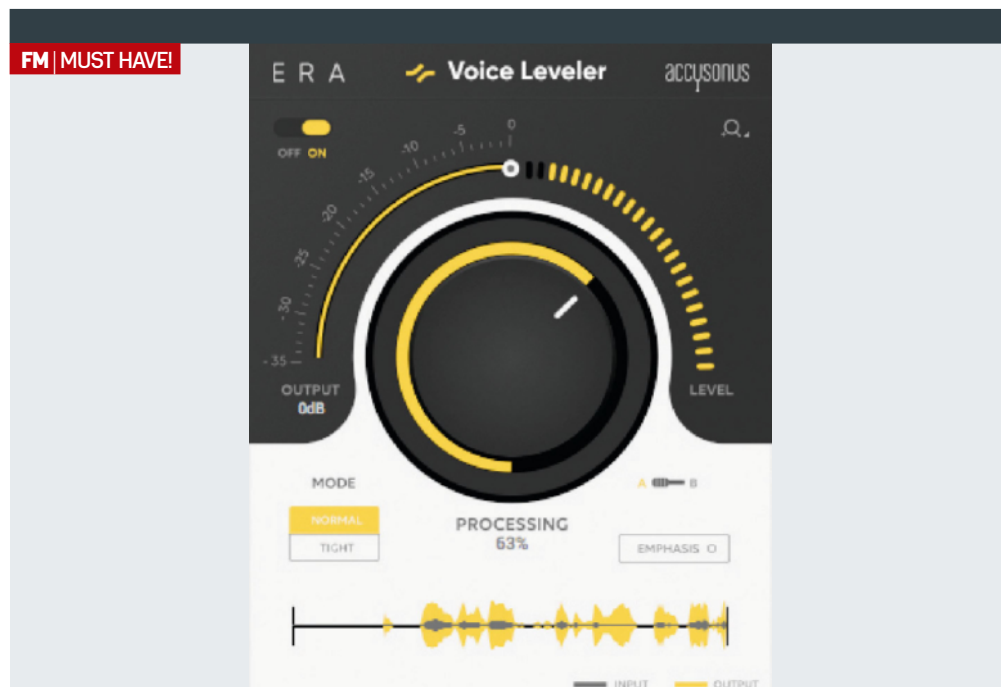# Levelling plugins

Getting levels balanced throughout a track can be very time consuming. Streamline the volume automation process with these handy tools

FM|MUST HAVE!

Accusonus ERA Voice Leveler $59

Also available in Accusonus' ERA bundle of like-minded audio clean-up processors, Voice Leveler uses few controls, leaving processing voodoo unseen. Set your intended output level, and push up the big Processing knob to define the amount of processing – automatic gating, detection and timing definitions are all handled intelligently. Normal and Tight modes change the results, but their impact depends on the material and recording quality; meanwhile Emphasis automatically applies EQ if a signal is spectrally off-the-mark.

Getting a vocal up to a decent, consistent dynamic range is remarkably easy, though changing the processing strength and output level don't seem to have as much impact on that result as we'd expected. What we'd prefer over Emphasis and Tightness control is access to the gate's settings. This is supposedly handled by the main Processing knob, but when spill was present in the signal, we found we needed to insert a dedicated gate before ERA Voice Leveler. Even so, for artefact-free, pro results in a few clicks, this is the one.
accusonus.com

VERDICT 8.9

HoRNet AutoGain Pro €22

Set your Gain Level, Maximum and Minimum, and the Attack and Release to get started with AutoGain Pro and have the yellow triangle 'fader' dancing in response to your audio and your settings. There are plenty more parameters to be getting on with, turning AutoGain Pro into a full-on gain-riding workstation. Sidechain parameters allow you to control response with an external signal, and choose detector Attack, Release, High-Pass and Low-Pass. Reverse mode flips positive and negative gain, you can gate the signal, process in RMS or Peak mode, and Classic mode strips it all back to basics.

