



Meet Chris Lord-Alge

For almost thirty years, Chris Lord-Alge has energized the sound of popular music. His hard-hitting mixes have transformed the radio soundscape, and introduced a new sonic vocabulary along the way. CLA's massive hardware arsenal includes racks and racks of the most coveted compression units in music history. CLA Classic Compressors are models of his hand-picked favorites—the very best of the best.

Modeling the Magic

Connoisseurs of vintage recording equipment know that no two units of the same make and model sound exactly alike. Tubes, transistors, capacitors, and other components work together to give each piece its own unique personality. So when Waves decided to model these popular hardware compressors, we turned to Chris Lord-Alge.

Widely known among audio pros and listeners alike for his punchy sound and extreme compression techniques, Chris gave us exclusive access to model his most prized processors, and worked closely with Waves through every phase of development. Together with many of his personal presets, these precision models deliver the distinctive sound of CLA's favorite classic compressors.

All product names and trademarks are the property of their respective owners, which are in no way associated or affiliated with Waves.



For over 20 years, Grammy®-winner Chris Lord-Alge has been the mixing engineer of choice for pop and rock royalty.

Green Day | U2 | Dave Matthews Band | Daughtry | Pink | Leona Lewis | Avril Lavigne | My Chemical Romance | All American Rejects | Nickelback | Rob Thomas | Snow Patrol | Ray LaMontagne | Miley Cyrus | The Jonas Bros. | Tim McGraw | Faith Hill | Tina Turner | Rod Stewart | Celine Dion | Santana | Steve Winwood | James Brown

After wrapping up the mixes for the latest Green Day release, Chris took some time out to speak with Waves and share some exclusive free presets for the SSL E-Channel.

How do you prepare for a new mix?

The most important thing I do is approach it as a first-time listener, and find out what in the song makes it exciting or emotional.

What do you focus on the first time you hear a song?

I really look for the pulse, the groove, what glues it together, what makes me tap my foot, or be pulled into the story.

Do you envision a final mix on first hearings?

I can see the finish line as soon as I put the car in drive.

What makes a great song for you?

A great vocal performance with a band that complements it. And a great recording to bring it home.

What makes a great album?

Not a simple question, but a great album is hard work, great songwriting, and quality engineering combined with stellar production, creating a vision that flows like a musical river.

What records changed your life?

Genesis *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway & A Trick of the Tail*
Led Zeppelin *4*
Frampton *Comes Alive*
The Who *Quadrophenia*
Def Leppard *Hysteria*
Deep Purple *Machine Head*
Pink Floyd *Wish You Were Here*
Chic *Good Times*

Analog and digital—in what ways do you like to combine them?

Every track goes through an analog device.

- The tracks come as Pro Tools Sessions (D)
 - We compile the audio tracks and add whatever effects we want (Eq, Compression, it's wide open!!)
 - then we transfer to 3348 (D)
 - I mix through an SSL 72 G+ (A)
 - I use a lot of outboard gear tube and solid state (A)
 - Mixdown is both (A) & (D), even ¼" @ 7½ ips
-

You've mixed everything from the hardest rock to R&B and pop. Do you have a different approach for different genres?

The song really dictates the approach to the mix. And I love having the variety; one listen tells me what's on the menu:

Hard Rock for Breakfast
Pop for Lunch
Disco for Dinner
Ballads for Dessert

You may have to dig deeper in the spice rack!

How long does it take to mix a track?

It can take 1 to 5 hours. It all depends on making the pieces fit. And when it moves me, it's done.

Do you know a song is a hit while you're mixing it?

A simple "Yes" would sound egotistical, but at this point, I think some of them pick me and I help them on their way.

Hits tend to be like flypaper; they really know how to stick to you.

Do you have the freedom to get adventurous with tracks while you're mixing? How far will you take it from the original rough mixes?

I feel that people want me to do whatever it takes to make the song great, and it may take some real crafting to get it there. I always use the rough mix as a road map, knowing that everyone has been used to hearing that version. Then I do my best to kick its ass for the song's sake!

When you are mid-mix, is the band or the producer with you? How much do you collaborate along the way?

I usually only play the mix for the band and producer when I have it where I want it. Then we get everyone's input and make their changes before printing.

Your records sound great on every kind of system. What's your secret?

Thank you, I try! I think the secret is to listen really quietly on small speakers and to focus on the music and not be distracted. Many of my mixes are done through my old Sony boombox.

If you were to compare mixing to other art forms, which would they be?

I would say that what I do is really more artistic than technical...more like a chef, because I bring my personal taste in sound.