VLA-TWO

Vocal Leveller and Compressor

"Level the voice. Keep the performance."

User Manual | Version 1.0.0

Studio9 Plugins



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1. INTRODUCTION

VLA-Two is an audio plugin for vocals. It evens out the level of a voice in two steps. First, an upward leveller lifts the quiet parts of the signal, so soft words and phrase endings come closer to the loud parts. A Noise Gate control stops this lift when the signal is very low, so room noise and silence between phrases are not raised. Second, a compressor turns down the loudest parts. After these two stages come a Makeup Gain control and an Output Limiter that sets a ceiling for the final level.

VLA-Two works on mono and stereo tracks. It adds no latency, so it can be used while recording as well as while mixing. It is available as a VST3 plugin on Windows, macOS and Linux, and as an AU plugin on macOS. The signal passes through the plugin in this order:

Input → Upward Leveller (with Noise Gate) → Compressor → Makeup Gain → Output Limiter → Output

2. INSTALLATION AND LICENSING

Close your DAW before installing. After installing, open your DAW and rescan your plugins if it does not find VLA-Two on its own. The plugin appears as "VLA-Two" in the Dynamics category.

2.1 Installing on Windows

Run the installer, named like VLA-Two_100.exe, and follow the steps. It places the plugin in:

C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3\VLATwo.vst3

If you downloaded the ZIP file instead, copy the folder VLATwo.vst3 into that location yourself.

2.2 Installing on macOS

Open the installer package, named like VLA-Two_100.pkg, and follow the steps. It installs both the VST3 and the AU version of the plugin.

macOS 11 or newer is required (Intel and Apple Silicon are both supported).

2.3 Installing on Linux

Install the Debian package, named like VLA-Two_100.deb, from a terminal:

sudo apt install ./VLA-Two_100.deb

It places the plugin in /usr/lib/vst3. Add this folder in your DAW’s VST3 search path.

2.4 Registering a license code

After you buy VLA-Two you receive a license code by e-mail. It starts with "VLA2-". Registering works offline; no internet connection is needed.

1. Open VLA-Two in your DAW.
2. Click the gear icon in the top right corner of the plugin window.
3. Paste your license code into the field "Enter license key".
4. Click "Activate".

If the code is valid, the window shows "Licensed To:" followed by your name, and the TRIAL tag next to the gear disappears. If the code is not accepted, the message "Invalid license key. Please try again." appears. Check that you copied the whole code, without extra spaces.

The license is saved on your computer and is shared by every instance of VLA-Two, so you only enter it once. It does not become part of your DAW sessions or presets. To use another code, click the gear and choose "Change License". To remove the license from this computer, click the gear and choose "Delete License".

2.5 Trial version limitations

Without a license, VLA-Two runs as a trial version. It has no time limit, and every control and setting works fully. The only limitation is the trial mute:

- The plugin mutes its output for 3 seconds, once in every 30 seconds of audio it processes. The moment of the mute within each 30 second period is random.
- The mute also applies when you render or bounce offline, because it follows the audio that is processed, not the clock.
- While the plugin is not muting, a TRIAL tag appears next to the gear icon. During a mute the tag reads MUTED (in red), and a notice appears in the middle of the graph.
- Each instance of VLA-Two has its own timing, so several instances do not all mute at the same moment.

The input and output meters keep showing the real signal during a mute.
Entering a valid license code ends the muting at once.

3. THE DIALS



VLA-Two has ten dials in a row along the bottom of the window. Each dial has a value box under it. You can drag the dial up and down, use the mouse wheel, or click the value box and type a number. Double-click a dial to return it to its default value. Hold

the mouse over a dial for a moment to see its name. The dials are described here from left to right.

NOISE GATE

Range: -60 to -30 dB. Default: Off (-60 dB).
Sets the level below which VLA-Two stops lifting the signal. When the signal stays under this level, the upward leveller adds no boost, and a gentle downward expander turns the signal down further: for every 1 dB the level is below the gate level, the output drops by an extra 1 dB, up to a maximum of 30 dB of reduction. This keeps room noise, breaths and microphone bleed from being raised between phrases. The gate stays open for a short time after the voice stops, so word endings are not cut off. At its lowest position the dial shows "Off", and neither the gate nor the expander does anything. Raise the dial until the gaps between phrases are quiet, but not so far that soft words are affected.

LOW GAIN

Range: 0 to +18 dB. Default: +6 dB.
Sets the maximum amount of boost the upward leveller may add to quiet parts of the signal. The boost is applied only when the signal is below the Low Threshold, and it never exceeds this value. At 0 dB the leveller adds nothing. Low Gain also changes how quickly the leveller reacts: the higher the setting, the faster the boost is taken away when the voice gets loud and the faster it returns when the voice gets quiet. Start with a low value and increase it until quiet words sit comfortably next to loud ones.

