

VST3 · AU · Version 1.0 · Mzane Electric

MZ-compressor

Professional track compressor with clear metering and musical styles

A clean, flexible compressor for vocals, drums, bass, guitars, and everyday mix work. Watch the live waveform and gain reduction, dial in Threshold, Ratio, Attack, and Release, and use Styles and factory presets as musical starting points.

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MZ-compressor interface

1. Welcome

MZ-compressor by Mzane Electric is a track compressor designed as the dynamics companion to MZ-equalizer. The idea is simple: insert it on a track or group that needs level control, watch the waveform and gain-reduction display, and shape dynamics by ear. Choose a Style and a Preset to get close quickly, then refine Threshold, Attack, Release, and Mix until the part sits in the mix without sounding squashed. Use Bypass with Auto Makeup or Makeup so loudness stays fair when you compare.

This guide covers installation, the interface, control reference, and practical mixing guidance for mix engineers and musicians.

Key features

- Threshold, Ratio, Attack, Release, and soft Knee
- Makeup gain and Auto Makeup for matched listening
- Dry/Wet Mix for parallel compression without extra routing
- Styles: Clean, Punch, Smooth, Vocal, and Bus Light
- Peak or RMS detection, stereo Link, Lookahead, Range, and Drive
- Sidechain high-pass and external sidechain keying
- Live bipolar waveform (In / Out / Both) with Slow or Fast scroll
- Separate gain-reduction lane with peak hold and colour zones
- Draggable threshold guides and a small I/O transfer view
- Factory presets for common instruments and light group glue

What you will need

- A DAW that loads VST3 (and AU on macOS).
- MZ-compressor installed from your official Mzane Electric download.
- Audio on the track or bus where you insert the plugin.

2. Installation

After purchase (or a trial download), get the package from your Mzane Electric account or product page on www.mzanelectric.com. Always install from the official download.

macOS

- Unzip the download. You will typically find both a **.vst3** and a **.component** (AU).
- VST3: copy into /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3/ (or your user Library VST3 folder) as **MZCompressor.vst3**.
- AU: copy into /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components/ (or your user Library Components folder) as **MZCompressor.component**.
- Logic Pro and GarageBand use AU; many other DAWs use VST3.

Windows

- Unzip the Windows package.
- Copy **MZCompressor.vst3** into C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3\.

Restart your DAW or rescan plugins. If macOS asks for permission the first time, allow it and try again.

Tip: If the UI does not update after an install, remove the plugin from the track and insert it again.

3. Activation & Trial

MZ-compressor is activated through your Mzane Electric account. Without an active trial or full license, audio processing is disabled.

- Open the plugin in your DAW.
- If it is not yet activated, the activation window will appear. You can also click **License** at any time.
- Sign in or create your Mzane Electric account.
- Start a free trial, or unlock the full version after you have purchased.
- If you already bought MZ-compressor with the same account, full access should unlock automatically.

Purchase on www.mzanelectric.com. After buying, download from your customer library, install, then activate in the plugin with the same account. For help, email info@mzanelectric.com.

4. Interface overview

The main workspace is the waveform display: a centred signal scope above a separate gain-reduction (GR) lane, with In/Out meters on the right. Across the top you will find Preset, Style, Detect, License, Bypass, and Expand. Status chips on the display show when Ext SC, Auto Makeup, or a Mix below 100% is active. Click the IN/OUT badge to choose which signal you see; click SLOW/FAST to change how much history the scope shows. Drag the amber Threshold lines on the waveform to set Threshold. The knobs below control Threshold, Ratio, Attack, Release, Knee, Makeup, Mix, SC HPF, Link, Look, Range, and Drive.



Figure — MZ-compressor interface.

Regions at a glance

Area	What you see
Preset	Factory starting points for vocals, drums, bass, guitars, parallel punch, and light bus glue.
Style	Clean, Punch, Smooth, Vocal, or Bus Light — sets the overall compression character.
Detect	Peak for punchy response; RMS for smoother average leveling.
License	Activate or manage your Mzane Electric license / trial.
Bypass	Turns compression off for a dry A/B check. The display shows the logo and Bypass.

Area	What you see
Expand	Larger window when you want more space on the display.
Waveform (WAVE)	Centred bipolar scope of the signal. Use the IN/OUT badge to view input, output, or both.
SLOW / FAST	Scroll speed of the display. Slow shows a longer history; Fast is snappier.
GR lane	Gain reduction over time. Green is light, amber is working, red is heavy. Peak hold is shown as pk.
Thr lines	Amber guides for Threshold. Drag them to set Threshold. Knee appears as a soft band around Thr.
I/O mini curve	Small transfer view of Threshold, Knee, and Ratio.
Meters	Input and output levels with a dB scale (green / yellow / red headroom zones).
Auto Makeup	Automatically adds makeup so compressed and bypassed levels stay closer for fair A/B.
Ext SC	Keys the compressor from the sidechain input when your DAW provides one.

Drag knobs **vertically** to adjust values. Your DAW saves and recalls settings with the project.

