



Sonnox OXFORD DYNAMICS

MusicTech
RECOMMENDED
★★★★★★★★★

Sonnox's Oxford Dynamics aims to provide everything you need for total dynamic control. Mark Cousins pours the squash...

KEY FEATURES

- Compressor, limiter, gate and expander
- 2-band sidechain EQ
- Fully variable soft ratio function
- Variable harmonic enhancement for extra loudness, presence and punch
- Selectable re-dithering function

MEASURING UP

In complete contrast to the Oxford Dynamics is Chandler Audio's TG12413 (£269). The TG is close to being a 'one-button' compressor – simply switch between compression and limiting modes, adjust the recovery time and push it as hard as you like. However, it doesn't offer the extensive options that the Oxford plug-in does.

OXFORD DYNAMICS

Manufacturer **Sonnox**

Price **£235**

Contact **Source Distribution**

020 8962 5080

Web **www.sonnoxplugins.com**

Minimum system requirements

PC Windows XP, 512MB RAM, iLok USB key

Mac OSX 10.4, 512MB RAM, iLok USB key

Achieving good dynamic control in your music involves a lot more than just the application of compression. Indeed, if you really want to get into the finer details of a mix you'll need a number of tools to hand, including a gate, an expander, a limiter, the provision of sidechain access and, of course, the ubiquitous compressor. This is when Sonnox's Oxford Dynamics plug-in will come in handy. More than just a compressor, this plug-in combines several of the most fundamental tools for dynamic control. Already a long-serving member of the PowerCore platform as well as the Pro Tools LE and TDM families and following the recent management buyout and subsequent corporate rebranding from Sony Oxford to Sonnox, Oxford Dynamics is now available in both AU and VST formats, making a timely re-evaluation of its skills well overdue.

The Oxford Dynamics plug-in is divided into a series of modules (Gate, Expander, Compressor, Limiter, Side Chain and Warmth), with unique parameters for each section (selectable via the Access button) and a global input/output graph showing the resulting dynamic response. For most users the Compressor module will arguably be the main point of interest, and it includes a number of advanced features, such as a Soft Ratio selector that enables you to smooth the compressor's knee over a range from 0 to -20dB.

Squeeze me

The compressor performs in a pleasingly functional way: it's quick to respond, subtle when it needs to be and has a good dose of musicality in its output. Overall, though, we felt that the best results were obtained at the two extremes of compression – either when producing a transient-smacking drum squash or when using ultra-low ratios and thresholds. Of course, the Oxford Dynamics can produce 'vintage' compression styles, too, but you'll need some familiarity with its controls (and knowledge of the techniques of compression) to extract those flavours.

Looking at the other modules reveals more of the same attention to detail. Importantly, you'll notice that each of the dynamics sections has its

own time parameters, enabling you to shape each module to its particular application. For example, having a gate, expander, compressor and limiter to hand means that you can radically shape individual drum mics, making them considerably tighter with the gate and expander, for example, while the compressor and limiter adds the desired amount of punch.

On the side

The sidechain functionality takes some time to comprehend because the Side Chain EQ module refers specifically to equalising the internal key. The Key Input feature, on the other hand, enables you to patch in an external input, but this does not have access to the Side Chain EQ. Usefully, you can also use the Side Chain EQ across the main input signal – a very handy way of restoring some of the brightness sometimes sucked out by compression. The Warmth section, which is operated via a simple Percentage control, can also be used to introduce a suitable degree of harmonic excitement, as well as offering a way of tolerating the occasional peak signal by as much as 6dB at its 100% setting.

Dynamic solution

In keeping with many of the other plug-ins in the Sonnox product range, the Oxford Dynamics plug-in is clearly intended to be a contemporary production tool rather than a re-modelling of vintage hardware units. And while the Oxford Dynamics arguably lacks some of the immediacy and character of other classic compressors, it does offer far more detailed control over the dynamic properties of your sound. Ultimately, Oxford Dynamics is a real Swiss Army knife of dynamic control, yet it retains the kind of musicality and subtlety that leaves most DAW compressors and limiters out in the cold. **MTM**

SUMMARY

WHY BUY

- Full range of dynamic control tools
- Flexible operation
- Great for both subtle and extreme compression
- Includes sidechain processing

WALK ON BY

- Takes some time to master
- Some users might prefer a less transparent compressor

VERDICT

Oxford Dynamics is one of the most complete and flexible dynamics plug-ins available – a great solution for subtle gain control or more extreme contemporary compression effects.



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