

Waves C6

Taking a favourite with a decade of users behind it and upping the feature set to a new level of power initially humbles our **GEORGE SHILLING**. Then he just plugs-in to this multiband compressor.

Waves has recently added the C6 to its range of plug-ins, it being a development of the long-established C4 multiband compressor. That plug-in provided four bands of compression with three crossover points and, remarkably, it has been in the Waves catalogue for 10 years. The C6 (there's a clue in the name) increases the number of frequency bands to six. But things are not quite so straightforward. The two extra new dynamic bands are 'floating', separate from the crossover matrix, which enables their use anywhere across the audio frequency range for such things as de-essing and de-popping, for example. Another notable addition is that of a sidechain feature and this is provided only in a separate version of the plug-in that appears in the plug-in list as C6 Sidechain.

Installation can be achieved using an online installer, but if your studio computer is not internet-equipped, you must download the entire V7.1.1 collection (1.3Gb), even if just installing one plug-in. Authorisation is now more straightforward, using iLok, and this plug-in is available for TDM or Native.

The plug-in window is necessarily fairly large, neatly filled with controls for each band, along with some global controls and a big graph. The familiar Waves control bar runs along the top with A and B settings for comparison, Load and Save menus, a link to the manual, and Undo and Redo buttons, which usefully step back through the last 32 individual control adjustments — handy! The main area of the window is the large graph displaying level against frequency. The orange line shows the EQ curve moving as it dynamically changes. Coloured dots can be dragged to change the crossover frequency and gain for each of the main four bands, or the centre frequency and gain of the two floating bands. Grey curves show the crossover slopes (adjusted by a numerical global Q, or individual Qs for the floating bands). Vertical lines indicate the three crossover points and it is also possible to click and drag these, and there are also numerical displays for them which can be dragged to adjust. Purple shaded areas show the maximum range of gain change, adjusted with each band's Range control, and the way this works is key to understanding how to use the C6.

There is a Master section at the left with a variety of global parameters. Release toggles between Manual and ARC (Auto-Release Control) and in the latter state the Release setting for each band becomes a reference point but the actual release time is calculated on-the-fly for the least distortion. This ARC setting provides a smooth character. But even in Manual mode the Release times are also affected by the following



Master control which is labelled Behavior and toggles between Electro and Opto settings. Opto releases more quickly from 3dB or more gain reduction than lower amounts, and 'decelerates' the release as it nears zero. Electro does the opposite and accelerates towards zero for a denser sound. The final master control is Knee with a range of settings between Soft and Hard. Combined with the Range settings on each band, these effectively interact to replace what you might normally achieve with a Ratio control — the C6 has no Ratio controls. Setting a negative Range and adjusting the Threshold appropriately results in expansion, while a positive Range results in compression. Of course, different bands can work in opposite directions for all sorts of possibilities.

Each of the six bands includes a number of similar controls. Most prominent is Threshold which has the benefit of a slider (with a coloured knob corresponding to the graph dot for the particular band) along with its numerical display. Alongside the slider is the 'Energy Meter' that displays level. Each band has Solo and Bypass buttons. Gain, Range, Attack and Release display numerical values, which can be adjusted by dragging vertically, and for each of those (and Threshold too) there is a master button that can be dragged up or down to adjust all of them simultaneously, while retaining their relative offsets. At times I wished the floating bands could be excluded from the master controls when I had them set up for separate processes from the main bands. A global Q control sets the slope of the crossover points of the four main bands, while the two floating bands each have their own Q control to set the effective width of the covered frequencies.

The C6 Sidechain version of the plug-in adds the familiar sidechain source selection menu item in the TDM or RTAS versions. This may then be selected individually by each of the six bands using each one's Internal/External toggle button. Furthermore, there is a global S/C Mode selector with the options of Wide or Split, where the sidechain can optionally be constrained and filtered by the particular band's frequency coverage. Also, there's a Listen button on each band, which enables you to monitor each sidechain feed individually. This version of the plug-in

is hugely powerful and flexible, enabling all kinds of ducking function.

The amazing flexibility and number of parameters are potentially overwhelming at first but using the presets as starting points is helpful and some very clever processing is possible here. The C6 achieves things that I never knew I needed. You can reduce the harshness of a guitar, say, whenever the vocal is present. For broadcast, you can duck certain frequencies from background music when an announcer is speaking. And with six bands you can perform multiple tasks simultaneously with this single plug-in — compressing booming low-end while de-essing or reducing splashy cymbals. It's easy to zone in on what is happening using the Solo and Listen buttons.

The PDF manual that comes with the C6 is concise and clear, but not a patch on the original C4 manual, which is twice the length and provides much more in the way of practical examples and uses — it's downloadable and recommended. There are many presets provided, categorised and named for particular instruments and scenarios, with clever enhancements for particular playing styles (Pizzicato, Ringing Chords, etc.), but a bit more explanation of intended application would have been useful.

An obvious application is for mastering. Achieving large amounts of maximising or limiting is not really the C6's bag but it is great at subtle enhancement or radical tonal change, working dynamically if required to shape the sound. Low-level enhancement is easily achieved with a classic 'loudness' type setting, where the low and high frequencies are enhanced in quieter parts of the programme. And noise-reduction is another obvious area where the C6 can be effective.

Pricing is US\$400 for the Native version or \$800 for TDM. You must also factor in the additional ongoing Waves Update Plan fees to receive support and updates. Currently the only collections that include the C6 are the enormous and expensive Mercury Bundle and Soundgrid Pro. The C6 is a class act, perhaps more suited to problem-solving, live use and postproduction than music recording but it sounds great, has endless possibilities, is rock solid, and contains features not found elsewhere. ■

PROS

Very flexible and powerful multiband compression; useful 'floating' bands; sidechain feature.

CONS

Complex and takes some familiarisation; no explanations of presets.

EXTRAS

The Waves Sound Design Suite includes more than 30 plug-ins for sound designers and postproduction facilities. The Suite includes: C4 Multiband Compressor; DeEsser; Doppler; Doubler; Enigma; H-Comp; H-Delay; L1 Ultramaximizer; L2 Ultramaximizer; L3 Ultramaximizer; L3-LL Ultramaximizer; Linear Phase EQ; Linear Phase Multiband; LoAir; MetaFlanger; MondoMod; Morphoder; PAZ Analyzer; Q10 Equalizer; PS22 Stereo Maker (TDM Only); Renaissance Axx; Renaissance Bass; Renaissance Compressor; Renaissance EQ; S1 Stereo Imager; SuperTap; SoundShifter; TransX; UltraPitch; and GTR3 (Software Only).

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