

Fenix Red

N·Ai

MANUAL



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ABOUT ME

AlexB is a one-man company, so:

Hi ! I'm Alex :)

I have been a member of the Acustica Audio community since the 2007, and started Beta-Testing in 2009. I released my first commercial program libraries for Nebula Pro in 2009 because I wasn't satisfied by the sound of the plugins.

What I looked for was a good emulation of the console to improve my music - I have composed a lot of songs for Café del Mar in that years. My first Café del Mar recording was done with a Korg CR-4 only, then the following years I have moved to PC world and Nebula has been found as the plugin of my dreams.

Sincerely at the first test I wasn't satisfied at all by the sound. The libraries was very poorly sampled and the plugin was a little cloudy and flat.

After being in touch with Giancarlo (the genius behind Acustica Audio) and to have said him about my thoughts about what to improve in Nebula, he has promptly given me a new improved release of the plugin. We have continued for the whole afternoon and after some exchanges of test and new releases, finally Nebula became dynamic, open, deep and with life. Thank you Giancarlo !

So, pushed by this experience I've made some of the most highly sought after and rare hardware devices available for use in the digital world while maintaining virtually all of the analog character that makes recording a true art-form. Every sampled hardware piece has been refurbished and modified to improve the sonic characteristics, thanks to my 30+ years of experience in electronics and audio engineering. With hyper-realistic samplings of pristine mastering equalizers, top class consoles, the most sought after compressors, and the rarest vintage devices, I'm proving to the audio community that Acustica Audio sets the standard for the finest sound quality in the digital realm by facilitating a true analog experience with programs that make full use of the VVKT technology.

Please visit the website for more information: www.alex.b.eu

Thank you !

AlexB... Audio Renaissance.

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Please do not illegally share the program libraries, your financial support allow me to continue in developing. **Be aware: there isn't any authorized reseller of my programs.**

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Thank you

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1. Documentation, Installation and Support

1.1 - Introduction

Thank you for purchasing the AlexB library programs for Nebula.

Now you have one of the best professional high quality audio software. I have spent countless hours to develop these no-compromise programs to give you only the best sound and the most realistic “feel” as possible to the real hardware. I'm confident that this plugin will help you make better and more professional mixes (while enjoying yourself even more)... Because: Sound First !

If you have any trouble with the software please do not hesitate to contact me at:

support@alexb.eu

1.2 - Overview

Despite the digital revolution in the pro audio industry, many of today's top albums are still mixed on analog consoles and with analog outboard gear. Mixing into an analog desk just sounds better. Everything sits better in the mix, there is more weight to the bottom, and the overall sound is more three dimensional.

Analog devices produce electrical artifacts that affect frequency response, add harmonics, cause signal clipping and increase noise. These artifacts, which audio engineers often consider the character of a particular device, result from a combination of factors such as component grade, technology type (i.e. vacuum tubes, ICs, transistors), power supply specifications, equipment casing and other variables.

Depending on the circuit characteristics, input signal frequency response varies. Some circuits cut frequencies, others boost them. This behaviour is part of the overall device character and should not be confused with user adjustable EQ.

Total harmonic distortion (THD) is based on the levels of the odd and even harmonics of an input signal, usually at a level much lower than the fundamental level. THD balance and decay are circuit dependent, and thus differ from device to device.

Cross-Talk and Noise are two elements which every designer tends to avoid to not affect the audio quality. Since in the analog world they can't be avoided, fortunately in digital domain with Volterra Technology I have reduced the noise at less of -120dBfs and completely avoided Cross-Talk during the sampling.

The result is an optimum full quality sound from a like-new working condition hardware.

I have recreated these non linearity characteristics into these programs by sampling the units in excellent condition. Your tracks will become more alive with the classic vibe of a real hardware and you may notice that your mixes may take on an almost magical quality with punch, glue, and dimension that you didn't hear with your other algorithmically based plugins.