The implementation of gain-riding and the plethora of controls can hurt the process, depending on the task you're doing, but this isn't the only AutoGain option from HoRNet. The vanilla AutoGain does a similar job with fewer tools, while AutoGain Pro Mk2 provides two detectors, two processors, and also adds mid/side capability.
hornetplugins.com

VERDICT 7.9

Audio Vitamins Structure £24

This little gadget has a different outlook to the other levelling plugins here. Structure is intended to be placed first in the effects chain on multiple channels in a

whole mix, where it will analyse the loudness of the audio and apply a compensatory boost or cut, saving a long time in the pursuit of using gain or 'trim' plugins. You can get a start on your mixing with everything in its right sonic place, while the faders remain at zero. While the gainstaging happens automatically, further controls include the mode: 1, 2 or Master, corresponding to whether that instance of Structure is placed on a standard track, a lead track, or a bus; and a control to tell that instance (Analyse) or every instance of the plugin (All) to recalibrate. It may not 'ride the faders' like the others here, but it's a useful tool for your box.
audiovitamins.com

VERDICT 8.8

iZotope RX Leveler (Part of RX Advanced)

Available only as part of RX 7 Advanced, and coming without a separate plugin version, the Leveler module is a great solution to quickly ride your audio and come out on-the-level. No, we're not suggesting you part with $1,199 just to get your hands on a gain-riding processor, but if RX is already hiding in your production tool kit, the Leveler is an often overlooked but excellent way to get the job done.

The Leveler is simple. Just set the Target Level, Responsiveness, Dynamics Preservation, optimise for Dialogue or music, and even get some Breath Control and De-essing while you're at it. All this can be previewed, and several setups rendered and compared so you can choose which to commit to. It's great if you own it already, but out of reach for most.
izotope.com

VERDICT 9.1
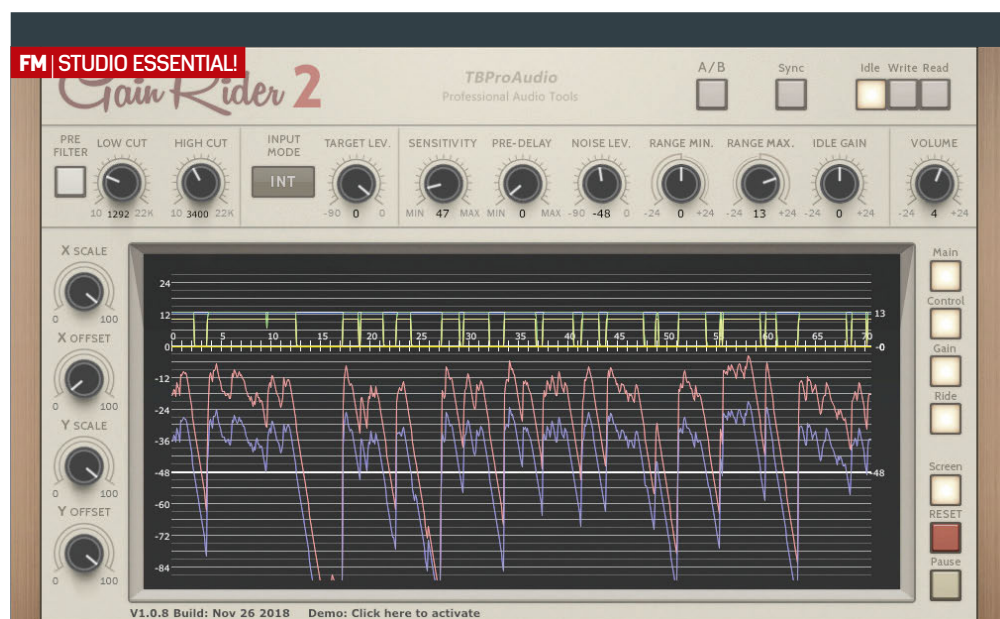
TB Pro Audio GainRider 2

€75

This one's a complex beast, giving you not just basic parameters, but nerdy options like pre-delay and scope axis offsets too. Up to four levels can be displayed on the signal chart, although these can be overkill for basic functions, making the ability to switch each in and out at will very useful. With all this complexity, it's funny to see a single 'Sensitivity' dial to adjust the timing of the gain's movement, but it does work very well.

GainRider 2's controls are fader-centric rather than signal-centric meaning you have to perform some mental gymnastics, depending how you usually think about audio signals in mixing or editing. Another point to bear in mind is the lack of a gate on this one.

Polished signals aren't exactly two clicks away with GainRider 2, but this isn't the intention behind it – this is one for the engineers.
tb-software.com

VERDICT 8.2