



Aguilar Octamizer & TLC Compressor

AGUILAR OCTAMIZER

Street \$159

Pros A mean and meaty octaver offering superior control

Cons Battery wire detached during testing

AGUILAR TLC COMPRESSOR

Street \$199

Pros Flexible studio-style compression in stompbox form

Cons None

Made in U.S.A.

Warranty 3 years

Contact aguilaramp.com

TECH SPECS

Controls Octamizer: OCTAVE LEVEL, OCTAVE FILTER, CLEAN LEVEL, CLEAN TONE; TLC Compressor: LEVEL (∞ to -3dBu), ATTACK (10ms to 100ms), THRESHOLD (variable from -30 to -10dBu), SLOPE (variable from 2:1 to ∞)

Power 9V battery or DC with optional AC adapter

Size 5½" x 2⅝" x 2¼"

Weight 1lb, 2oz

BY BRIAN FOX

HAVING SPENT THE LAST 15 YEARS building a solid reputation for its bass heads and cabinets, Aguilar Amplification has begun to broaden its product line to include stompboxes. Aguilar's Octamizer and TLC Compressor are the latest addition to hit the streets, joining the company's outboard preamp/DI, the Tone Hammer.

Both the Octamizer and TLC Compressor utilize analog circuitry and are housed in identical steel boxes. Tight ¼" instrument and DC jack placement allows the two pedals be set side-by-side, but I found the jacks' close placement a bit irksome when using right-angle instrument and power cables on my pedalboard. Four rubber feet give each pedal solid traction, and included neoprene pads aid in pedalboard mounting. The heavy-duty switches had a smooth and solid foot-feel. For battery access, Aguilar opted for a sliding drawer. It's a slick system that's quick, sturdy (no flimsy

plastic covers), and doesn't require any tools. However, one of the Octamizer's short battery cables detached from the 9V connector pad during a battery swap, requiring me to use DC power.

OCTAMIZER

Had Aguilar's Octamizer been around for the roundup of octave pedals in our Special Effects issue (December '06), it could very well have blown the curve for the others. Simply put, this is one badass octave. The Octamizer utilizes two distinct level knobs—OCTAVE LEVEL and CLEAN LEVEL. On the CLEAN side, the TONE control utilizes a full-spectrum tilt EQ; twisting the knob clockwise boosted highs while simultaneously attenuating lows, and twisting it counter-clockwise bumped up the bass response and cut the highs. I appreciated the ability to have a crisp, clean signal with a deep octave effect. On the OCTAVE side, the FILTER knob controls the low-pass filter's

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cutoff point. Rolling it back gave the effect a dark, throbbing character, while turning it up—and raising the filter’s cutoff frequency—yielded a more aggressive, throaty midrange bump. Like any analog octave pedal, the Octamizer is monophonic, and falters when served chords and double-stops. But when served cleanly articulate

notes, the Octamizer’s tracking was spot-on, with no latency and minimal stutter.

TLC COMPRESSOR

Like your body’s appendix, compression can be a puzzling thing: you may be better off with it, you can get by just fine without it, and if you’re not careful, it just might kill



It can be a tight fit, but the pedals’ jacks accommodate both straight and right-angle plugs.



The Octamizer and TLC Compressor utilize a slick sliding drawer for easy battery access.

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you (or at least your tone). Most bassists who have spent time in a studio understand the benefits of compression: by boosting a signal when it dips below a certain dynamic level and attenuating it when it eclipses a specified peak, a compressor helps smooth out the dynamic inconsistencies that can make a bass sound uneven and amateurish. Live, compressors can be especially effective in balancing slap-and-pop dynamics, and can be crucial components in signal chains subject to volume spikes (from over-the-top fuzz pedals, for example). Of course, there's a bit of danger involved: at extreme settings, a compressor can squash dynamics in an artificial-sounding, non-musical way. Aguilar president Dave Boonshoft, an accomplished player in his own right, certainly understand the benefits and risks involved. Modeling the TLC Compressor on some of the outrageously expensive compressors he's used on sessions, Dave is now attempting to bring it to the people in a compact, versatile, and affordable package.

While some stompbox compressors are short on functionality, offering minimal control of level and sensitivity, the TLC is considerably more involved. In addition to its LEVEL control, the TLC offers control over ATTACK time (the speed at which compression kicks in), THRESHOLD (the dynamic point at which compression engages), and SLOPE (the ratio or degree of compression). It all amounts to a stompbox that you can use on stage or in the studio to better control your dynamic character. I loved how the TLC evened out my sometimes erratic pickstyle dynamics, and how it imparted sweet-sounding sustain to plucked notes. For my own style, I find its best to set compression such that I'm just barely able to know when it's engaging. With the TLC, finding that optimal setting was a cinch.

With killer functionality, slick design, and sick sounds, this pair of pedals from Aguilar certainly measures up the high standard the company has set with its amps and cabs. If you're looking to smooth your sound with compression, fuel your funk with sub-octave effects, or pimp your pedalboard with the pair, by all means check out the TLC Compressor and Octamizer. **BP**