1.3 - Sampling Process

I believe that "Vectorial Volterra Kernels Technology" is the path of the future and will enable analog sound to be implanted into digital DAW environments with real harmonic content and analog vibe. In my creation of these Nebula Programs, I use only top notch modern and vintage gear, precisely sampled by using my own proprietary technique with custom converters I have built specifically for NAT3 which outperforms top notch commercial converters. Ultra filtered and stable AC supply, high end cables, with particular care to the connections, levels and impedance matching were used to translate the sonic qualities of this priceless devices into the Nebula software technology. Every captured sample is analyzed and carefully listened. Every volume change, gain change, frequency change is tested and accurately programmed without destructive digital processing for optimized sound and then compared to the original device. The result is a virtually indistinguishable digital replication of this landmark device.

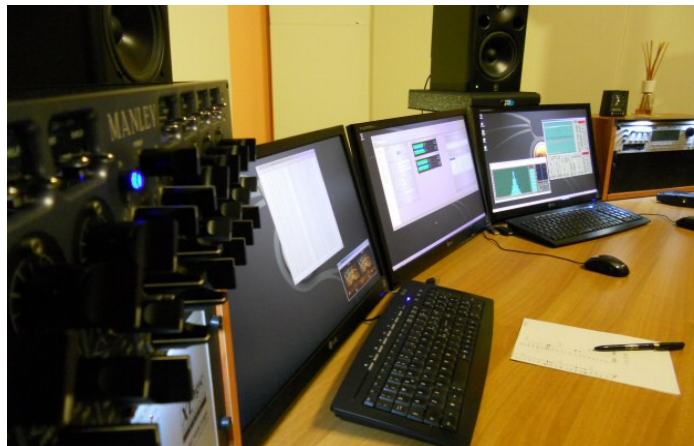
The hardware is sampled without introduction of noise or aliasing. The thinking behind this process is to provide the full quality of the analog behavior, which means placing all emphasis on quality over cpu resources. The process is extremely efficient and optimized to be used on current computer technology with a forward thinking to the future of more powerful systems, but this will be a more cpu-intensive device than your typical software. Consider the value in having even one instance of the original unit in your hardware rack and choose to see the true value in having the best sound that technology has to offer.

The preset doesn't sound processed, harsh or digital as many plugins do, but instead it sounds like a natural extension of the original audio, gluing your tracks in the mix with an analog vibe.

Some plugins make your recordings sound like digital.

Some plugins are supposed to make your recordings sound like analog.

THIS plugin helps make recordings sound like MUSIC !



1.4 - N·Ai

N·Ai (Neural Adaptive Intelligence) represents the latest evolution in sampling and programming. It utilizes a custom-built, proprietary AI-driven converter designed exclusively for high-definition hardware sampling.

Through machine learning, N·Ai listens to and adapts to the source in real time, preserving its integrity during the critical sampling phase.

Drawing on my 15+ years of experience as a chief technician in electronics and telecommunications – where they used to call me “the doctor” (WHO?!) – I had access to advanced technology and the technical expertise necessary to develop a new sampling and programming method, complete with a custom template and build-up process.

1.5 - System Requirements

- Intel or AMD CPU based PC or MAC computer
- Free space on Hard Disk or better SSD (library size depending)
- Nebula3 v1.3.903 or Nebula4 with installed commercial license
- HD or SSD for Programs Backup

1.6 - Installation and file BACKUP

After downloading, unpack the files and **make a safe backup** of the library. I recommend to use a Toshiba Canvio 2.5" HD as well to do a regular backup of your system with Acronis True Image.

Copy the files manually, *.N2P into \programs folder and *.N2V into \vectors folder.

Clean the \temp folder in the main root nebulatemprepository.

1.7 - Nebula 4 installation

Skins for Nebula3 and Nebula4 have a cost but they are included in the libraries as **gift**.

The skins are developed to work together with my programs. The use of other unauthorized skins will result in the unavailability of technical support.

Copy the contents of the programs, properties, setups, skins and vectors folders into their respective folders in the main root nebulatemprepository.

Clean the \temp folder in the main root nebulatemprepository.

Run Nebula4 with the original XML configuration and click on “Setups”.

Select the programs you want to create and right click on it to choose between “Rebuild VST2 setups” or “Rebuild VST3 setups” or “Rebuild AAX setups”.

Rescan plugins in your DAW and you are ready to use them.

NOTE: do not change/add/remove anything parameter in the setup.

