



smart:chain
Connected mixing. Everything in sync.

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smart:chain is an intelligent channel strip that combines smart processing with session-wide control. It brings together EQ, compression, gating, Input Rider, de-essing/de-harshing, Saturation, clipping and automatic level balancing in one connected workflow.

Instead of configuring each processor independently, smart:chain observes a source once and uses that shared understanding to derive a coordinated starting point for the chain. Every processing stage remains visible and editable: smart:chain accelerates setup without taking away creative control.

From individual tracks to a coherent mix

Multiple smart:chain instances communicate across a project. You can organize tracks into user-defined groups, open any participating instance from one window and create a genre-aware rough balance with Auto Levelling.

- One shared learning pass informs the intelligent processing chain.
- Perceptual Front / Middle / Back placement supports depth and separation in groups.
- Remotely controllable instances make large sessions easier to navigate and edit.
- Auto Levelling creates an editable starting balance to jump-start your mixing workflow.
- All important parameters remain available for manual refinement.

System requirements

CPU

Intel Core i5
AppleM1
RAM
4GB

Operating systems

Windows 10+ (64 bit)
Mac OS 11+

OpenGL Version 3.2+



You will need admin privileges to successfully install the smart:chain plug-in.

Mac OSX

To start the installation process, please open the disk image **sonible_smartchain_osx_x.x.x.dmg**. This will mount the image and open a finder window showing the content of the installation package.

To install smart:chain on your system, run the installation file **smartchain.pkg**.

The installer will now guide you through the necessary steps to install smart:chain on your computer. smart:chain will automatically be installed in the default locations for audio plug-ins.

Default folders:

Audio Unit

/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components/

VST

/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST/

VST3

/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3/

AAX

/Library/Application Support/Avid/Audio/Plug-Ins/

Windows

To start the installation process, extract the downloaded zip-file **sonible_smartchain_win_x.x.x.zip** onto your hard disk and run the installer.

The installer will now guide you through the necessary steps to install smart:chain on your computer. smart:chain will automatically be installed in the default locations for audio plug-ins.

Default folders:

VST3

C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3\

VST

C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST\

AAX

C:\Program Files\Common Files\Avid\Audio\Plug-Ins

Licensing system

You can select between two licensing systems: machine-based or iLok (USB dongle).

By creating a user account on www.sonible.com and registering your products – if they are not already visible in your Dashboard – you can manage your plug-in activations.

Machine-based

Each license key allows you to install smart:chain on two computers with unique system IDs. These system IDs are computed during license activation.

The same license can be used by multiple users, but each user has to individually unlock the full version of smart:chain under their account.

In case a system-ID is changed (e.g. replacement of the hard drive), you can revoke/activate the plug-in next to the respective system-ID in the Dashboard of your sonible user account.

iLok

If you want to transfer one activation to your iLok, just make sure the plug-in is registered in your sonible user account. Click on the button „transfer to iLok“ next to the plug-in in your Dashboard and follow the instructions.

Note: 1st gen iLok dongles are currently not supported.

Unlocking

If you purchased a license for smart:chain online, you receive your license key via email.

Machine-based unlocking

When opening smart:chain for the first time, a notification window will be displayed asking you to unlock smart:chain with a valid license key.

Please make sure that your computer is connected to the internet before starting the registration process.

Enter your license key and click „register.“ The plug-in will now communicate with our server to check if the license is valid. If it is – enjoy! :)

iLok

If you transferred your license to an iLok, simply attach the iLok to your computer or start a iLok cloud session. The plug-in will then be automatically registered – enjoy!

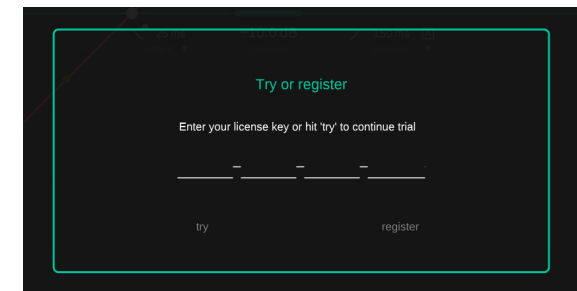
If you don't receive the email within minutes please check your junk folder first before contacting our support (support@sonible.com).

Trial version

To run smart:chain in demo-mode, simply click "try" and you will then be able to use smart:chain for a couple of days without any limitations. (Please refer to our website to find out more about the current demo period of smart:chain). When the demo period expires, you will need to purchase a full license in order to continue using the plug-in.

Internet connection requirements

sonible plug-ins only need an internet connection during the trial period and for initial license activation. During the trial period, the plug-in needs to go online every time it is used. Once the license of your plug-in has successfully been activated, an internet connection is no longer needed.



My Licenses

[Register license key](#)
[Need help?](#)

Product	License Key	Type	Description	Status	Date	Action
smart:chain Download	XXXX-XXXX-XXXX-XXXX	PC	XXXXXX	active	2000-00-00	revoke
				not activated		transfer to iLok

smart:chain brings per-track processing and project-wide control into a single window. The currently selected instance is edited in the main view; group tabs provide access to all smart:chain instances of a project.

