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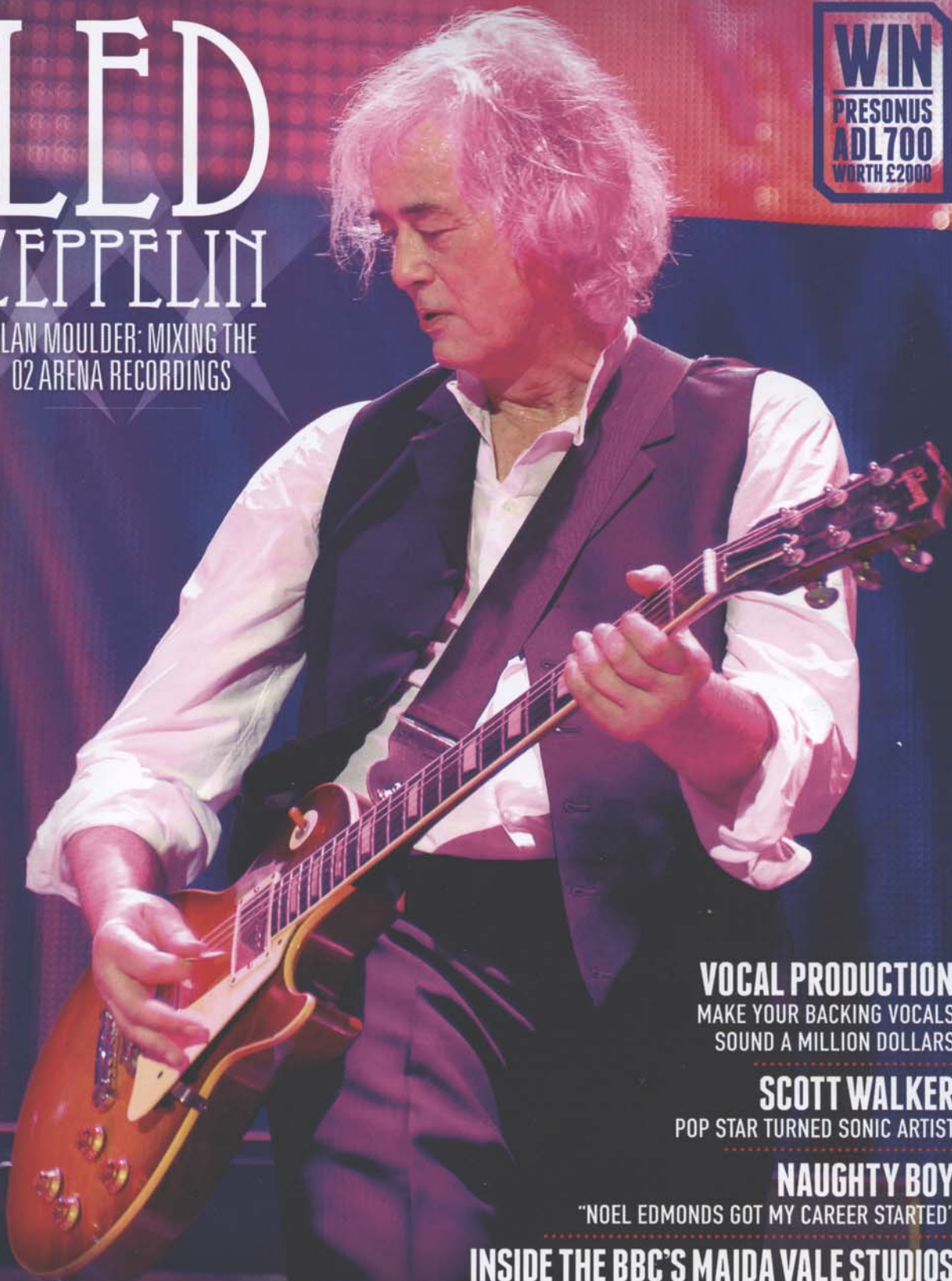
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Radial Komit 500-series Compressor

The secret of Radial's excellent reputation is simple: design excellent products, and build them well. It was no surprise, then, that when we reviewed their Workhorse 5000 500-series chassis back in SOS September 2011 (www.soundonsound.com/sos/sep11/articles/radial-workhorse.htm), we thought it excellent and innovative, introducing, as it did, a number of new features to the format, such as the Omniport concept and the ability to feed the signal from one module to another without patch cables. Radial's rack may be compatible with third-party 500-series modules, but they also make quite a number of them themselves. Having had the pleasure of playing with a few of them recently, I thought I'd share my experience of working with their Komit compressor.

Considering that there are only three knobs on the front panel, Radial have managed to pack in plenty of features — and they've done that by limiting the user's options, but in a musically useful way. There's a one-knob limiter, based on a diode-bridge circuit, a one-knob compressor, and a post-compressor but pre-limiter gain stage. The only other control, aside from the VU/Gain Reduction meter, is an on-off button.

Despite the slight coloration of the Hammond transformers in the signal path, the sound of the compressor is typical of Radial's products: it's simple, it's clean and it does the basic job of compression very well. It's based on a feed-forward VCA detection circuit, enabling it to react quickly to the signal. As you can see from the picture, the knob governs the compression ratio, but what you can't see is that as you change the ratio, the unit automatically adjusts the shape of the knee and the threshold. When it comes to time constants, you only get the option of three settings, governing both attack and release: fast, medium and slow. I'd prefer more flexibility here, but these settings do allow you a surprising degree of control.

The gain stage enables you to compensate for the attenuation performed by the compressor, but it can also be used to deliberately drive the diode-bridge-based limiter. This part of the processor is designed to clip signals when it overloads, but you can coax more gentle distortions out of it, too. Paired with the compressor, then, what we have here is a winning combination of clean and coloured, controlled and vibey. It's not the cheapest compressor in this format, but it's not badly priced. It's more affordable than many — and no others I know of in the 500-series format take advantage of the Workhorse's Omniport as a key input, which enables you to use the Komit for side-chaining applications, or to trigger multiple modules from the same key. There are more characterful compressors out there, and more interesting limiters too... but the Komit offers a lot of functionality, and ease of use to boot, so I can see it appealing to a broad audience.

Matt Houghton

E £358.80 including VAT.

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