If you load the preset into Nebula 4 instead of using the setups, you must adjust some parameters in the Settings–Expert page, applying the values listed in the Setups–Tweaks section.

1.8 - Nebula 3 installation

Copy the files manually, *.N2P into \programs folder and *.N2V into \vectors folder.
Clean the \temp folder in the main root nebulatemprepository.

To install the skin

- 1 - copy the *.N2S file into the root skin folder
- 2 - run your DAW and open Nebula
- 3 - go into MAST Page
- 4 - set the Skin to ALEXB_N3
- 5 - click on save and reload Nebula

After installation it's recommended to clean the \nebulatemprepository\temp folder.

2. General Use

2.1 - Parameter Settings

Some parameters must be set into Nebula to work correctly with AlexB Programs.

Nebula3

The best way is to make copy-and-paste of Nebula3.dll and Nebula3.xml (or whatever is the name of your installed Nebula plugin has) then rename both copies as AlexB-N3.dll and AlexB-N3.xml.

Now set the following parameters by editing the AlexB-N3.xml file:

```
<AHEADLENGTH> 6000 </AHEADLENGTH>
<RATECONVERSION> 4500000 </RATECONVERSION>
<OFREQD> 11 </OFREQD>
<SKINNAME> ALEXB_N3.N2S </SKINNAME>
<DSPBUFFER> 8192 </DSPBUFFER> (optional for better audio quality)
```

click on save and load the AlexB-N3 in your DAW.

Nebula4

Nebula4 doesn't require any special manual settings as they are already configured in the setups.

2.2 - Off Line Process

If your DAW isn't powerful or you want/need to freeze or export processed audio tracks I strongly recommend the Free NEBULASETUP2 by Zabukowski: <http://zabukowski.com/software/>

2.3 - Gain Staging

GUI's meters show the value in dBfs.

Take care with gain staging since the programs are close to the hardware, as reference 0dBVU on the hardware corresponds to -18dBFS on your DAW digital meter.

Normally the best sound is achieved with occasional maximum digital peaks to -10dBfs, i.e. kick or snare transients, pluck synth and other hits. On the mixbus the whole mix can hit an occasional maximum digital peaks between -8dBfs and -6dBfs. (imperative!)

When the signal is too high the sound will be congested and saturated/distorted in a bad way, too high peaks (and inter-sample peaks) overload Nebula which plays a BLIP as alert.

I recommend to mix with a good and precise VU Meter like this by Waves:

www.waves.com/plugins/vu-meter



It mimics the way our ears react to sound by giving you a more realistic representation of the way audio level changes are actually perceived.

In this way you can easily check the levels on every single track and for the whole mix by inserting the VUMeter as last instance on the mixbus and by setting the 0dBVU = -18dBfs on it (Headroom).

I suggest to deactivate or remove the VU Plugin when you export the mix to avoid any coloration. Yes, some plugins color the sound even if they are analyzers and/or bypassed.

NOTE: *a console, limiter, equalizer, tape machine or compressor is not a guitar amp! If you drop the level back to where it would be using the real hardware, libraries can sound huge.*

Useful video about to use the VU Meter and Gain Staging:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DVz_T48M-Q

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECRx4WF3pcc

Great book about audio recording engineering:

<https://bobbyowsinski.com/recording-engineers-handbook/>

Another great book about music production with my contribution about console:

www.routledge.com/Producing-Music-1st-Edition/Hepworth-Sawyer-Hodgson-Marrington/p/book/9780415789226

2.4 - Common Controls

All programs have some common controls which are detailed below.

Input Gain

The Input Gain control sets the level at the input of the plugin.

The range is from $-\infty$ dB to +6 dB.

Output Gain

The Output Gain control sets the level at the output of the plugin.

The range is from $-\infty$ dB to +6 dB.

Bypass

This switch control sets the plugin operative or bypassed

Meters

Input and Output Meters display the levels at the input and output of the plugin in dBfs.

Compressors and Expander/Gate have a gain reduction meter also.

NOTE: clicking on the controls while pressing "ctrl" on computer keyboard, the control returns to zero.

