

Veteran FOH engineer Marcel Cacdac tells of a cool compression technique he learned from renowned engineer Robert Scovill

Because of their wide dynamic range, vocals are a prime candidate for compression in both studio and sound reinforcement situations.

"You'll be amazed at the punch and power you'll get out of a vocal with this little trick," says Cacdac, who uses it on other sound sources as well. Set up a compressor for the vocalist, but instead of inserting it into the [mixer] channel, use an aux send to get the signal to the input of the compressor, and then return the output of the compressor to another open channel on the board.

"You can send as much signal as you can to the compressor through your aux send, and squash the heck out of it at, say, 3:1 or 4:1, with maybe 6 dB of gain reduction," Cacdac says. "You make up for that reduction on your output gain and send that back into an open channel, where you have another stage of gain, EQ, insert, and assignability." By blending the two signals, you get the punch of a heavily compressed sound without losing the clarity and unsquashed naturalness of the original.

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