5. Quick start

1. Insert MZ-compressor on the track or group that needs dynamics control.
2. Play audio. Load a Preset close to your source, or start from Default with Style set to Clean or Vocal.
3. Lower Threshold until the GR lane shows a few dB of reduction on the loud parts (often about 2–6 dB to start).
4. Set Ratio (try 2:1–4:1 for music). Adjust Attack and Release so the part still feels natural.
5. Use Auto Makeup (or Makeup) so Bypass comparisons stay fair. Check with Bypass.
6. If you want parallel compression, lower Mix (for example 30–50%) and allow more GR on the wet path.

6. Controls reference

Drag knobs vertically to change values. Popup readouts appear while you adjust. You can also drag the amber Threshold lines on the waveform. The table below lists each control and what it does in everyday use.

Control	Range	What it does
Threshold	–60 to 0 dB	Level where compression begins. Lower = more compression. Drag Thr lines on the display to set it.
Ratio	1:1 to 20:1	How strongly levels above Threshold are reduced. Higher = stronger leveling.
Attack	0.1 to 200 ms	How quickly compression starts after a peak. Faster Attack catches transients; slower keeps punch.
Release	5 to 1000 ms	How quickly compression lets go. Too fast can pump; too slow can sound dull.
Knee	0 to 24 dB	Softens the onset around Threshold. Higher Knee = gentler, more musical transition.
Makeup	–24 to +24 dB	Gain after compression. Use with Bypass to match loudness by ear.
Auto Makeup	Off / On	Adds estimated makeup automatically for fairer A/B checks.
Mix	0 to 100%	Blend of dry and compressed signal. Below 100% is parallel compression.
SC HPF	20 to 400 Hz	High-pass on the detector only. Raise so low end (kick/bass) does not trigger as hard.

Control	Range	What it does
Link	0 to 100%	Stereo linking. Higher values keep left/right reduction more similar and the image steadier.
Lookahead	0 to 10 ms	Lets the detector see peaks slightly early. Useful for clean transient control (adds a little latency).
Range	0 to 60 dB	Limits maximum gain reduction so the compressor cannot smash endlessly.
Drive	0 to 100%	Optional light colour / saturation after compression. Keep low for clean work.
Detect	Peak / RMS	Peak reacts to peaks; RMS reacts to average level (often smoother on vocals/pads).
Style	Five modes	Clean, Punch, Smooth, Vocal, Bus Light — tilts timing and character for common jobs.
Ext SC	Off / On	Key from the sidechain input bus when the host provides one (ducking, kick-keyed bass, and so on).
Bypass	Off / On	Disables compression for dry comparison.
Preset	Factory list	Loads a complete starting setup. Adjust to the song afterward.
Expand	On / Off	Larger window for detailed display work.
IN / OUT badge	Click	Wave view: input, output, or both overlaid.
SLOW / FAST badge	Click	Scroll speed of the waveform and GR history.

7. Mix and sidechain in practice

Mix lets you blend dry and compressed signal in one plugin. That is parallel compression: keep the dry attack and body, then add a more controlled wet path underneath.

Sidechain changes what the compressor listens to. SC HPF filters the detector so deep bass does not pull the whole track down. Ext SC uses a different input (for example a kick) as the key.

How to use Mix (parallel)

- Start with Mix at 100% and get a useful amount of GR (often more than you would leave fully wet).
- Lower Mix to roughly 30–50% so the dry signal returns and the compressed path adds density.
- Turn Auto Makeup off if you are fine-tuning by ear with Makeup and Bypass.
- A/B with Bypass at matched loudness. If it feels too crushed, raise Mix or ease Threshold/Ratio.

Example: kick-keyed bass with Ext SC

The bass and kick fight for the same low end. You want the bass to dip briefly when the kick hits, without squashing the bass all the time.

- Insert MZ-compressor on the bass track. Route the kick to the plugin's sidechain input in your DAW.
- Turn **Ext SC** On so the compressor keys from the kick.
- Set Style to Clean or Punch. Use a moderate Ratio (about 4:1) and a fairly fast Attack.
- Lower Threshold until the GR lane moves clearly on each kick hit.
- Set Release so the bass recovers between kicks (often fairly quick on dance/pop; slower if it pumps).
- Optionally raise **SC HPF** if the key is too bassy and the ducking feels muddy.
- A/B with Bypass. Aim for space for the kick, not a hole in the bass.

Result: the bass ducks with the kick and returns between hits, so both parts stay clear in the mix.

Tip: When Ext SC is on, a blue SC badge appears on the display.

Tip: SC HPF does not change the sound directly—it only changes what triggers compression.

