Indie Vocals Compression GUIDE

Hey friend! My name is Marcus Lapp with The Indie Music Lab. Thank you for downloading this free guide. If you follow this guide and apply these approaches to your vocal mixes, you will begin to see immediate improvements to the quality of your vocals. Happy compressing!

Compression for a punchy Indie pop, Indie rock, or Alternative vocal
(I use this approach 80-90% of the time)

For the best results, **stack these 3 compressors on top of one another** on your plug-in chain. There's no need to make one compressor do all the work.

Compressor 1: The "Balance" Compressor

Use THESE settings on any basic compressor in ANY DAW to achieve volume balance:
- Fast attack (1 ms)
- Fast release (5-15 ms)
- 4:1 Ratio
- Adjust the threshold until you get 3-8 db of gain reduction on the loud parts
- Makeup gain: 2-4 db

Compressor 2: The "Glue" Compressor

Use THESE settings to add some "glue" to your vocal
- Medium attack (20-40 ms)
- Medium release (30-50 ms)
- 4:1 Ratio
- Adjust the threshold until you get 2-5 db of gain reduction on the loud parts
- Makeup gain: 2-3 db

(Glue compressor ALTERNATIVE APPROACH)
Here's a slightly different way of using a compressor to achieve glue. Everything is the same EXCEPT you turn the threshold AND the ratio knobs ALL THE WAY DOWN, and then you slowly bring the ratio up to as little as 1.1:1 or 1.3:1 or until you get the 2-5 db of gain reduction happening.

Compressor 3: The "Punch" Compressor

When it comes to adding punchiness and that "in your face" quality on a vocal, I love using analog modeled compression plug-ins like the Waves CLA-2A, Slate Digital's FG-116, or Studio One's Fat Channel FET compressor. However, if you don't have any of these analog style compressors, don't sweat it, you can still get a punchy vocal using the same stock compressor you've been using for everything else.

Here's what these "punch" settings look like on a basic stock compressor:

Use these settings to achieve that "punchy" "in your face" vocal sound:
- Fast-medium attack (1-15 ms)
- Medium release (50-70 ms)
- 4:1 Ratio
- Adjust the threshold until you get 3-8 db of consistent gain reduction

Here's what these settings might look like on an analog-style compressor plug-in:

Notice the fast vs slow on the Attack and Release knobs are "backwards" compared to most stock compressors. Make sure you know which way is fast and which way is slow because they're not all laid out the same way

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How to compress vocals for a light, organic Indie Folk or Ambient Indie sound.

Simply add the first 2 compressors *(Balance & Glue)* and don't add the "Punch" compressor. Keep it light and you're all set!

There it is! As simple as this guide may seem, there really is no need to make vocal compression any more complicated than this. I've gotten incredible results by simply repeating this formula of simply stacking the **Balance**, **Glue**, and **Punch** compressors right after each other on the vocal chain.

You now have more actionable knowledge about vocal compression than 95% of producers & home studio musicians. Congrats!

- Marcus Lapp / The Indie Music Lab