'll probably need to get something a bit more tweakable, but that's a rare circumstance for most people. Make sure to check out the rest of the ERA suite, focusing on Plosives, Esses, Reverb, Clipping and Voice Levelling.

accusonus.com

VERDICT 9.4



Waves OneKnob Pumper \$49

Built for 'those' throbbing, ducking sidechain pumping effects, OneKnob Pumper lives up to its name in that a single control defines the amount of processing applied. This control is flanked by Rate and Offset selectors – there's 1/1-1/32 for the Rate,

including some triplets, which is probably enough for most circumstances but by no means exhaustive; and 0, 90, 180 and -90 (degrees) for the offset selectors.

There's no way to change the pump shape in this one, but it's a very nuanced tweak to make to begin with anyway. One assumes that Waves have modelled some of the most epic, generic and Platonic pumps in the history of dance music in order to arrive at their ideal, sacrificing tailoring power for the perfect, quick-as-a-flash sidechaining sound. Even so, it feels like slightly too much has been sacrificed to conform to the rest of Waves' OneKnob series (more rates, better offset programming, and maybe some different curve shape choices would've been nice), but if you just want instant gratification, this will see you right.

waves.com

VERDICT 8.3



Softube Saturation Knob
FREE

Straight out of the Swedish modelling boutique and offering a three-way switch, Softube's Saturation Knob plugin is a great analogue-style processor with but a single knob and a rocker switch. Said knob gets cranked to increase the flavoursome saturation, with the 'restrained and reasonable' range occurring over the first two fifths of its range (crank it until the yellow light is flickering to get things warmed up). After this, there's audible distortion, which can be useful for signal-smashing, but the real benefit of Saturation Knob is in its subtlest uses, gelling tracks, bringing out the bass on smaller speakers, and re-emphasising the effect using the Keep High switch, allowing that little extra grunt.

Saturation Knob is a great saturator, a potential alternative to distortion, and a great, free taster for the range.

softube.com

VERDICT 8.6



Dada Life Endless Smile

\$39

The sequel to Sausage Fattener is ready to rock with one big knob, one mode selector and one cartoon character that symbolically represents the death of technique at the hands of pre-programmed euphoria. Endless Smile is eminently automatable from 0 to 110%. This clever plugin contains a number of processing modes that lend themselves to electronic music build-ups. There's filtering, reverb, delay, endlessly-rising and falling parallel resonant filter networks, and plenty of combos of all of them as you surf the seven modes from Soft to Extreme.

The idea is to pop Endless Smile over a group of tracks, choose your poison, and then automate the single control towards its maximum before bringing it back down again when the music hits. Hence the one-knob design. There's not much more to it, and the result is a set of incredibly usable (if not a little clichéd) effects, ready-rolled to work the dancefloor. Some more combinations would have probably been useful to avoid sounding like everyone else, but then again, the effect is highly dependent on the sounds you're putting through it.

dadalife.com

VERDICT 9.1