Squeezer

Flexible general-purpose audio compressor with a touch of citrus



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1 About Squeezer

I wrote this compressor to learn all I could about audio compression. It took me several months to gather all the specs and papers I needed and convert this vast amount of information into code.

What makes Squeezer different from the compressors I know is the stepping of all knobs to *preset values* (it took a loooong time to fine-tune them). On clicking a small red light located right next to them, however, the knobs become *continuous*. That allows you to find good-sounding settings very fast while not preventing fine-tuning.

Squeezer is also very flexible. Its internal layout can be changed in many ways: feed-forward / feed-back, linear / S-curve / log, optical / transistor, RMS / almost peak, three different knees.

By writing and fine-tuning this compressor I have gained deep insight into audio compressors and really learned how to use them musically. But not only that, Squeezer has quickly become my go-to generic compressor.

2 What is compression?

2.1 The tale of the bar keeper

Once upon a time there was a bar. Customers enjoyed their drinks and music played in the background. After a while, the bar keeper noticed that his drinks sold best when the music fell into a certain loudness range. So he bought a loudness meter and wrote a set of instructions for the DJ:

80 dB SPL set mixer's output gain to 0 dB
85 dB SPL set mixer's output gain to -5 dB
90 dB SPL set mixer's output gain to -10 dB
95 dB SPL set mixer's output gain to -15 dB

This worked quite well and he could finally afford to buy a shiny new bar counter. Upon which the DJ gave notice (he had always dreamt of getting a *stereo* mixer and the new counter didn't go down too well with him). After an initial shock, the bar keeper was quite content. The DJ really *had* been quite lousy.

Being an inventor, the bar keeper also opened the mixer and connected its output to a simple amplifier. The amplifier's gain was regulated by a level sensor which in turn was connected to the amplifier's output.

Although the new device exactly followed the DJ's instructions (and didn't smell as bad), customers complained about its sound quality. The bar keeper had invented a *wave shaping* device – gain changes were applied instantly which *distorted* its input signal.

Fortunately, the bar keeper remembered a very important thing: the DJ had often been drunk and taken his time to apply gain changes. So the bar keeper improved his device by adding a smoothing device between level sensor and amplifier.

He could have become very rich. But he didn't realise the magnitude of his invention and continued being a happy bar keeper. Which is not the worst thing when you come to think of it.

To this day, however, sound engineers fall silent in awe when they hear his name – the name of the bar keeper who **invented the compressor**.

3 Installation

In order to use the pre-compiled binaries, simply extract the Squeezer files from the downloaded archive. For the plug-ins, you'll then have to move the extracted files to your respective plug-in folder.

Squeezer requires a processor which supports the SSE2 instruction set. On Windows, you might also have to install the Visual C++ Redistributable for Visual Studio 2017.

Should the stand-alone version ever fail to start, you can reset its settings by deleting the file squeezer_stereo.ini or squeezer_mono.ini. These files are located in ~/.config (GNU/Linux) or %appdata%\.config\ (Windows).

4 Final words

I want to express my gratitude to the **Audio Engineering Society** for their wonderful E-Library. This includes everybody who wrote the fine papers within the library, especially Dimitrios Giannoulis, Michael Massberg and Joshua D. Reiss.

I must also thank the **beta testers** and **users of Squeezer** for sending kind words, suggestions and bug reports. Finally, I want to thank the **open source community** for making all of this possible.

Although coding Squeezer has been a lot of fun, it has also been a lot of work. So if you like Squeezer, why not send me a short email and tell me so? Write a few words about yourself, send suggestions for future updates or volunteer to create a nice skin. I also really enjoy listening to music that you have produced using my software...

Here is my email address (please remove "-nospam"):

"Martin Zuther" <code-nospam@mzuther.de>

Thanks for using free software. I hope you'll enjoy it!

A Build Squeezer

A.1 Dependencies

A.1.1 premake

Importance: required

Version: 5.0.0 (alpha13)

License: BSD

Homepage: premake.github.io

Installation

Place the binary somewhere in your PATH. Depending on your platform, you should run premake using the scripts Builds/run_premake.sh or Builds/run_premake.bat.

To change the premake file using the provided Jinja templates, you'll also have to install the necessary dependencies.

A.1.2 JUCE library

Importance: required Version: 5.3.2

License: ISC and GPL v3 (among others)

Homepage: www.juce.com

Installation

Extract the archive into the directory libraries/juce.