3. Fenix Red – N·Ai

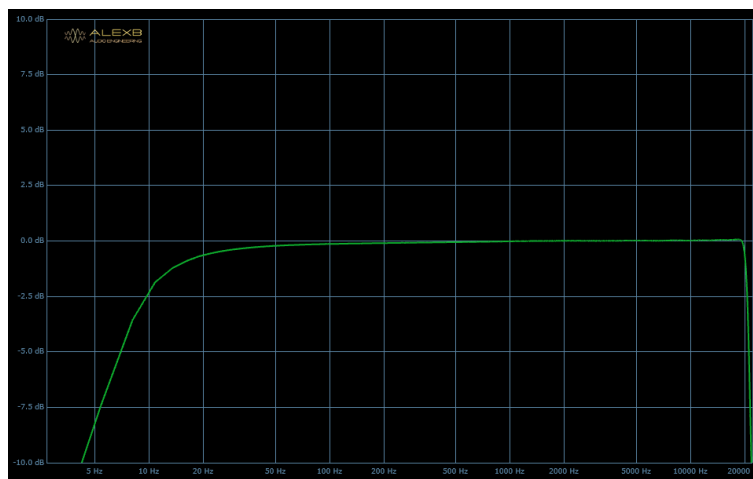
3.1 - About the original hardware

Anyone who has ever wanted the ultimate tube compressor, capable of bringing a vocal forward, adding a touch of air, controlling dynamics, and adding size and dimension to the audio without making it cloudy, can now realize their wildest dreams.

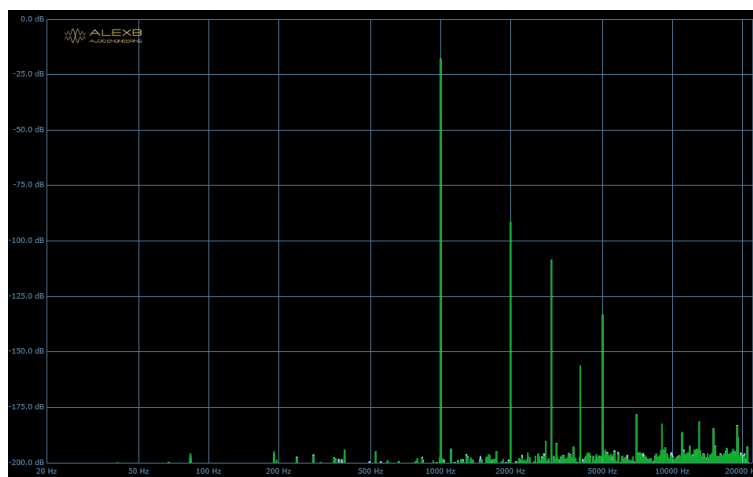
This all-valve signal path and side-chain Vari-Mu compressor embodies everything that is good and right about premium compression.

The compressor has been sampled in two distinct configurations. The first captures the character of original genuine Mullard tubes, offering exceptional transparency, detail, and harmonic richness. The second configuration follows a complete refurbishment and precise recalibration using new, hand-selected NOS Siemens & Halske premium tubes, providing a warmer, smoother response with an enhanced sense of cohesion and musical flow.

Sampled using N·Ai proprietary technology to avoid unwanted coloration and preserve the original three-dimensional depth, warmth, and sense of life.



FNX Red-NAi frequency response (@ 0dBVU)



FNX Red-NAi THD (@ 0dBVU)

3.2 - Session Setup

Fenix Red reproduces the characteristic sound of a British tube mastering compressor, a type of processor commonly used in high-end music production. To accurately recreate this analog behavior within a DAW, we recommend using the FNXRED-NAi program whenever precise dynamic control is required.



To emulate the original unit sound you should use the presets in this way: Insert the Comp preset followed by the Line Out preset. Both presets interact together to give the same behavior, harmonic content and overall sound as the original sampled unit.

External SideChain

The Sc program is useful to control the dynamic module of the Compressor and Limiter via external side-chain for ducking, pumping or other effect.

To use side-chaining correctly please refer at the manual of your DAW.
This function works on Nebula4 VST3 only.

Meters

Nebula is known for certain limitations in its metering. In these programs, the meters have been carefully programmed to mimic the behavior of the sampled hardware, which features a smooth and slow response (GR Meter).

