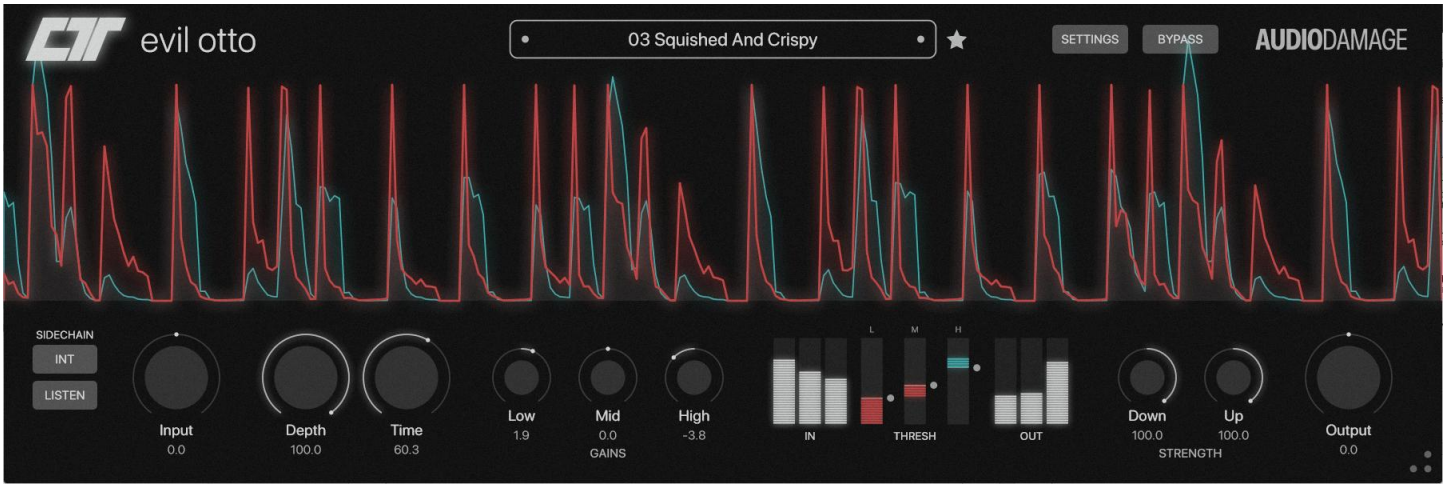
Evil Otto User’s Guide

Audio Damage, Inc.

Release 1.0



23 March 2026

System Requirements

The following table summarizes the operating system requirements and formats provided by Evil Otto.

Operating System	Minimum Version	Architectures
macOS	10.13 (High Sierra)	Intel, Apple Silicon (Universal)
Windows	10	x86_64
Linux	Modern distributions	x86_64
iOS	12	arm64

Plugin Formats

Format	macOS	Windows	Linux	iOS
VST3	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
AU	Yes	—	—	—
AUv3	—	—	—	Yes
Standalone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
LV2	—	—	Yes	—
CLAP	Yes	Yes	Yes	—
AAX	Yes	Yes	—	—

Installation

Evil Otto uses our custom plugin manager application for installation. Launch it as usual on your operating system of choice and you'll be presented with a window like this:

Near the top of the window, beneath the large word EVIL OTTO, you'll see the version number of the software carried by the installer. This is distinct from the version of the plugin manager itself, which is shown in the upper right and usually not of much interest.

Under the heading FORMATS are large buttons corresponding to the plugin formats which can be installed: AAX, AU, CLAP, LV2 and/or VST3, depending on the operating system. If the plugin is already present on your system in one or more formats (i.e. if you're upgrading from a previous version), the corresponding button is drawn in blue. When possible, the version number of the existing plugin is also shown.

Click a button to select the format for installation. A yellow outline appears around the button to indicate that its format will be installed. In the above screenshot, VST3 and CLAP are installed, AAX is not installed, and VST3 is selected for installation. The older instance of the VST3 plugin will be overwritten by the version contained in the plugin manager. Clicking a button a second time removes the yellow outline, and the corresponding format will not be installed. Clicking the SELECT ALL button selects all available formats for installation.

