

AUDIFIED DW DRUM ENHANCER

€199 From gating to saturation, here's a simple way to process your drum recordings

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Drum kits are one of the hardest instruments to record – even after you shape your environment, place your microphones and hit the red button, there's still the matter of mixing the individual tracks to sound like one cohesive kit. And the more microphones you use, the more the task at hand multiplies. This can range from (and also beyond) using a gate to isolate signals on a particular track, compression to add punch and make the dynamic range less erratic, EQ to carve out or boost frequencies, or the addition of soft, valve-style clipping to emulate the 'warmth' of analogue gear.

For its latest product, Czech audio plugin developer, Audified has teamed up with DW Drums to produce the DW Drum Enhancer, a collection of common audio processing tools designed especially for processing acoustic drum sounds.

Build

Audified supplies the plugin in all common formats used by DAW software (VST, AU, AAX) and it's an all-in-one multi-effect design, complete with gate, compressor, EQ section and saturation module. The idea being that you can place an instance of the plugin on every recorded drum track, or your busses to deliver the same processing to multiple kit parts at once. It is neatly laid out in a virtual rack, flowing left to right in line with the way the signal flows through the plugin. There is a 'Drum type' selector, allowing you to choose the part of your kit you're processing, simple controls and clear metering for input, saturation level, output, and the gain reduction applied from the compressor.

Hands On

We started this review by loading up a Logic project containing some drum tracks recorded far from perfectly in a modest, yet commercial recording studio 10 years ago. The tracks suffered from a lot of spill, lacked punch and were recorded at a less-than-ideal signal level (low), so it's fair to say they were in need of some enhancement. The effect is applied as an 'insert' on your track and



1 TOONTRACK EZ MIX 2

We say: "While EZ Mix has a heavy leaning to guitar processing, there is certainly plenty for drums too. As with EZdrummer, additional mix packs from big-name producers are also available as add-ons."



2 WAVES CLA DRUMS

We say: "This 'keep-it-simple' solution from Waves allows for similarly preset processing, designed in collaboration with golden-eared mix engineer, Chris Lord Alge"



MODULES

The DW Drum Enhancer contains a gate, compressor, EQ and saturation effects

starting with a bass drum that contained more hi-hat than the top shelf of a trilby shop, we got to work trying to let the plugin do its thing. First up you choose the type of sound you're applying the effects to – this switches the plugin's settings that you don't have editing-access to: compressor ratios and attack times, EQ frequency ranges etc. There are Kick, Snare, Toms, each containing Modern, Heavy and Vintage options, as well as an Other category leaving options for overheads, room, and a drum bus. The name of the game here is simplicity - Audified have

given you the ability to tweak parameters that they feel you might need to, but not the ones that make processing more difficult. Gating drums can be tricky to get right, as there is a fine line between chopping out bleed and cutting off the tail of notes you want to keep.

This is definitely more effective than using other stock plugins. We were quickly able to remove the bulk of our hi-hat bleed without destroying the fundamental bass drum sound, meaning that we make additional processing further down the line only apply to the bass drum, rather than unwanted noise. Next up is

"YOU CAN DIAL IN A BALANCE TO MAINTAIN THE ORIGINAL 'SHAPE' OF YOUR SIGNAL WITHOUT SQUASHING IT TO DEATH"

Essential spec



PRICES

£199

TYPE

Software plugin

EFFECTS

Gate, compressor, EQ, saturation

PRESETS

45

FORMATS

Mac and PC, (VST, AU, AAX)

CONTACT

shop.audified.com

SWITCHABLE FUNCTIONS

While Audified has kept editing simple, the gate has switchable hard/soft modes, and the EQ can be placed before or after the compressor

METERING

From here you can see exactly what the plugin is doing to your signal levels, allowing you to make settings appropriately



the compressor – one of the most important yet misunderstood bits of gear in any studio. If you get it right, you'll add punch and power to your sound, but get it wrong and you'll make it weak.

There are only three controls here: threshold to choose at which point the effect is applied to your signal, a Mix control and make-up gain to bring back the overall level after the compression is applied. The Mix control is a godsend, allowing you to easily blend the compressed signal back in with your dry sound. What this means is that you can dial in a balance between the two to maintain the original 'shape' of your signal, while bolstering it with the snappier sound of the compressor without squashing it to death. After the compressor comes the EQ (although the signal path is actually switchable). It's three-band (bass, mid, treble) but the frequencies it deals with change within this

depending on which kit part you've selected to start with. As such, it's not flexible after this point, you turn them up or down and that's it, however while it's not possible to get forensic, it does mean you can make more general changes to the tonality of your sound. Finally, there is the saturation. This applies the same type of soft clipping you experience from driving analogue gear hard, causing it to overdrive. It's not out-and-out distortion, though, and we actually found it to be a bit subtle on our under-performing drum tracks, having to really push the input levels and crank the saturation control high to get it to kick in. On more modern, better-produced recordings, however, it is more noticeable and can add some additional girth to bass drums, and high-end harmonics to your snare and cymbals.

None of what the Drum Enhancer does is exclusive. There are thousands of different EQ

and dynamics processors available on the market, and, of course, you already own some of them for free with your recording software. But if you've ever tried to use these processors and ended up scratching your head, this is for you. R

VERDICT: The Drum Enhancer made light work of our tracks, and as always with processing, the results are incremental. When we finished applying each effect, A/B-ing between the two revealed how the incremental improvements made quickly at each step add up to a big difference. It promised to enhance, and enhance them it does!

BUILD QUALITY



PLAYABILITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



RHYTHM RATING

