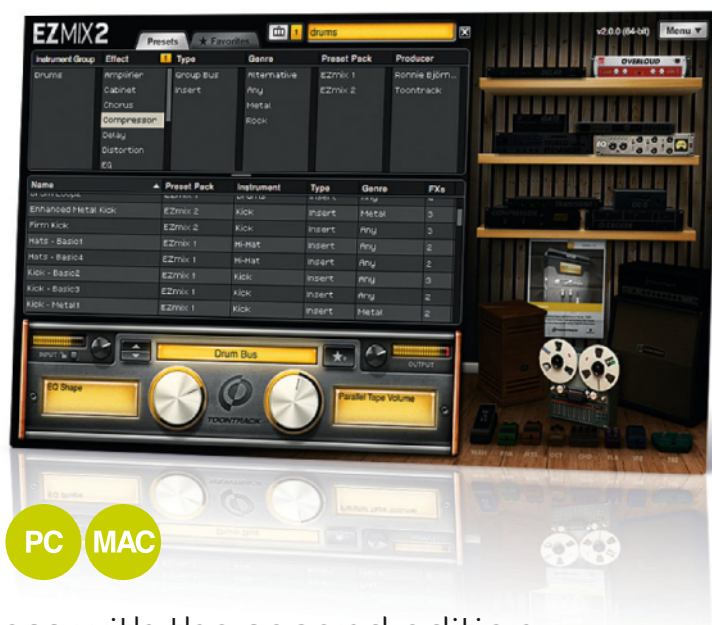


# Toontrack EZmix 2 £115

PC MAC



Mixing is theoretically made effortless with the second edition of this multieffects plug-in, but is it all too good to be true?

> Released in 2010, the original EZmix packed a library of task/instrument-orientated preset effects chains into a simple, compact interface. These are ready to be loaded onto each channel of your DAW's mixer in lieu of individual EQs, compressors, etc. Apart from in/out levels and one or two arbitrary parameters, you're given no control over these effects whatsoever – total 'EZness' being the whole point, of course.

Version 2 includes all 205 original chains and 145 new ones, and it brings a number of new features to the party. The biggest of these is guitar-focused: five guitar amps, a bass amp and a handful of pedals (tremolo, octaver, wah, etc) chained in various combinations give guitarists a varied selection of tones. Related to this, EZmix 2 now supports standalone operation, so you no longer need to launch your DAW if all you're after is a quick wig-out.

Also new is the controversial addition of mastering effects: multiband compressor, mastering limiter, stereo enhancer and aural exciter. This is a bold and audacious move on Toontrack's part – the idea of preset-driven mastering is one that pros are simply never going to take seriously. Nevertheless, the results aren't actually half-bad! While the more complex three- and four-effect setups either work pretty well or not at all depending on the source material, the Master Limiter and Maxi presets are impressive. We can just about condone

using them in earnest on finished mixes, at least for those who wouldn't know how to achieve similar results with traditional mastering plug-ins.

Other improvements over EZmix 1 are the new GUI, which looks better and provides more information (the graphical representation of the effects in use is a nice touch), and improved plate, room and spring reverb algorithms.

## Automatic for the people

The workflow of EZmix remains unchanged from version 1. Filter the browser down to the type of sound you seek, load up a chain and very broadly tweak it with the two contextual knobs. Depending on the preset, these may give control over reverb time and dry/wet mix, or cutoff frequency and modulation amount, or gain and presence, etc. Put a drums chain on your drums bus, a guitar chain on your guitar track, a bass chain on your bass track, a mastering chain on your master output, etc, and you're done – a completed mix (bar levels/panning) in seconds.

While EZmix's generous library of chains is admirably versatile, the lack of parametric control means that the results frustrate as often as they impress. The inability to get in there and make proper adjustments is truly maddening at times. Couldn't we at least be permitted to change the order of the effects in each chain? And ideally, we would like to see three or four editable parameters rather than one or two,

which we don't think would dilute or compromise the EZmix concept at all.

Despite Toontrack's optimistic marketing media, such limitations render EZmix 2 very much a hobbyist tool, albeit an authentic, fun and brilliantly realised one. It definitely works for demos and quick mixes, but don't expect it to give you results on a par with a pro engineer wielding an array of separate plug-ins. And on a more philosophical level, we're not entirely comfortable with the whole 'preset mixing' thing – mixing is supposed to be an art, after all. **cm**

Web [www.toontrack.com](http://www.toontrack.com)  
Contact Time+Space, 01837 55200  
Info Upgrade from EZmix, £29

## Alternatively

**iZotope Alloy**  
**cm146 » 8/10 » \$249**

Complete channel strip plug-in with prefab one-screen preset layouts

**URS Classic Console Strip Pro 2**  
**cm158 » 9/10 » \$480**

Pricy but powerful, this provides custom channel strip creation

## Verdict

**For** Quick and easy

Great sound quality

Surprisingly effective mastering chains

Focused and well-designed

**Against** Very rock-focused

Results are limited by lack of control

If you find mixing a drag, EZmix 2 could be just what you need to create decent-sounding tracks with minimal fuss

7/10

## It's all Over

**EZmix 2's effects were designed and developed by Overloud ([www.overloud.com](http://www.overloud.com)), and their quality is highly impressive. That's partly what makes the lack of control irritating – how we'd love access to the full control set! How about an EZmix Pro, Toontrack? Or indeed, Superior Mixer!**

**As well as the guitar and mastering effects, the broad array of mixing processors buried within the chains includes EQs, filters, compressors, gates, distortion, chorus,**

**flanger, phaser, reverb, reverse reverb, delay and more. The chain designers have done a sterling job of combining these devices into a rich variety of both creative and mix-functional racks, although it must be said that they are all very rock-orientated.**

**Also worth noting is that the current lineup of EZmix expansion Packs all work with EZmix 2. We assume more are on the way, making use of the new processors and hopefully catering more for non-rockers.**