**Side Chain Compression**

With any compression, a threshold is set and when the amplitude of a track goes above that threshold, the compressor kicks into action.

The idea behind side-chain compression with a voice over is that the amplitude of the voice track (or any source track) drives the compressor on another track (in this case, the music volume). Whenever the V/O passes the threshold, it pushes the music down so you can hear the voice clearer. Today, this can be accomplished with volume automation, but this same routing technique has become a creative one you can use for music production.

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**Key input**

**Side Chain**

**Ratio** – Adjusts how much the compression is applied. For example, if the compression ratio is set for 6:1, the input signal will have to cross the threshold by 6 dB for the output level to increase by 1 dB.

**Threshold** – The level at which the compressor starts to work.

**Attack** – How quickly the compressor acts when the threshold is crossed.

**Release** – How long the compressor remains active. How slowly it “lets go” of the signal.

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**Channel Routing for Side Chain Compression**

**Music**  **V/O**
Setting Up Side Chain Compressor

1. You should have your Music and V/O tracks visible and edited for time. You can add EQ and compression to the voice track as needed to address any sonic issues.

2. On the V/O track, set up a send to Bus 1 (since it is a mono track). Bring the fader up to 0.

3. On the Music track, insert a compressor (I am showing Comp/Limiter Dyn 3, but most should work).

4. Where you see the image of a key on the left side of the compressor, it should say “No Key Input.” Change that to Bus 1, so the V/O track is feeding this compressor. With this set up, when the voice engages the compressor, the attenuation will occur on the music track. Activate Side-Chain by pressing on the key image on the right of the compressor.

5. You will want to set the threshold fairly low, the attack fairly fast and the release fairly slow. Experiment with these parameters to try and get the voice to push down the music enough to be heard.

Alternative uses of Side Chain Compression

1. Instead of a V/O & music, set up two instrument tracks, one with a synthesizer pad playing long chords, and another with a kick drum playing on every beat (4 beats per measure).

2. Send the kick drum signal over to a bus.

3. Insert a compressor on the synth track and use the same key input/side chain instructions as above. In this set up, the kick drum pattern/rhythm will drive the synth to breathe. In this use, the attack & release times relate to the BPM/rhythmic pattern you are creating.