ByPass

Click on the AlexB logo to toggle the bypass on and off.



TRICK: Knob fine-tuning is possible with the use of the mouse wheel.
Ultra-fine tuning can be achieved by holding Shift + mouse wheel.
The mouse wheel also works for quickly switching of the release control.

Mastering Tip

Ideally, Fenix Red should be used as the last processor in the signal chain, placed just before the brickwall limiter.

To add weight and dimension, and to achieve a more cohesive sound while increasing perceived loudness, try the following settings: set Attack to 6, Release to 4, and HPF to 70Hz.

Then adjust the Threshold so that the gain reduction meter moves smoothly around -1 dB, with a maximum of -2 dB.

Compensate the level by increasing the Makeup Gain, and finally adjust the Tube control to taste.

NOTE: Use only the presets you need. Stacking unnecessary presets is the wrong way to emulate the sampled hardware.

Also, don't oversample the program to avoid audio quality loss.

Remember: every digital processing introduces quantization errors/noise, which degrade the sound. A smart use of digital processing keeps the sound alive

There's lots of magical thinking about digital audio. The only time there isn't any degradation is a file copy. Everything else measurably degrades the audio. So does all analog signal processing only more so. It's always a question of "Is the enhancement from the signal processing worth the degradation?" Too many people only listen for the former while not paying attention to the latter.

There are plenty of "you can't hear it" excuses offered but the truth is that sometimes you can and others you can't depending on the program material. It's also unique to each listener.

(qtd. Bob Olhsson)

3.3 - Program list:

Nebula4 setups:

A5D Comp/Limit
A5D Comp/Limit Line Out

Nebula 3:

The FNX Red-NAi library include the following programs displayed into menu “FNX”.

Fenix Red Compressor
Fenix Red Compressor Line Out

Fenix Red Compressor

Compressor with six fixed attacks, seven fixed releases, threshold, HPF, gain makeup, wet/dry controls and side-chain switch.

ATTACK: Attack Control

The “ATTACK” control sets the amount of time it takes for processing to cease once the input signal drops below the threshold level.

The switchable values are from 4ms to 120ms.

RELEASE: Release Control

The “RELEASE” control sets the amount of time it takes for processing to cease once the input signal drops below the threshold level.

The switchable values are from 40ms to 2.2s.

Note: Attack and release controls are somewhat interdependent, therefore no precise times are printed on the front panel to avoid possible confusion.

THRESHOLD: Threshold Control

The “THRESHOLD” control defines the input level at which limiting or compression begins. Signals that exceed this level are processed. Signals below the threshold are unaffected.

HPF: High Pass Filter Control

The “HPF” control sets the cut-off point of a high-pass filter on the internal sidechain.

The range is variable from 0Hz to 300Hz.

MAKEUP: Gain Makeup Control

The “MAKEUP” control sets the output level of gain makeup.

The range is variable from 0dB to 18dB.

MIX: Dry/Wet Control

This control lets you balance between processed (Wet) and original signal (Dry) allowing you to do parallel compression without routing to buses/aux.

The range is variable from 0% (Dry) to 100% (Wet).

Fenix Red Compressor Line Out

Line Out stage with TUBE and NLD controls.

TUBE: Tube selection/blend Control

This control continuously blends between the two output-stage tubes.

Turning the control fully counter-clockwise selects the stock Mullard tube.

Turning the control fully clockwise routes the signal entirely through the NOS Siemens tube.

Intermediate settings provide a smooth blend of both tubes, allowing fine adjustment of harmonic character and response.

Trick: the 50/50 setting may be of particular interest, as it can introduce a subtle high-frequency roll-off and an enhanced sense of depth and spatiality.

NLD:

(Non-Linear Drive) controls how much the input signal drives the system into its non-linear region, adding harmonic content. This trimmer acts like an add-on to the original circuit, so trust your ears when adjusting it. Its range is ± 24 dB.

NOTE:

NLD → genuinely drives the model into non-linear behavior (hardware-like)

THD → simply scales pre-existing harmonics without changing the model's behavior

TRICK:

The easiest and most effective way to use the stepped control is by using the mouse wheel.

END