No changes to your system's storage device take place until you click the INSTALL button near the lower-right corner of the window. Click that button and you'll receive visual confirmation that the formats you've selected have been installed. (Yes, it happens quickly.) On Windows and Linux, if you hold down the Shift key on your keyboard, the INSTALL button's label switches to UNINSTALL, and clicking it will remove the selected formats from your system[1]. Once you're installed and/or removed the formats you need, simply close the application in the usual manner for your operating system. You're done. There is no license code or other authorization necessary; we'd rather assume we can trust you than burden you with an onerous DRM system.

If your DAW doesn't see Evil Otto after installation, rescan your plugin folders. Every DAW handles this differently, so consult your DAW's documentation if you're not sure how.

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[1] Blame Apple, not us, for the lack of this feature on macOS. On macOS just manually delete the plugin(s) from your plugin folder(s).

You'll find some handy buttons under the EXTRAS heading, all of which are pretty self-explanatory:

EULA – presents the End-User License Agreement for our products. By clicking the INSTALL button you're implicitly agreeing to these terms, but we expect that you'll find them reasonable should you take the time to read them.

MANUAL – opens the current version of this user manual, in PDF form, in your web browser.

WEBSITE – opens the product's web page in your browser.

SUPPORT – displays information for contacting us, either via our Discord presence or through email.

Introduction

OTT compression has become one of the most recognizable sounds in modern music production. If you've listened to anything in the EDM, pop, or hip-hop worlds in the last decade, you've heard it — that hyper-present, larger-than-life quality where every detail of a sound is pushed forward and nothing hides in the background.

The technique itself is straightforward: take a multiband compressor, apply downward compression to tame the peaks in each band, and simultaneously apply upward compression to boost the quiet parts. Do this across three frequency bands and you get a sound that is dense, detailed, and aggressively "right there." The name says it all — Over The Top.

Evil Otto is our take on this idea. It's not a clone of any particular implementation. We started from the core concept — simultaneous upward and downward multiband compression — and built a processor that gives you meaningful control over the behavior without burying you in parameters. You get the essentials: how much compression, how fast it reacts, independent control of the upward and downward amounts, per-band thresholds, per-band output levels, and a sidechain input for ducking. That's it. No hidden menus, no pages of settings.

In the spirit of its roots, the desktop versions of Evil Otto are free. Revenue from the iOS version covers our additional costs for deploying on that platform.

How It Works

If you already know what OTT compression is, you can skip ahead to the Controls section. If not, here's what's going on under the hood.

Compression, Briefly

A standard compressor watches the level of your signal. When it crosses above a threshold, the compressor reduces the gain — the louder it gets above the threshold, the more it gets pulled back. This is **downward compression**, and it's what most people mean when they say "compression." It tames peaks and controls dynamics.

Upward compression does the opposite. It watches for signal that falls below a threshold and boosts it. Quiet details get pushed up. The sound becomes more present and denser, because the quiet parts aren't quiet anymore.

OTT: Both At Once

OTT compression applies both of these simultaneously. Peaks get pushed down; quiet parts get pushed up. The result is an aggressively flattened, hyper-detailed signal where everything is right at the front. It's an immediately recognizable sound — you've heard it on synth leads, on vocals, on drums, on entire mixes.

Multiband: Three Times Over

Evil Otto doesn't apply this to the full-frequency signal as a single process. It splits the audio into three frequency bands — low, mid, and high — and applies OTT compression to each band independently. This is important because different parts of the frequency spectrum have very different dynamics. A kick drum's low-frequency energy behaves nothing like the high-frequency content of a hi-hat, and compressing them together means one is always being treated wrong.

By splitting into bands, each region of the spectrum gets compression appropriate to its own dynamics. You can then adjust the threshold and output level of each band independently to shape the overall tone.

The Signal Path

Here's what happens to your audio as it passes through Evil Otto:

Input Gain — adjusts the level hitting the compressor. This matters because compression is level-dependent; driving it harder produces more effect.

Multiband OTT — the signal is split into three bands, each receiving simultaneous upward and downward compression with independent thresholds.

