



**Vertigo Sound**

# VSC-2

Vertigo Sound's Quad Discrete VCA Compressor – the VSC-2 – is a master of all trades. **John Pickford** gives it a squeeze.

## VSC-2

Manufacturer **Vertigo Sound**

Price **£3,642**

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There's no shortage of two-channel compressors on the market, but German company Vertigo Sound has come up with a product that has some handy features not commonly found elsewhere. The VSC-2 also goes by the name of Quad Discrete VCA Compressor, so-called because it employs four voltage-controlled amplifiers (VCAs). These have been designed and hand-built by Vertigo using high-quality discrete components. The VCAs have been designated the model number 1979 in tribute to the devices found in classic compressors of the late 1970s, such as those onboard the legendary SSL mixing consoles. The homage doesn't stop there as the casework comes in a very New-Wave shade of metallic blue and the bright orange Vertigo badge adds to the funky 70s vibe.

A 2U design, the front panel is intelligently laid out, with all of the pots and switches having a satisfyingly purposeful feel. There are five rotary pots for each channel – Threshold, Ratio, Attack, Release and Make Up. Both the Threshold and Make Up pots are continuously variable but are unusual in that they are non-linear in operation. In both cases the most widely used settings take up a larger part of the pot's travel to enable pinpoint accuracy during setup. The other three pots are stepped controls. There are six Ratio settings, the first of which (marked

### Key Features

- 4 VCAs
- Sidechain high-pass filters
- Analogue metering
- Soft to hard knee settings
- Stereo/mono operation

Soft) is referred to by the designers as Tiptoe compression. The ratio starts very low but increases in relation to the signal, up to a maximum of 8:1. This is very useful on signals that would not benefit from the harsh onset of peak detecting compression and is similar in character to the more forgiving sound of opto-compressors.

and around 6dB of compression, we were able to achieve an obviously more processed sound. Here the sidechain filter really made its mark. Set to 90Hz, the low end of the kick drum bypassed the compressor, allowing for a delicious thwacky sound without excessive pumping artefacts.

Next we fed in a female vocal with a huge dynamic range. We took a tip from Vertigo Sound and chained both channels of the VSC-2 to process the mono signal. Using channel A's Soft attack setting, we linked its output to the input of channel B and gave it a bigger squeeze, with a ratio of 8:1. The results were superb: dynamic range was reduced in an entirely natural and transparent way.

As the VSC-2 has been designed primarily as a mix buss compressor, our final test was to listen to the unit across a busy track with plenty of low-end left. Again, the sidechain filter was employed at 90Hz and with the meters gently ticking away (giving around 2dB of gain reduction), just the right amount of glue was applied to the track to finish off the sound beautifully.

## Vertigo Sound's VSC-2 is in the upper echelon of professional stereo compressors

The remaining ratios are 2:1/4:1/8:1/10:1 and Brick. This last setting, as the name implies, provides brickwall limiting with a ratio of 40:1.

Attack and Release controls each offer six time constants. For the peak detecting attack these are .1ms/3ms/1ms/3ms/10ms/30ms. Release times span from .1s to 1.2s with the useful addition of Auto Release mode. Beneath the well-lit VU meters are two sidechain filter switches, one for each channel. In use they offer bass roll-off at 60Hz or 90Hz, which makes the VSC-2 ideal as a mix buss compressor.

### Hot squash

We first strapped the VSC-2 across a stereo group of drums. In stereo mode, channel A's pots become the master control for both channels and it took us no time at all to get some great sounds. At medium attack and release settings, 2 or 3dB of compression really brought the sound to life without compromising the kit's natural character. Pushing the unit harder, with a shorter release time

We love the VSC-2 – it's a versatile compressor but it's intuitive to use. It's also very well built using the finest bespoke components and cosmetically pulls off the trick of looking retro in a thoroughly modern way. Sound quality is first rate and the sidechain filters mark it out as a mix buss compressor that is second to none. **MTM**

### MTM Verdict

#### WHY BUY

- + Versatile and user-friendly
- + Excellent build quality
- + Great for mix buss compression
- + Will not mangle your signals

#### WALK ON BY

- No external sidechain inputs

*The VSC-2 is in the upper echelon of professional stereo compressors. All of its components are of the highest quality, it sounds superb and it excels as a mix buss or master compressor. A very well thought-out design.*



### Measuring Up

Thermionic Culture's Phoenix Master Edition Compressor (£3,799) is an all-valve unit and is a variable mu or soft knee design, so compression ratio increases with the amount of compression used. There is no limiting facility but there is a sidechain filter operating at 75Hz and 150Hz. The Alan Smart C2 Compressor (£1,950) is a VCA design and features a 'crush' facility that makes use of FETs. There is an external sidechain input and the option to purchase high-pass filter cables (£30) that provide filtering at 150Hz.