Make room for character

Multiband saturation and distortion / User manual

Sear lets you drive different parts of a sound independently. Start with 1 full-range band, or split the spectrum into as many as 5 bands. Each band has its own Flavor and Drive, with Solo and Bypass for focused comparisons.



Your first sound

Insert Sear on a mono or stereo audio track. A new instance starts with 1 full-range Tape band and Drive at 0%. Play your source, then raise Drive until the change works for the part.

Try another Flavor. Use Output to match the level you hear with Bypass engaged, then lower Mix if you want less of the driven sound. Keep the comparison at a similar volume so louder doesn't win by default.

Shape the bands

Select a band before changing its sound

Add and select

Double-click inside the band strip to add a crossover at that point. You can have up to 5 bands. Click a band to select it. The highlighted band is the one controlled by the Flavor menu and Drive knob.

Move and remove

Drag a vertical boundary to move the crossover. Crossover positions run from 40 Hz to 16 kHz. The outer bands still cover the low and high ends of the audio spectrum.

Double-click a boundary to remove the band on its right. At least 1 band always remains. Dragging boundaries together, or toward an outer edge, can also collapse a band. Check which band is selected after changing the layout.

S / solo

Click S to hear a band in isolation. You can solo more than 1 band. Click the active S buttons again to return to the full spectrum. Solo affects what reaches the output, so clear it before judging the whole sound.

B / band bypass

Click B to bypass distortion for that band while keeping it in the crossover path. This is useful for leaving lows clean while driving the mids, or for comparing 1 band without changing the rest.

Remembered settings

Sear saves the band layout and each band's settings with the plug-in state in your DAW. Removed bands can retain settings internally. After adding or reopening a band, check its Flavor, Drive, Solo and Bypass rather than assuming it starts fresh.

Dial in the sound

Band controls and global controls

Flavor and Drive

Flavor selects the character for the highlighted band: Tape, Warm, Thick, Glow, Grit, Scorch, Fuzz, Fold or Obliterate. Use the menu or its arrow buttons to move between them. Try flavors on the same source at matched output levels; they respond differently to level and material.

Drive runs from 0-100% for the selected band. At 0%, that band has no driven change. Turn it up to increase saturation or distortion. Double-click Drive to reset it to 0%. You can also edit the value below the knob.

Mix and Output

Mix is global. At 100%, you hear the processed result. Turn it down to blend toward the clean signal through the same band path. Double-click Mix to reset it to 100%. Solo remains active at any Mix setting.

Output is a global level trim from -36 dB to +12 dB. Use it to match the processed level with the bypassed level. Double-click Output to reset it to 0 dB. Output trim applies to the active processed path, not global bypass.

Global Bypass

Bypass removes the distortion while retaining the crossover phase response. It's a level and character comparison, not an assurance that the signal will null against an unprocessed parallel track. Use your DAW's normal delay compensation when mixing parallel paths.

Presets

The preset menu contains 10 starting points, from Init through stronger split-band recipes. A preset recalls the complete layout and sound, including global controls. The arrows move between presets. An asterisk means you've changed the recalled settings; choosing that preset again resets it. Save your own variations through your DAW's plug-in preset system.

Install and keep working

Audio Unit and VST3 / Version 1.0.1

macOS

Use the Mac installer on Intel or Apple Silicon Macs running macOS 12 or later. It includes universal Audio Unit and VST3 plugins. Quit your DAW, run the .pkg, then reopen your DAW. Logic Pro uses Audio Unit. Find Sear under Cuekeeping.

Audio Unit installs at /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components/Sear.component. VST3 installs at /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3/Sear.vst3. Both are available to all users.

Windows

Use the x64 installer for an x64 DAW on an Intel or AMD Windows PC. Use the ARM64 installer on Windows 11 on Arm. The ARM installer includes native ARM64 and ARM64EC variants; your VST3 host selects the compatible variant. An x64 host running under emulation may require the x64 installer.

Quit your DAW, run the installer, then rescan VST3 plug-ins. Sear installs in the common 64-bit VST3 folder. These Windows installers are unsigned, so Windows may show an unrecognized publisher notice. Only install a copy obtained from Cuekeeping.

Sessions, updates and removal

Save your DAW project to preserve Sear's state and automation. Version 1.0.1 does not support state or automation from the private Drive/Sear previews. Print audio you need from old preview sessions before replacing them. Don't expect a preview instance to reopen with the same sound.

On Windows, use the Sear uninstaller in Installed apps. On macOS, quit the DAW and move Sear.vst3 and Sear.component from their system plugin folders to Trash, then rescan. Removing the plug-in doesn't remove your DAW projects.

If Sear is missing, check that your DAW supports the installed format and architecture, then rescan. For help, include your OS, DAW version, Sear version and the steps that reproduce the issue.

Activate Sear

Your Sear trial and license are independent of Pulse Maker

Start your trial

Open Sear in your DAW and click Activate / trial at the bottom left. Enter your email address, then click Send activation code. Enter the 8-digit code from your email and click Activate plugin. Codes expire after 10 minutes. Stop playback after activation to apply access.

Your fully functional 14-day Sear trial starts at first verified activation. No card is required, and marketing email is optional. Sear passes the original audio through until activation. When the trial ends, processing stops at a safe playback boundary; it won't interrupt ongoing playback or an offline render.

Own Sear already?

Use the email address from your Sear purchase. Buying Sear upgrades the same installation without changing your sound or DAW project. Click Refresh license after purchasing, or activate again with your purchase email. Permanent access is specific to Sear.

Separate products, 1 account

Sear and Pulse Maker work independently. Each has its own trial, purchase and local license file. Starting a Pulse Maker trial doesn't consume your Sear trial, and owning either product doesn't unlock the other. Your Cuekeeping account can hold both.

Computers and offline use

Your license supports 2 activated computers. Manage installations and downloads at account.cuekeeping.com/account. Deactivate a computer you no longer use before activating another. A purchased license works offline on its activated computer; a trial keeps its original expiration date.

If a code is missing or expired, check spam and request a new code. Use the same purchase email for account access. For help, contact support@cuekeeping.com with your OS, DAW and Sear version.