Sidechain Ducking — if an external sidechain signal is present and enabled, it ducks the compressed output.

Output Gain — final level adjustment after processing.

Controls

Input Gain

Sets the level of the signal entering the compressor. Because compression responds to level, this isn't just a volume knob — turning it up drives the signal harder into the compressor, producing a more aggressive effect. Turning it down backs things off for a gentler result. The knob is bipolar with a range of −60 dB to +12 dB, and a default of 0 dB at its center position.

Depth

The master amount control. This scales the overall intensity of the OTT compression — both upward and downward — across all three bands simultaneously. At 0%, no compression is applied. At 100%, you get the full effect. Think of it as a wet/dry mix for the compression behavior itself. This is the single most impactful control on the plugin. Start here.

Time

Controls how fast the compressor responds. Lower values produce faster attack and release times — the compressor clamps down quickly and lets go quickly. Higher values slow the response, producing smoother, more gradual compression. Fast times emphasize transients and can produce a pumping effect. Slow times produce a more transparent, leveling behavior. If you're hearing distortion artifacts on low-frequency material, try slowing it down.

Down Amount

Controls the strength of the downward compression across all bands. This is the peak-taming side of the equation. Higher values mean more aggressive peak reduction. At 0%, no downward compression is applied — only upward compression will be active (assuming Up Amount is above 0%).

Up Amount

Controls the strength of the upward compression across all bands. This is the detail-boosting side. Higher values push quiet material up more aggressively. At 0%, no upward compression is applied. Turning Up Amount high while keeping Down Amount low gives you a signal that maintains its peaks but fills in all the quiet detail underneath — useful for bringing out room tone, reverb tails, or subtle performance nuances. It will also bring up noise, because that's what upward compression does. Keep this in mind.

Low Level / Mid Level / High Level

These three knobs (grouped under GAINS) control the output level of each frequency band after compression. Use them to shape the tonal balance of the compressed signal. If the low end is too boomy after compression, pull Low Level back. If the highs are too harsh, reduce High Level. These are straightforward gain trims — they don't change the compression behavior, just the relative balance of the three bands in the output. They have a range of −12 dB to +12 dB.

Low Threshold / Mid Threshold / High Threshold

These three controls set the compression threshold for each band independently. They appear as draggable regions overlaid on the center meter display, with small dots indicating their positions. The threshold determines where the compressor engages. Signal above the threshold gets downward compression; signal below gets upward compression. A lower threshold means the compressor engages on quieter material. A higher (closer to 0 dB) threshold means only louder signals trigger the downward compression, while more of the signal falls into the upward compression zone.

Adjusting these per-band lets you fine-tune how the compression interacts with different parts of the frequency spectrum. Each control has a range of −60 dB to 0 dB with a default value of −30 dB.

Sidechain Ext

This switch enables the external sidechain input. When active, Evil Otto uses a sidechain signal (routed from your DAW) to duck the compressed output. This is useful for the classic sidechain pumping effect — feed a kick drum into the sidechain and your compressed pad or bass will duck rhythmically around it. How you route a sidechain signal varies by DAW and plugin format.

Sidechain Listen

Solos the sidechain input so you can hear what's being fed into it. This is a monitoring shortcut—use it to confirm your sidechain routing is correct before committing to a sound. This control is not automatable, because it's a setup tool, not a performance control.

Bypass

Bypasses all processing with a smooth gain crossfade, so you can A/B the effect without clicks or pops. Available in the top-right of the interface and fully automatable.

Metering Display

The center of the interface shows nine vertical meters organized in three groups:

IN (left group) — Input levels for each band (Low, Mid, High) after the signal has been split. Useful for seeing what's hitting the compressor in each band.

THRESH (center group) — Gain reduction and expansion per band. Each meter shows compression activity relative to the threshold: downward compression appears below the threshold line, upward compression appears above it. The small dots to the right of these meters indicate the threshold positions.

OUT (right group) — Output levels per band after compression and band-level adjustment.

The meters update at 30 Hz with smoothed values, so they're responsive but readable.

