Recommended EQ pre-compressor:

High-pass filter
120 Hz, -18 dB/oct.

Lead Vocals (Pop)

Attack: *Fast*, 10-20 ms

Release: *Medium*, 150-250 ms

Ratio: 2:1 to 8:1

Gain Reduction: *Heavy*, 2 to 5 dB

A good place to start with pop vocals is a 5:1 ratio. Try a higher ratio for more controlled sound, or a lower ratio for a more natural sound. Gain reduction is usually heavy for a properly treated pop vocal.

Arising from the United States and UK music cultures, pop music is a genre of music that originated during the mid-20th century. In its first iterations, pop music of the 1950s was synonymous with golden era rock-and-roll and youth-oriented styles. These genres remained roughly interchangeable until the late 1960s, after which pop became associated with more danceable and accessible subject matter.

Recommended compressor types:

Optical
(LA-2A)

FET
(1176)

Recommended EQ pre-compressor:

High-pass filter
100 Hz, -12 dB/oct.
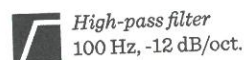
Lead Vocals (Jazz)

Attack: *Fast*, 20-50 ms
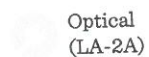
Release: *Medium*, 200-300 ms

Ratio: 1.5:1 to 3:1
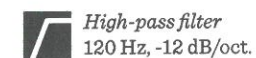
Gain Reduction: *Medium*, 1 to 4 dB

With jazz, it's essential to preserve the live-sounding nature of the vocal as much as possible. Keep the gain reduction and ratio at a moderate level to preserve the energy of the vocal performance.

The traditions of vocal jazz emerged in the early 20th century, the descending from American blues singers such as Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey. Early jazz vocal innovators like Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald would go on to define the genre. Other styles of vocal jazz, such as scat singing, were first recorded by Louis Armstrong in 1926 ("Heebie Jeebies").

Recommended compressor types:

Tube
(Fairchild)

Optical
(LA-2A)

Recommended EQ pre-compressor:

High-pass filter
120 Hz, -12 dB/oct.

Lead Vocals (Rap)

Attack: *Fast*, 10-20 ms

Release: *Medium*, 100-200 ms

Ratio: 3:1 to 6:1

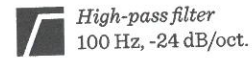Gain Reduction: *Heavy*, 3 to 6 dB

One of the best methods to create a great-sounding rap vocal is to apply compression and lots of it. Start with a 4:1 ratio, and heavy gain reduction. Sometimes, two compressors in serial works best.

A byproduct of the hip-hop culture of NYC in the early 1970s, rap as a genre began at Bronx block parties when DJs began isolating the drum "breaks" of funk, soul, and disco songs and extending them. MCs tasked with introducing the DJs and keeping the crowd energized would talk between songs, joke, and interact with the audience. Today, rap music is one of the best-selling genres of music worldwide.

Recommended compressor types:

Optical
(LA-2A)

VCA
(SSL)

Recommended EQ pre-compressor:

High-pass filter
100 Hz, -24 dB/oct.
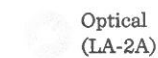
Background Vocals

Attack: *Fast*, 30-50 ms

Release: *Slow*, 200-400 ms

Ratio: 4:1 to 8:1

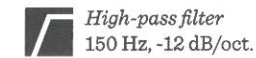Gain Reduction: *Heavy*, 4 to 10 dB

Background vocals tend to sound best with ultra-heavy compression amounts. Best to apply more compression to the backgrounds, and less to the lead vocals. EQing lows out of background vocals helps.

A backing vocalist is a singer who layers vocal harmony with the lead vocalist or other backing vocalists in a group. A backing vocalist may sometimes sing alone as a lead-in to a song or a counter-melody to the lead. Backing vocalists are employed in a variety of popular, traditional, and world music styles. In many pop and rock bands, the musicians doing backing vocals also play instruments.

Recommended compressor types:

VCA
(SSL)

FET
(1176)

Recommended EQ pre-compressor:

High-pass filter
150 Hz, -12 dB/oct.

Podcast Vocals

Attack: *Fast*, 10-20 ms

Release: *Medium*, 150-250 ms

Ratio: 3:1 to 6:1

Gain Reduction: *Heavy*, 3 to 6 dB

For a professional vocal sound in podcast production, start with a solid ratio like 4:1 and pour on the gain reduction. Fast attack and medium release should work fine for most well-recorded podcasts.

Podcasts (previously known as "audio blogs") have technological roots dating back to the 1980s. With the advent of portable digital audio playback devices such as the iPod, podcasting began to catch hold in late 2004 following the launch of the iTunes download store a year prior. Today, more than 120,000 English-language podcasts are available on the Internet, available for distribution at little or no cost to the listener.

Recommended compressor types:

VCA
(SSL)

Optical
(LA-2A)