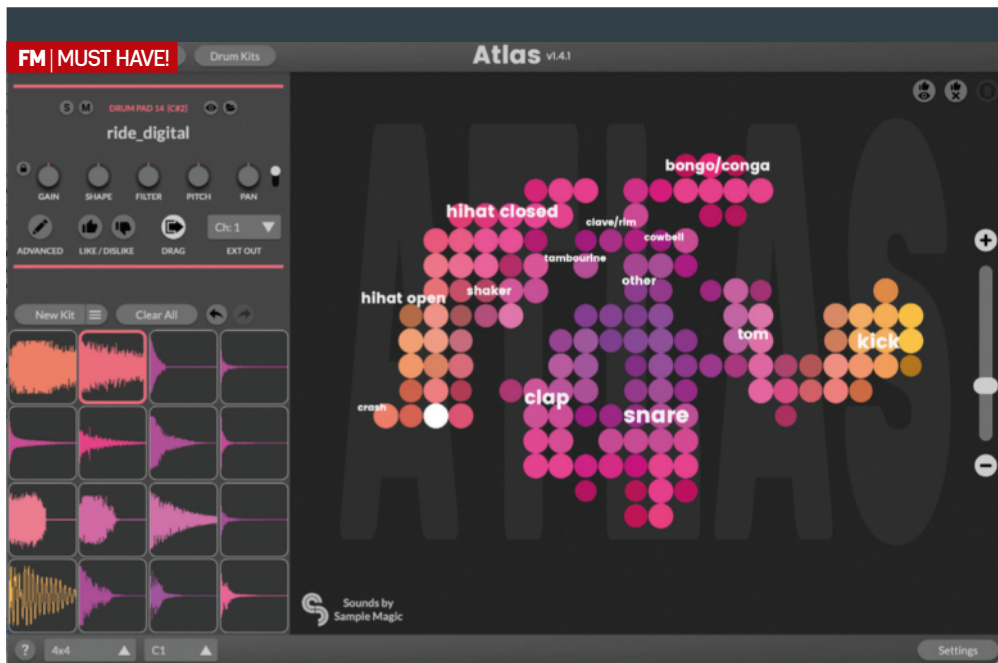


## AI-powered tools

They may one day take our jobs, but for now let's welcome our new robot overlords with an appraisal of their DSP and machine-learned talents



### Algonaut Atlas \$99

This AI-powered, browser-led sampler is a boon for those looking to find their own drum samples in a flash, splaying its in-built library (and your folders) on a 'map' display, with 'landmasses' representing types of hit (kick, snare, hi-hats and the rest). You get a 4x4 pad grid, swappable for 1x8, 2x8, 8x8 and Launchpad configurations, and there are basic sample editing functions per pad. Just enough for most quick drum sketches. There are handy MIDI files included for playing your kits, too. Load your own sample folder into Atlas and have it detect what's going on from there. Plus, since your drum types are detected and laid out, you can simply click New Kit to get an inspirational starting point for a new set of sounds. Atlas is inspirational without going overboard on features, though a larger set of built-in sounds and the ability to load multiple 'Maps' (ie, sample folders) at once would be nice.

[algonaut.tech](http://algonaut.tech)

**VERDICT 9.1**



### iZotope Neutron 3 Advanced \$399

The pack leader in AI (well, machine learning), iZotope have gone deeper than ever with Neutron v3, thanks to what used to be called Track Assistant and is now dubbed Mix Assistant. This listens to the tracks in your DAW and then offers both the ability to trim the levels of all of them ('Balance Assistant') and/or insert several of its onboard processors on your current channel (Track Enhance). Both processes take the lead from AI with the aim of getting you the best starting points for mixing.

Neutron is a great mixing package, with some best-in-class effects tools helping it do its thing, plus way more tools to help you mix better included. But the AI-related processes may actually be Neutron's weakest feature. Balance Assistant, from our experience, can be heavy-handed, and Track Enhance is a decent starting-point-generator but certainly not the be-all/end-all in mixing intelligence. Though it's an AI-powered plugin, we'd primarily recommend this for its mixing setup.

[izotope.com](http://izotope.com)

**VERDICT 7.5**



## ToneBoosters Equalizer 4

€39

This looks like a pretty standard EQ to begin with... and in some ways it is. There are 33 types of band, including all the usual controls over each, plus the usual spectral analysis of the signal.

Hotting things up are more modern EQ features such as Band Audition, Band Bypass, and auto Makeup per-band. You've then got the benefit of each band being switchable into dynamic mode, with sidechaining and analogue circuitry modelling on top of it. All that fits into a small interface, which is refreshing for an EQ.

So what's AI about all that? Well you get to choose one of six target profiles – Pop 70s, 80s, Pop Acoustic, and more – which Equalizer 4 will help you shoot for. It does this by drawing a 'target curve' onto the graphic display, after having analysed your current audio signal, telling you where to cut and boost to achieve the profile you've selected. This it does very well, though more target curves would be nice.

Equalizer 4 isn't just a straightforward EQ – it can go as deep as you like and still provide suggestions for making everything better.

[toneboosters.com](http://toneboosters.com)

**VERDICT 8.5**



## sonible smart:comp €129

This recent release has been popping up all over the place, and with pretty good reason as well. smart:comp gives you a DC-rectified-oscilloscope-style waveform view, letting you chart the compression transfer graph right alongside the signal's peaks and valleys. You get all the common compression controls, plus the bafflingly unique ability to be able to tailor your attack and release curves – finally. But then the AI controls add another dimension...

Define for smart:comp what type of material you're playing into it – nine options including bass, drums, m/f vocals, guitar, keys (more would've been nice) – and hit record to have the plugin analyse a section of audio. The amount you get to record is small, though. Choose wisely. After this, the compression parameters are set for you, and you can tailor them. The Spectral Compression function acts to provide tonal balance (ie, signal smoothing) using a network of 2000 dynamic bands. While operating in sidechain mode, enabling Spectral Compression supposedly intelligently ducks only the frequencies that the sidechain considers as maskers, though our tests make this seem overzealous. This, and the strange limitation of the Ratio topping out at 10:1, are the only drawbacks to an otherwise very useful tool, whose AI functionality will help those who don't know what they're after.

[sonible.com](http://sonible.com)

**VERDICT 8.9**