iZotope Neutron
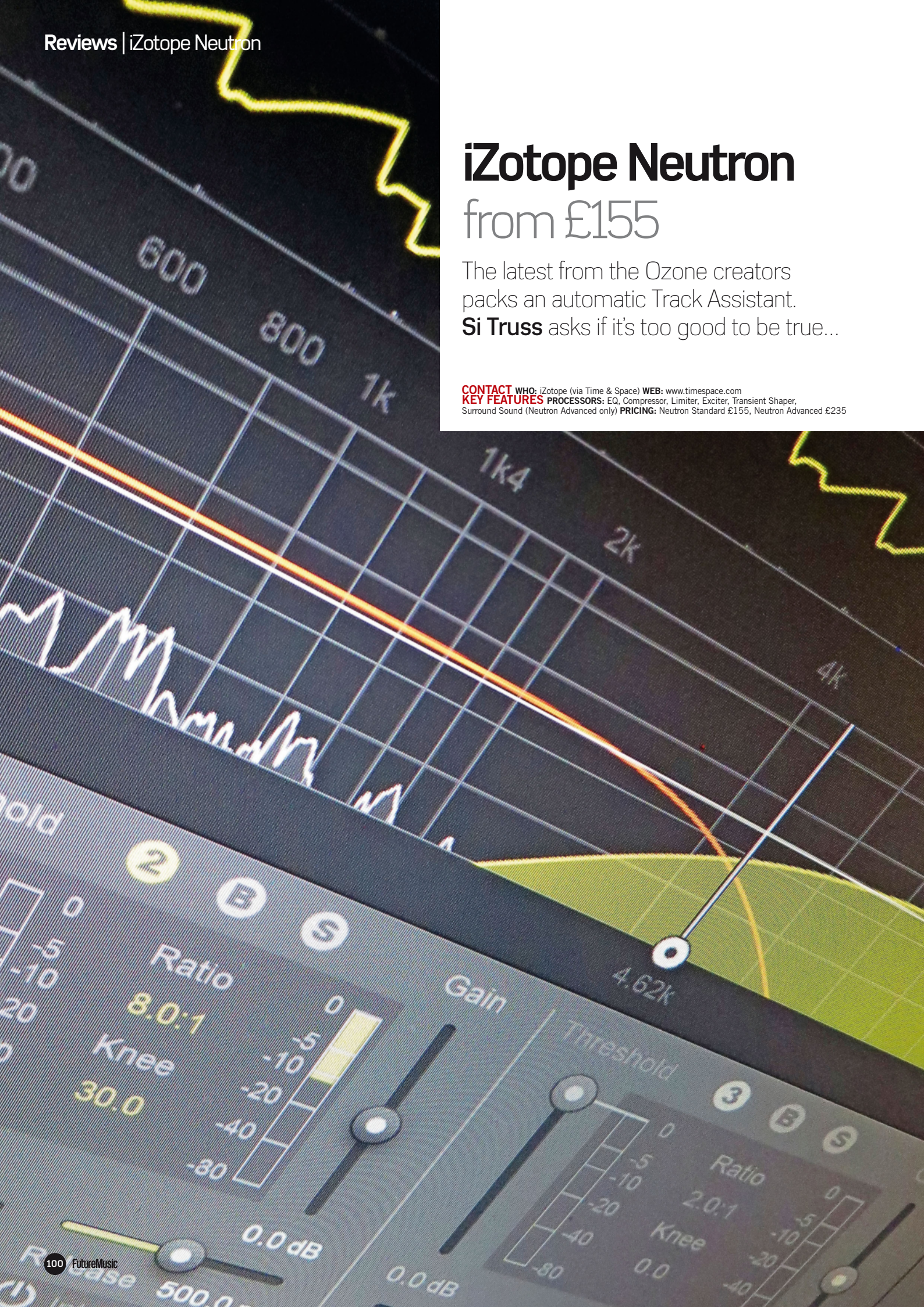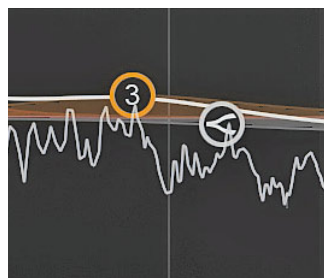## from £155

The latest from the Ozone creators packs an automatic Track Assistant. **Si Truss** asks if it's too good to be true…

CONTACT WHO: iZotope (via Time & Space) **WEB:** www.timespace.com
KEY FEATURES PROCESSORS: EQ, Compressor, Limiter, Exciter, Transient Shaper, Surround Sound (Neutron Advanced only) **PRICING:** Neutron Standard £155, Neutron Advanced £235

THE PROS & CONS

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Track Assistant is a quick source of tailor-made mixing presets

Masking meter is very handy for identifying bloated or busy frequencies

Each processor is a well-spec'd mixing tool in its own right

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Still requires a solid grasp of mixing theory and experience to get the most out of it

Each of Neutron's tools holds up as a solid effect in its own right

The past few years have seen a noticeable trend towards 'intelligent' mixing and mastering tools. Into this fray enters iZotope's Neutron, a suite of mixing processors enhanced by a Track Assistant tool, which analyses an audio signal and presents the user with a tailor-made channel strip. While this might sound like heresy, iZotope are quick to point out that Neutron isn't intended to *replace* your carefully honed mixing skills. Rather, the idea behind Track Assistant is to present the user with an intelligently designed preset from which to build.

Even without taking into account Track Assistant, Neutron is a quality suite of mixing tools. It offers five processor slots, each of which can be filled with any one of Neutron's effects modules. These include an EQ, compressors, exciter, limiter and transient shaper. The plug-in is available in Standard and Advanced editions, the latter adding a 7.1 surround sound tool to the mix and allowing the processors to be used standalone.

Anybody who's used iZotope's Ozone will find themselves on familiar turf, both in terms of the plug-in layout and the general quality of the processors. Each of Neutron's tools holds up as a solid effect in its own right, going beyond mere 'vanilla' processing to offer a variety of modern and advanced features, including dynamic EQ, multiband compression and transient shaping, and four flavours of saturation from the exciter module.

Arguably the most useful of Neutron's tools is its masking meter, which offers a simple visual tool for identifying overlapping frequencies. With Neutron placed across multiple tracks within a session, a dropdown menu allows the EQ settings and spectral analysis of tracks to be compared one above the other, with Neutron highlighting the 'busy' frequency areas. It's a very useful tool for identifying frequency bloat.

As for the Track Assistant itself, results are undeniably impressive although far from infallible. The algorithm almost always did a very impressive job of serving up a well tailored starting point from which to shape the source material. In most situations I did find myself tweaking this to taste, so a decent level of mixing knowledge is recommended to get the most out of Neutron, in order to know when and how to override these automated decisions. The well-designed UI makes tweaking an easy process though; with simple tools for bypassing and A/Bing. Global settings allow the analysis to be tweaked between subtle, medium and aggressive, too.

In all, Neutron is an excellent mixing tool. Far from being digital snake oil or a crime against musicianship, it feels like a genuine step forward in plug-in technology and one which we should whole-heartedly embrace. **FM**

FM VERDICT

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Neutron is a powerful and well-designed mixing tool in its own right, and the Track Assistant feels like a real technological step forward