

WAY HUGE SAFFRON SQUEEZE COMPRESSOR MKII

REVIEW BY **DAVID A. EVANS**

STREET PRICE **\$149.99**



Saffron is probably one of the most expensive spices on the planet and is prized for its inimitable taste. The folks at Way Huge probably took inspiration from the spice for their Saffron Squeeze MkII compressor. Fortunately, the Saffron Squeeze will spice up tonal palettes and leave listeners wanting more without breaking the bank.

Way Huge's MkII Squeeze is a second-generation compression pedal. Along with the previous version's Volume and Sustain knobs, the MkII includes Gain, Tone, and Attack controls that cleverly allow for a

variety of tonal possibilities. The Tone knob adjusts the level of the post-compression signal's higher frequencies, while the Attack knob dials in a gradual release, a slippery-quick release, or anything in-between. The Gain control actually adjusts the level of the incoming signal prior to its compression.

Players of low-output pickups might find the Gain knob handy simply because it can boost the incoming signal. If only a bit of compression is called for, the extra control over the input signal's volume gives users the chance to

dial in subtler compression levels. Alternatively, if the big squeeze is called for, boosting the input Gain knob will tend to overdrive the compression circuit, lending it a warmer, occasionally clipped quality.

In the majority of its settings, the MkII Saffron Squeeze compresses without adding the sort of grit that bedevils lesser versions of the effect. Indeed, in the suggested "Classic Squeeze" setting, the pedal more than ably handled funky, percussive strumming and picking patterns as heard in, for example, Talking Heads's

"Burning Down the House." Simple strumming and picking through the Squeeze gave a shimmering, controlled sound that remained both clean and balanced during heavier, percussive playing. The folks at Way Huge aren't joking when they recommend this setting for classic tones.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Saffron Squeeze can clamp down to give a warm, ultra-compressed quality to one's signal. Surprisingly, the Squeeze's recommended "Constrictor" setting allowed for very open, ringing, and thick chords, particularly those played farther up the neck. Here a little experiment with the Attack knob revealed the smoothness of this pedal. Less attack tended to require two or so seconds for the signal to rise in intensity from its compressed to its more "open" level. Cranking the Attack to the right quickened the attack, and lent the resulting signal

more of a shimmering quality that emphasized the high end.

The Saffron Squeeze felt built to last, and even its small Gain, Tone, and Attack knobs inspired the sort of confidence that lesser pedals often fail to provide. Way Huge added an extra convenience by mounting the battery door on the lower side wall of the pedal. As nice as this ease of access was, the plastic tab that locks the little door in place seemed a bit flimsy. This is a small concern, however, and one that owners of a dedicated power supply can ignore.

Although a compressor won't improve anyone's playing, it's a tool that, like a good spice, can distinguish one's playing from that of others. The Saffron Squeeze is just the sort of reasonably priced, high-quality effect that good sonic chefs ought to include on their pedal boards.

WHAT WE LIKE

Shimmering, controlled compression that tends not to dirty one's tone; pre-compression, input-level control helps to boost a quiet signal.

CONCERNS

The plastic battery compartment door, although well-placed, features a small tab that feels as if it will break too easily.