Settings

The Settings panel (invoked by clicking the appropriately named button in the top bar) provides several switches for changing Evil Otto's visual behavior:

Show Tooltips — hover text describing each control

Enable Animation — enables the scrolling waveform display

Enable Glow Effects — adds glow effects to the UI elements

Outrun Color Scheme — switch between the default color scheme and the Outrun scheme

Turning off the animation and/or glow effects may improve the performance of Evil Ott's editor on older computers.

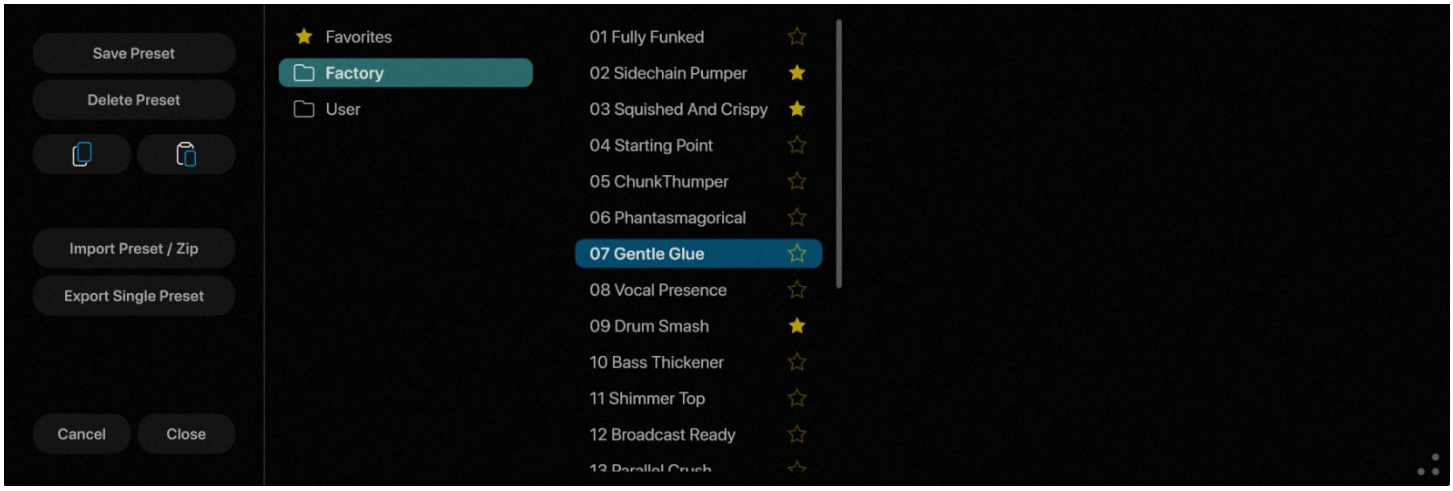
Waveform Display

When animation is enabled in the Settings, a scrolling waveform display appears showing both the pre-compression input and post-compression output signals overlaid. This gives you a real-time visual sense of how much the compression is reshaping the signal's dynamics. The input signal appears in one color and the output in another, making it easy to see at a glance how much work the compressor is doing.

Presets

Evil Otto includes a large collection of presets to serve as a demonstration of its capabilities and inspirations for your own creations. There are a few controls at the top of the window associated with presets:

The name of the current preset appears in the center. (You probably figured that out yourself.) Clicking the little dots on the left and right loads presets in alphabetical order. Clicking the yellow star outline marks the preset as a favorite to help you find it again in the future. To examine all of the presets, click the name of the current to open the preset browser.



The browser displays presets within four lists of folders. The leftmost list shows the folders within Evil Otto's preset collection, grouped in two categories: Factory, and User. Clicking any of these folders reveals its contents in the next list. Clicking on a preset name loads the settings into Evil Otto. Click the **Close** button in the preset browser to dismiss it. If you click the **Cancel** button instead, the browser closes and Evil Otto's settings revert to their previous state.

Once you have clicked on any item in the panel, you can navigate within the preset browser with the keys on your keyboard. The left and right arrow keys move the selection between columns, and the up and down arrow keys move it within the list. Tapping the ESC key has the same effect as clicking the Cancel button.

