



BECOS COMPIQ PRO STELLA COMPRESSOR

WORDS RICHARD PURVIS



We've seen rackmount studio compressors with fewer controls than this little pedal from Romanian maker Becos. We put it through its paces and ask: can it possibly sound as 'pro' as it looks?

Becos is a small but extremely ambitious stompbox brand from the Black Sea port of Constanta in Romania. The Stella is the company's flagship compressor for guitar and bass and it's quite something to behold in terms of its promise: a compact pedal with nine knobs, four toggle switches and seven LEDs.

The idea behind it is to pack all the features of a serious VCA compressor into a pedalboard-friendly format – and with the same audio quality. That's what we mean by ambitious...

Controls for ratio, threshold, attack, release and gain make-up are self-explanatory and having a wet/dry mix dial is an increasingly popular trick; but then we come to the stuff you really don't expect to find on a pocket-sized stomper.

'Tilt EQ' can be used to boost treble and cut bass or vice versa, around a pivot point that can be set to either 1kHz or 330Hz. The attack and release controls can be bypassed with fast or slow presets and the knee can be set to hard or soft.

The sidechain filter lets lower frequencies through without triggering the compressor

too quickly and you can choose between 'normal', 'low' and 'deep' settings for this. Finally, you have the option to take the uncompressed part of the mix and overdrive it to simulate tape saturation.

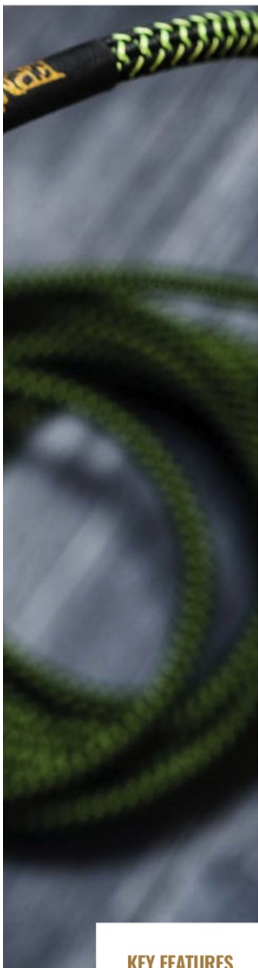
If all that has set you running into the loving arms of your two-knob Dyna Comp, please don't be daunted – in practice, it's a lot simpler than it seems.

IN USE

VCA compressors are known for being fast and transparent and that's what you get here: it doesn't make things sound drastically different, just magically nicer.

Single notes are thickened without thumping, and chords gel together in a way that somehow makes you sound like a better player. And while the added sparkle means this is not as pure a compressor as the great Origin Effects Cali76, that'll be a plus for some players.

There's no real need to stray from the basics with either guitar or bass: stick to soft knee, normal sidechain and fast timing



This is a fully featured unit compared to many guitar-pedal compressors, with sidechain filtering options and more

KEY FEATURES

PRICE £223

DESCRIPTION VCA compressor pedal.

Made in Romania

CONTROLS Ratio, threshold, attack, gain, tilt EQ, release; wet/dry mix, dry saturation, dry level; toggle switches for hard/soft knee, neutral/low/deep side chain filter, high/low EQ pivot, manual/fast/slow timing; internal circuit jumpers for EQ bypass and dry signal low cut/high cut

FEATURES True bypass; powered by 9-volt battery or mains supply (minimum 12mm barrel tip)

DIMENSIONS 113 x 68 x 50mm

CONTACT Becos becosfx.com



An analogue tape-saturation circuit adds harmonic distortion for a warm, vintage feel



You have an overall wet/dry mix for parallel compression, as well as a level control

and it's just a question of tweaking the ratio and threshold to taste, then playing with the gain and EQ for balance. Hiss never becomes a problem, and dialling in some gritty tape saturation can be a great way to further energise a clean tone.

Drawbacks? Well, those switches are almost impossible to get at, unless you have lollipop sticks for fingers. And more importantly, the pedal won't work at all if the barrel tip on your power supply is less than 12mm long. Plenty are 10mm: if you don't like using batteries, you'd best check.

That aside, this really is a proper gem of a compressor. Becos sells direct via its website, with free shipping within the EU; if you're in the UK, it might be worth grabbing one right away, in case that situation no longer applies. **G**

9/10 Becos, you're worth it – this is a stupendous little compressor

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Origin Effects Cali76 Compact Deluxe **£279**, ThorpyFX The Fat General **£220**, Keeley Compressor Pro **£299**