

# TL Audio 5060

Drawing in part from its Fatman range of units in providing 'simplified' control for users in a hurry, TL Audio has taken the approach further up market with a preset compressor (with manual control too) for its Ivory range. **ZENON SCHOEPE** battles with his conscience.



**I'M NOT ALONE IN** having a problem with preset compressors. Let me rephrase that, I have a problem with preset compressors that I might be able to afford. Give me a rare and classic compressor that I could never afford and I will expect it to make preset decisions for me, but there's something of the double standard at work when it doesn't cost the earth. If I analyse this, then it comes down to the fact that when I see presets called such things as Bass and Kick I immediately think that it's aimed at beginners and people who don't know what they're doing. It's a type of snobbishness.

It is against a background of these prejudices that I approach TL Audio's 5060 Preset Valve Compressor. It's an Ivory 2 unit and therefore sports that off-white faceplate and uses familiar switchgear and presentation.

Dominant on the front panel is a 16-position Program switch, which apart from offering a Manual position for more hands-on control, offers such descriptive Presets as Whisper Vox, Pop Vox, Rock Vox, Scream Vox, Keys, Bass, Acoustic Guitar, Electric Guitar, Snare, Kick, Loop, Pop Mix, Rock Mix, Dance Mix, and Slam Mix.

Select a Preset, and the box takes charge of Threshold, Ratio, Attack, Release and Knee controls leaving you to play with the Input and Output gain and the Gain Makeup. But I'm getting ahead of myself, let's look at what this box has.

The 5060 is stereo with no facility to run it in true dual-mode should you so require. You get two front panel instrument inputs, a single rear panel mic input on XLR, balanced jack I-Os (switchable for -10/+4) and an extra pair of unbalanced jack outputs. There's also a blanked panel for an optional DO-2 digital output card.

The front has an input selector that flicks between instrument, line, mic or mic with Phantom, a 4-stage mic gain switch jumping in 20dB steps, and a +/-20dB gain pot. You also get a 90Hz high pass, which works on all inputs, plus Peak and Drive (for the valves) LEDs.

A small VU meter can be made to track gain reduction or output level and has the useful inclusion of a +10dB switch that effectively pulls the needle back a tad so you watch its activity more clearly.

Selecting Manual from the aforementioned Presets list gives fully variable Threshold (-20dB to +10dB), Ratio (1:1.5 to 1:30), switchable Hard or Soft knee, and Slow or Fast Attack (0.5ms/5ms) and Release (0.2s/1.5s). A Fat EQ switch imposes a gentle 'scoop' curve after the compressor with 2dB and 1.8dB lifts at 50Hz and 10kHz respectively and 0.9dB down at 720Hz. This is great but to get the full



benefit of this delicate little circuit you've got to leave it out every now and again. Leave it in continuously and you are unlikely to appreciate the 'Skinny' straight through signal.

Which brings me back to the Programs. While names such as Kick and Snare do an admirable job at what they say they are for, for my own purposes I found it best to ignore the labels completely and just spin the dial. You can tell when a setting is inappropriate pretty quickly when adjustment of the input and output stages doesn't bring things more in to line. It is important to play with the front and rear ends as they can have a massive bearing on the overall effect. You're dialing in drive most significantly and this can change the complexion of the sound dramatically. Therefore, even the presets are effectively adjustable to an extent.

I have to say that this is one classy and easy sounding unit. Give it a good mix and it will add a sheen of professionalism and texture. It's gorgeous. I have to concede that the Preset constants are on the whole impeccably well chosen and the way they are positioned on the dial means that you encounter diversely different settings as you flick around. To my ear they're not arranged in increasing 'strength', for example.

Of course, you are going to have to go to Manual mode if you want to get really daft with your thresholds and ratios and the 5060 proves it is able to go to 12 in TL Audio compressor tradition. Having said that, at the extremes the two fixed Attacks and Releases prove a bit of a limitation and I found I had to back off more than I would have wanted to accommodate this. Both Knee curves are progressive and consistent though. Don't forget that you're also getting a good mic preamp and a pair of instrument inputs thrown into the bargain, which will broaden this single box's appeal to some.

The point about the 5060 is that if you look at it purely as a manual compressor without paying any attention to the Preset aspect then it's hard to be impressed by it. The onus is heavily on the quality and usability of the Presets and to be honest they really are

very useful. Look at it as a preset compressor with manual control, as indeed TL Audio wants us to, and it makes a lot of sense, particularly at UK£399 + VAT.

If the box was mine then I would ignore the Program names and just play it by ear and I'm sure that many will do the same. But have I overcome my Preset phobia? Yes, I have. This is a very good package that is very well thought out and gives you remarkable versatility and lots of options. It's also different and sounds great like all TL Audio compressors do. I believe this unit will achieve cult status in the future and they will sell lots. ■

## PROS

Well programmed presets; excellent audio quality; Fat EQ switch; very versatile.

## CONS

It's not dual channel; Manual mode can be limited; you might have a problem with it being Preset but really you shouldn't.

## EXTRAS

If you like the sound of the 5060 then TL Audio has given you the chance to win one.



Simply email your name and address to [tlcomp@resolutionmag.com](mailto:tlcomp@resolutionmag.com) to be entered in the draw. Good luck.

## Contact

**TL AUDIO, UK**  
Tel: +44 1462 492090  
Website: [www.tlaudio.co.uk](http://www.tlaudio.co.uk)