

SEYMOUR DUNCAN

STUDIO BASS COMPRESSOR

REVIEW BY **NICK LENERS**

STREET PRICE **\$155.00**



I've had the great pleasure to review many compressors lately, and it's always worth a quick review of how they work. In a general sense, compressors make quieter things louder and louder things quieter, such that the presence of your instrument feels smoother and more consistent. Very high compression makes quieter tones loud enough that your notes, as they ring out, seem to sustain for days. They can help even out string-to-string presence differences and they can hone in a very precise attack, which have always made them popular with slap and pick players.

Of the compressors that

have been showing up for sale lately, I think you could rightfully categorize them in three ways: old school, modern, and a mix between the two that you could call "classic with updates." I'd put the Studio Bass Compressor squarely in this third category. It doesn't offer digital presets, complicated envelope controls, or the related trappings of the very modern compressors, but there are some very smart features that the old two-knobs-and-a-battery compressors from the '80s never had. While the latter have some excellent, squishy tones, they've always been hard to use with the bass guitar's very wide frequency

range. Increasing levels of compression will get you the consistency you want, but they tended to take out the "oomph" and flatten the dynamic range of the instrument to where it can feel flat. The Studio Bass has a couple tricks to remedy this situation, while still offering a more "vintage vibe" to the sound.

The Studio Bass Compressor has a blend knob to introduce your unaffected signal into the mix, and a clever three-position toggle that further adjusts how the blend knob interacts with the compressor. With the toggle, you can adjust what frequency range is emphasized most within the

blend. Without knowing the entire design of the pedal, I could best guess there is some kind of equalization happening in the toggle's Mid and Low positions, which bring to the fore the midrange frequencies and low frequencies—respectively—of the dry signal. The middle position, labeled "F" for full-frequency, gives equal weight to the entire dry signal. From a player's perspective, the more human-feeling juice of the playing can be mixed in when you really want the compression to get squishy, which keeps the final output from feeling flat like the vintage boxes sometimes can. Depending on your instrument and how you play, the toggle switch can be very interesting, enhancing the clicky overtones of a pick attack, or letting quieter notes feel a bit more gentle with the mid-frequency free to breathe a bit. Even with the pedal's gain set very high, I didn't get a lot of noise, so you can let those emotional, touching chordal passages linger a bit without worrying about hum.

Another implication of the blend and toggle controls is the pedal is more interesting

than others if you prefer your compressor to not be the first pedal in your chain. While conventional wisdom is the compressor goes first on your pedalboard, having a more customizable blend knob makes this pedal great after modulation effects, where a dripping, swirly chorus sound can be set to half-and-half with a compressor's more focused attack. Putting it after envelope filters can rein in loud frequency spikes, something that's especially relevant if you're using this with a synthesizer. You're a lot more free to move it around as you see fit, and you might be surprised where it fits in best if you've always "played by the rules" on pedal order.

Finally, it must be said that many little things were done right that deserve mention. If you use a battery, you can access it without a screwdriver, and the plastic door that covers it is connected to the pedal with a hinge. You can run the compressor at either nine or 18 volts with a power supply, which not only can affect how the compressor interacts with your instrument, but also gives you a lot of

leeway about integrating it into your setup.

The pedal ships with a bare-bottomed enclosure, and the box includes a myriad of options to attach it to your pedalboard, including a Velcro strip, rubber feet, and a felt ring. Red stickers are included to mark your ideal settings. These are the little things that let you know it was designed by people who know a thing or two about the players who will use it, and that always counts for something.

WHAT WE LIKED

A classic sound with updated enhancements. The Blend and the toggle switch are smart additions that solve a lot of issues with old-school compressors, making it more flexible with regards to pedalboard order. Little touches, voltage flexibility, and choice of attachment are always welcome.

CONCERNS

If you're looking for a more feature-loaded option with presets, custom attack envelopes and the like, you won't find them here.