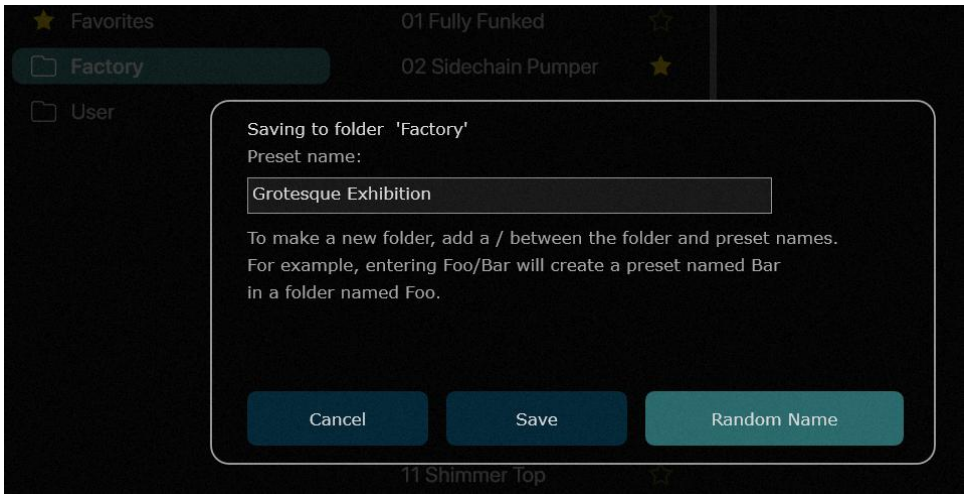
Just like the star at the top of the window which we mentioned previously, the stars to the right of preset names mark presets as favorites. Clicking a filled start removes the mark from a favorite. Once you've marked at least one favorite, a correspondingly named category appears in the leftmost column. Clicking it shows you all the presets you've marked, and clicking their names loads them as usual.

The folders and presets in the browser correspond to folders and files within Evil Otto's own folder on your storage device (i.e. your computer's hard drive or SSD). This folder is located at `C:\ProgramData\Audio Damage\Evil Otto\` on Windows, and `~/Music/Audio Damage/Evil Otto/` on macOS. Theoretically you can save your presets anywhere you like, but for them to show up in Evil Otto's User list they must be placed in the User folder within Evil Otto's folder. Also, to avoid possible collisions during future updates, do not store your presets within the Artist or Factory folders.

Any folders you create within the User folder will show up as folders in the User list. You can create sub-folders within the User folder, but not folders within those sub-folders.

Loading a preset irretrievably erases Evil Otto's current settings, so if you have created a sound that you want to use again, save it as a new preset before loading another preset. To save your presets, click the Save Preset button at the left edge of the window. This invokes a dialog box with a couple of helpful features. As the text therein describes, you can create a folder within the destination folder (whose name is given at the top of the dialog box) by adding the folder's name to the beginning of the preset's name, separated by a slash mark.

Clicking the Random Name button replaces the preset's name with a pair of words chosen at random from two lists. While the resulting names won't have any connection with what the plugin is doing, you may find this feature useful for coming up with alternatives to routine names like "My Preset 12".



Potential pitfall: once you've saved a preset, clicking its name in the list loads the preset, overwriting whatever changes you've made since you saved the preset. Hence if you want to save the preset again to preserve the changes you've made, do not click on its name before saving it.

You can delete presets and folders from the lists by clicking their name and then clicking the **Delete Preset** or **Delete Folder** button. Evil Otto will give you a chance to confirm this action or cancel it. If you confirm, the preset/folder will be removed from your storage system and is gone for good.

Importing and Exporting Presets

Preset files are plain-text XML files so that you can exchange them online in forums, copy them between a Windows computer and a Macintosh (and even between an iPad and a regular computer), email them to your friends, etc.

The two buttons with icons representing copying and pasting (copy on the left, paste on the right) copy Evil Otto's current settings to the system clipboard and paste settings from the clipboard. You can use the copy and paste commands to transfer settings between two instances of Evil Otto or paste the settings into an email message or text editor. When copied to the clipboard, presets are presented in the same XML text as used in preset files.