8. Mixing guidance

- Start with a few dB of GR on peaks. Heavy reduction is fine for parallel Mix; keep full-wet GR modest on lead vocals unless you want that sound.
- Faster Attack catches peaks; slower Attack keeps punch (useful on snare and slap bass).
- If the track pumps, slow the Release or raise Threshold. If it stays dull, speed Release or ease Ratio.
- Raise SC HPF on full-range sources so the kick does not constantly trigger the compressor.
- Use Peak for drums and percussive material; try RMS for vocals and pads when you want smoother motion.
- Always A/B with Bypass at matched loudness (Auto Makeup or Makeup). Louder usually wins an unfair test.
- Drive is colour, not loudness. Keep it low for transparent work.
- Lookahead can clean up peaks, but it adds latency—use when the track can afford it.
- Range caps how hard the compressor can smash. Lower it if wild peaks cause too much GR.
- On groups, prefer Bus Light style and small GR. Fix tracks first if you need large moves.

9. Starting points for common sources

These ranges are practical starting points—not rules. Where a factory preset is listed, load it, play the part in context, and refine by ear. Always finish with a Bypass check at matched loudness.

Lead vocal

*Factory preset: **Vocals***

Even words and phrases without losing life.

- Style: Vocal (or Clean). Detect: Peak or RMS.
- Threshold so GR sits around 2–5 dB on loud phrases.
- Ratio about 2:1–4:1. Attack medium; Release medium-fast so it recovers between phrases.
- Knee soft (about 6–10 dB). Auto Makeup on for A/B.
- Optional SC HPF around 80–120 Hz so plosives and chest boom trigger less.

Watch for: If consonants get harsh or spitty, slow Attack slightly or ease Ratio before reaching for more Mix.

Kick drum

*Factory preset: **Kick Punch***

Controlled low end with beater punch retained.

- Style: Punch. Detect: Peak.
- Threshold for about 3–6 dB GR on the hit.
- Fast Attack if you want a tighter body; slightly slower if you want more click.
- Release fast enough to recover before the next hit.
- SC HPF low (or leave modest) so the detector still hears the kick body.

Watch for: Too-fast Attack plus high Ratio can kill weight. Keep an ear on the full mix, not solo only.

Snare

Factory preset: **Snare**

Crack and body without a boxy smash.

- Style: Punch. Detect: Peak.
- A few dB of GR on the hit. Ratio about 3:1–4:1.
- Attack fast enough to catch peaks, but not so fast the crack disappears.
- Release that recovers between hits.

Watch for: If the snare gets small, slow Attack or lower Ratio. Parallel Mix can add size without full-wet squash.

Bass guitar or synth bass

Factory preset: **Bass**

Even notes that stay solid on small speakers.

- Style: Smooth. Detect: Peak or RMS.
- Threshold for steady GR on louder notes (often 2–6 dB).
- Slower Attack to keep note front; medium Release.
- Soft Knee. Optional SC HPF if the detector is overreacting to sub energy.
- For kick clarity in dense mixes, try Ext SC keyed from the kick (see Section 7).

Watch for: Over-compression can make bass feel flat. Leave some dynamic difference between soft and loud notes.

Acoustic guitar

Factory preset: **Acoustic Guitar**

Gentle leveling without choking strums.

- Style: Smooth. Soft Knee.
- Light GR (about 1–3 dB). Ratio about 2:1–3:1.
- Medium Attack so the pick/strum stays; easy Release.

Watch for: Too much GR makes acoustics sound sticky. Prefer Mix below 100% if you need more density.

Electric guitar

Factory preset: **Electric Guitar**

Tighter dynamics while keeping bite.

- Style: Clean or Punch.
- Moderate GR. Ratio about 3:1–4:1.
- Attack set to taste (faster for control, slower for pick attack).
- Drive only if you want a touch of colour.

Watch for: On distorted guitars, compression can raise noise and fizz. Use less GR and check in the mix.

Parallel punch (drums or vocal)

Factory preset: **Parallel Punch**

Add weight and density while keeping the dry transient.

- Load Parallel Punch (Mix starts near 40%).
- Allow stronger GR on the wet path than you would leave at 100% Mix.

- Blend Mix until the part feels bigger, not crushed.
- Turn Auto Makeup off if you prefer manual Makeup against Bypass.

Watch for: If it smears, raise Mix (more dry) or slow Attack on the wet path.

Group / bus light glue

*Factory preset: **Bus Light***

Gentle cohesion on a group—not a rebuild of the tracks.

- Style: Bus Light. Soft Knee. Modest Ratio (about 2:1).
- Aim for about 1–2 dB GR on peaks.
- Slower Attack/Release than a snare insert.
- Link near 100% for a stable stereo image.

Watch for: If you need more than a couple of dB on a bus, fix the individual tracks first.

Troubleshooting

Issue	What to try
No sound	Confirm activation (License). Check Bypass, mute, Level/Mix, and that audio is playing.
Plugin not found	Rescan plugins. Use AU in Logic/GarageBand; VST3 elsewhere. Verify install folders.
Activation problems	Sign in with the purchase account. Re-open License. Email info@mzanelectric.com .
macOS blocks plugin	Re-download the official release and install again. Allow permission if prompted.

Support & product info

Product	MZ-compressor
Format	VST3 + AU (macOS universal) · VST3 (Windows)
Manufacturer	Mzane Electric
Version	1.0
Website	www.mzanelectric.com
Support	info@mzanelectric.com

Thank you for using MZ-compressor. For product support, contact Mzane Electric.