If you want to build the LV2 plug-in, please extract the archive distrho_lv2-xxxxxxxx.tar.gz into the same directory.

A.1.3 Virtual Studio Technology SDK

Importance: optional Version: 2.4 / 3.6.8

License: proprietary / GPL v3 Homepage: www.steinberg.net

Installation

Just extract the archive into the directory libraries/vst.

A.1.4 Python

Importance: optional

Version: 3.5 (or higher)

License: Python Software Foundation License

Homepage: www.python.org

You'll only need Python if you want to change the premake file (see section A.1.1) using Jinja templates.

Installation (Windows)

You can download an installer from the website.

A.1.5 Jinja

Importance: optional

Version: 2.8 (or higher)

License: BSD

Homepage: jinja.pocoo.org

You'll only need Jinja if you want to change the premake file using templates (see section A.1.1).

A.1.6 Artistic Style

Importance: optional Version: 2.05.1 License: LGPL v3

Homepage: astyle.sourceforge.net

This application formats the code so it looks more beautiful and consistent. Thus, you only have to install it if you plan to help me with coding Squeezer.

Installation

Place the binary somewhere in your PATH. Depending on your platform, you should run astyle using the scripts Source/format_code.sh or Source/format_code.bat.

A.2 GNU/Linux

A.2.1 Environment

To build Squeezer yourself, I recommend setting up a chroot environment. This is fast and easy to do on Debian-based systems and might save you a **lot** of trouble. At the time of writing, I'm using Linux Mint 19, but the procedure should be similar on your distribution of choice.

Start by installing the necessary packages:

```
sudo apt-get install debootstrap schroot
```

Then install the chroot base system by executing the following statements:

```
sudo debootstrap --variant=buildd \
    --arch i386 bionic \
    /srv/chroot/bionic_i386 \
    http://archive.ubuntu.com/ubuntu
```

```
sudo debootstrap --variant=buildd \
--arch amd64 bionic \
/srv/chroot/bionic_amd64 \
http://archive.ubuntu.com/ubuntu
```

Running debootstrap will take some time. Meanwhile, add the following lines to /etc/schroot/schroot.conf (make sure you remove all preceding white space so that each line begins in the first column):

```
[bionic-i386]

description=Ubuntu bionic (i386)

directory=/srv/chroot/bionic_i386

profile=default

personality=linux32

type=directory

users=username

[bionic-amd64]

description=Ubuntu bionic (amd64)

directory=/srv/chroot/bionic_amd64

profile=default

personality=linux

type=directory

users=username
```

Please make the necessary changes to username. If you experience problems, you can try to change bionic to a release name such as wheezy.

When debootstrap is done, log in as superuser:

```
sudo schroot -c bionic-i386
```

```
sudo schroot -c bionic-amd64
```

You'll have to change the file /etc/apt/sources.list first (ignore the line break, it should be a single line):

```
deb http://archive.ubuntu.com/ubuntu bionic main restricted universe
```

Now install a few packages – less and vim are optional, but might come in handy:

```
apt-get update
apt-get -y install bash-completion clang \
libasound2-dev libjack-jackd2-dev \
mesa-common-dev xorg-dev less vim
apt-get clean
```

If you like bash completion, you might also want to open the file /etc/bash.bashrc and unquote these lines:

```
# enable bash completion in interactive shells if [...]
[a couple of lines...]
fi
```

Finally, log out and log in as normal user:

Build Squeezer

```
schroot -c bionic-i386

schroot -c bionic-amd64
```

In this chroot shell, install the dependencies (section A.1). Congratulations – you are now ready to build Squeezer!

A.2.2 Build

After preparing the dependencies, start your chroot environment

```
schroot -c bionic-i386

64 bit
schroot -c bionic-amd64
```

change into the directory build and execute

```
./run_premake.sh
make config=CFG TARGET
```

where CFG is one of debug_x32, debug_x64, release_x32 and release_x64, and TARGET is the version you want to compile, such as linux standalone stereo.

In case you run into problems, you can try to switch compilers by opening the file run_premake.sh and using the premake options --cc=clang or --cc=gcc.

The compiled binaries will end up in the directory bin.

A.3 Microsoft Windows

A.3.1 Build

After preparing the dependencies, change into the directory build and execute

```
./run_premake.bat
```

Then change into the directory Builds/windows/vs20xx, open the project file with the corresponding version of Visual C++ and build the project.

The compiled binaries will end up in the directory bin.

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