The Import Preset / Zip button provides a way to add presets to Evil Otto without manually moving them into the appropriate folders in your file system. Clicking this button produces a file-browser window wherein you can select either a single preset file or a .zip file containing one or more presets. After you select the file, Evil Otto copies the preset(s) into whichever folder you have selected in Evil Otto's preset list, unzipping the file first if necessary.

Depending on whether you've selected a preset or folder, the Export Single Preset or Export Folder As Zip button performs the complementary functions of the Import button. First select either a preset or a folder in Evil Otto's list, then click the export button. A file-save window appears; choose a location in your file system, give the file a name, and click Save. If you have chosen a folder in Evil Otto's preset list, the plugin places it and all of the presets it contains in a .zip file.

Default Preset

If you save a preset with the special name "Default" in the User folder, new instances of Evil Otto will load it automatically when you add it to your DAW session. You can use a default preset file to give yourself the same starting point with Evil Otto with your favorite settings.

Sound Design Ideas

Evil Otto is simple enough that the best way to learn it is to use it. Here are some starting points.

Drums

OTT on drums is a classic. Put Evil Otto across a drum bus with Depth around 60–70% and fast Time settings. The upward compression brings out room tone and ghost notes while the downward compression controls the peaks. Lower the High Threshold if cymbals are getting harsh. Raise it if you want that trashy, overcompressed-overhead sound.

For parallel processing, run Evil Otto on a send with Depth at 100% and blend it in under the dry drums. This gives you the density without completely destroying the transients.

Vocals

Start conservative with a Depth around 30–40% and moderate Time. OTT can make vocals incredibly present and intelligible, but it also brings up every breath, mouth noise, and room reflection. Use the band levels to shape the tone: cut the lows if it's getting boomy, boost the highs for air, or cut them if sibilance becomes a problem.

The thresholds are your friend here. Raise the low threshold so the compressor isn't reacting to proximity effect rumble and adjust the high threshold to control how aggressively the compressor enhances sibilant detail.

Bass and Synths

This is where OTT compression made its name. On a bass sound, try Depth at 70–80% with the Down Amount higher than the Up Amount. This gives you aggressive peak control while moderately filling in the quiet moments. The low band threshold controls how much the sub energy gets squashed — set it carefully depending on whether you want a tight, controlled low end or a pumping, breathing one.

On synth leads and pads, go as far as you want. Turn Depth up, push both amounts high, and embrace the density. OTT on pads can turn a simple chord into a wall of harmonically rich, constantly evolving texture. It brings out every filter sweep, every subtle modulation, every overtone that would normally sit below the surface.

Mix Bus

Use caution here — a little goes a long way. Depth at 10–20% across a mix bus adds glue and density without being obvious. Keep the Time moderate to slow and be careful with Up Amount — too much upward compression on a full mix brings up noise and bleed between tracks.

That said, there are no rules. If you're making aggressive electronic music and you want to put Evil Otto at 100% Depth across your master bus, go for it. We won't judge.

Sidechain Pumping

Route a kick (or any rhythmic source) to Evil Otto's sidechain input, engage Ext, and the compressed signal will duck in time with the kick. This works well on pads, bass, and full mixes for that rhythmic breathing effect. Use Sidechain Listen to verify your routing before dialing in the effect.

Creative Abuse

Evil Otto responds well to being pushed into absurd territory. Try it with extreme settings on material it wasn't "meant" for:

Upward compression only (Down Amount at 0%, Up Amount at 100%) on a room mic to create an impossibly dense ambient texture.

Fast Time on low-frequency content to produce deliberate distortion and pumping artifacts.

Automate Depth from 0% to 100% for dramatic builds.

Stack two instances — one with slow Time for overall density, one with fast Time for transient detail.

And Finally...

Recognizing the traditions of the first OTT compressors as well as our own legendary Rough Rider, Evil Otto is free. If you enjoy it, we'd appreciate it if you would tell someone about it or check out our other plugins at audiodamage.com. Thank you for your support.

Please write to support@audiodamage.com if you have any questions or comments.