LOW THRESHOLD

Range: -48 to -12 dB. Default: -24 dB.
Sets the level below which the upward leveller starts to work. Signal above this level is not boosted. Signal below it is boosted by the amount it falls short of the threshold, up to the Low Gain setting. A higher threshold (for example -15 dB) lifts more of the performance; a lower threshold (for example -40 dB) lifts only the very quiet parts. The threshold is shown in the graph as a dashed line.

COMP THRESHOLD

Range: -48 to 0 dB. Default: 0 dB (no compression).
Sets the level above which the compressor starts to turn the signal down. At 0 dB the compressor does nothing. Lower the dial to compress more of the signal; the further the threshold is below the loud parts of the voice, the more gain reduction you get. The threshold is shown in the graph as a dashed violet line.

COMP ATTACK

Range: 10 to 120 ms. Default: 30 ms.

Sets how quickly the compressor reacts when the signal rises above the Comp Threshold. A short attack catches peaks quickly and gives a tighter, more controlled sound. A long attack lets the start of each word pass through before the compressor takes hold, which keeps more of the natural punch and clarity.

COMP RELEASE

Range: 40 to 280 ms. Default: 120 ms.
Sets how quickly the compressor lets go after the signal falls back below the Comp Threshold. A short release brings the level back up fast and sounds lively, but can make the compression noticeable. A long release gives a smoother, more relaxed result. If you hear the level pumping up and down, try a longer release.

COMP RATIO

Positions: 2:1, 4:1, 8:1, 12:1, 20:1. Default: 4:1.
Sets how strongly the compressor turns down the signal above the Comp Threshold. This dial has five fixed positions. At 4:1, a signal that is 4 dB above the threshold is reduced so that it ends up 1 dB above it. Low ratios give gentle, transparent control. High ratios give firm control, and 20:1 comes close to limiting. Note that the Output Limiter, not this dial, sets the final ceiling.

COMP KNEE

Positions: Hard, Soft, Smooth. Default: Hard.
Sets how gradually the compressor starts to work around the Comp Threshold. With Hard (0 dB) the compression begins exactly at the threshold. Soft (12 dB) and Smooth (18 dB) ease in over a wider range around the threshold, so the compression is less noticeable and the transition is smoother. Smooth is the most gradual of the three.

MAKEUP GAIN

Range: 0 to +18 dB. Default: 0 dB.
Raises the level of the signal after the leveller and the compressor, to make up for the volume lost through compression. The gain is applied before the Output Limiter, so a high setting can push the signal into the limiter. If the limiter is set to Off, a high setting can push the signal over 0 dBFS, and the CLIP bar on the output meter will light up.

OUTPUT LIMITER

Positions: -3 dB, -1 dB, 0 dB, Off. Default: 0 dB.
Sets the highest level the plugin can send out. The limiter reacts instantly and adds no latency, and it is stereo-linked, so the stereo image does not shift. In the positions -3 dB, -1 dB and 0 dB no sample will go above the chosen level. The limiter works on sample peaks and does not measure true (inter-sample) peaks. In the Off position the limiter is bypassed and the signal is not restricted.

The meters show the signal after the limiter. The amount of limiting is not shown in the graph.

4. THE LEVEL METERS

A tall meter sits on each side of the window: Input on the left and Output on the right. The coloured bar shows the average (RMS) level from -60 to 0 dB. The Input meter shows the signal as it arrives, before any processing. The Output meter shows the signal after Makeup Gain and the Output Limiter.

A thin white line on each meter holds the highest peak for 3 seconds and then falls back to the current level.

The CLIP bar at the top of each meter turns red when a peak reaches 0 dBFS and stays red until you click it. A click on the CLIP bar also clears the white peak line.

5. THE GRAPH



The graph in the centre of the window shows about the last 16 seconds of what the plugin is doing, moving from left to right. A legend above the graph names every line.

The Input line (green) and the Output line (yellow) show the signal levels on the dB scale at the left side of the graph, from -60 dB at the bottom to 0 dB at the top. The Low Gain line (red) shows the boost currently added by the upward leveller, scaled from 0 dB at the bottom to +18 dB at the top of the graph.

The GR line (orange) shows the gain reduction applied by the compressor: it rests at the top (0 dB) and moves down as the compressor works harder, using the same dB scale as the Input and Output lines.

Three horizontal lines show your settings: the dotted cyan Gate line shows the Noise Gate level, the dashed light grey Low TH line shows the Low Threshold, and the dashed violet Comp TH line shows the Comp Threshold. These lines move when you

turn the matching dials, which makes it easy to see where the leveller and the compressor start to work on the voice.

The expander and the Output Limiter are not shown as lines in the graph.

[VLA-Two VST3 Plugin]
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