Auto Leveling

Auto Leveling creates a genre-aware level balance across all learned instances. Mix, Group and Output Trims allow you to refine the generated balance.

Instance Panel and Instance Boxes

The Instance Panel shows all instances in the selected group. When part of a group, instances can be arranged in Front, Middle and Back layers to define their relative position in the mix. Select an instance box to remotely access and edit that instance.

Learning Section

Select a source profile and start the learning process. smart:chain analyzes the source and derives suitable settings for the complete processing chain.

Group tabs

Group tabs provide quick access to all user-defined groups and ungrouped instances. When Auto Leveling is active, each group tab also provides a Group Trim.



Main processing modules

Seven interconnected processing modules give you the essential tools to shape your track.

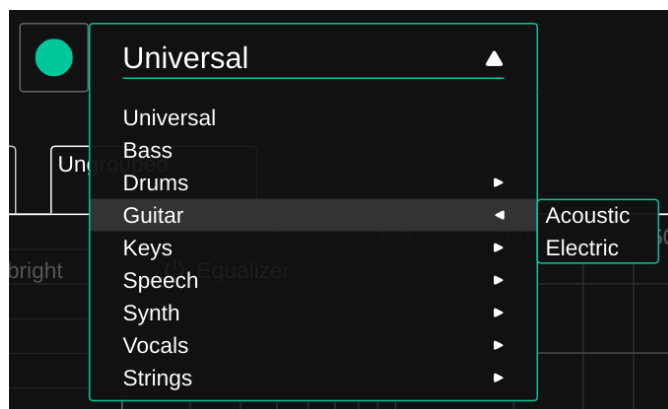
Output Section

The Output Section contains input and output metering, final peak control and the level control for the selected instance. Depending on whether Auto Levelling is active, the level control operates as Output Gain or Output Trim.

The following workflow takes you from the first plug-in instance to a connected mix. Begin with one source to become familiar with learning and the processing chain, then extend the same process across the relevant tracks in your project.

1. Insert the plug-in

Insert smart:chain on an individual source track. For session-wide features, insert one instance on every track you want to include.



2. Choose a profile

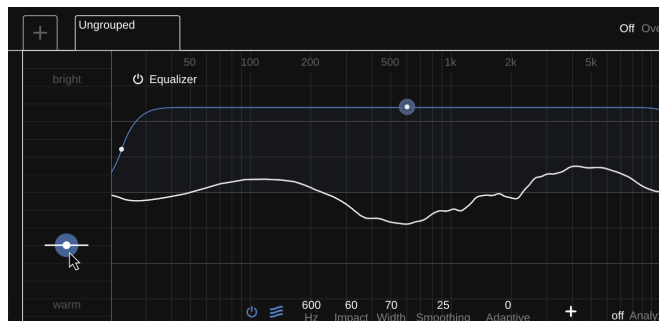
Choose the profile that best matches the source. Use Universal when no specific profile is suitable.

3. Learn

Play a representative section and click the Learn button. Include typical level, tone and articulation; avoid silence-only passages.

4. Check result and adjust character

When learning finishes, audition the derived chain and adjust the Warm/Bright and Dynamic/Dense character sliders.



5. Fine-tune the result

Enable, disable or refine the supporting modules as needed.

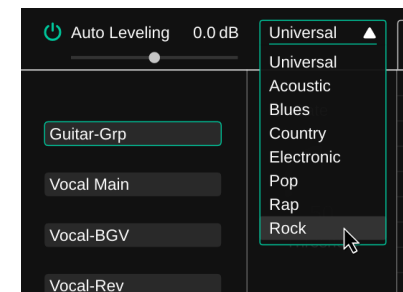
6. Create further instances

Insert smart:chain on other tracks and set them up.



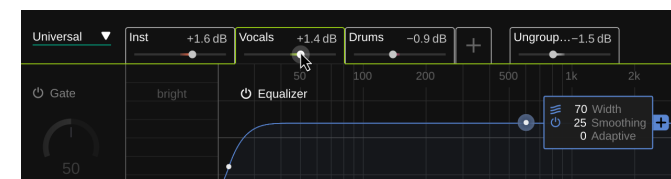
7. Use Auto Leveling

Enable Auto Levelling and select a genre for a meaningful rough mix.



8. Create groups

Create groups to organize related sources and arrange group members on the Front, Middle and Back layers.



9. Fine-tune Auto Leveling

Fine-tune the levelling result with Mix Trim, Group Trim and each track's Output Trim.

NOTE: Two learned instances unlock Auto Levelling, but a useful project-wide balance requires all relevant sources to carry smart:chain, use suitable profiles and complete learning. An unlearned source is marked with a warning symbol.

smart:chain is not simply a set of processors placed in one window. One shared understanding of the source informs a connected signal chain, while every stage remains available for manual control. The audio passes through the modules in this order:

1. Gate

Cleans the signal before tonal shaping by reducing unwanted content between desired events.

2. Equalizer

Shapes the spectrum with the learned smart:filter and additional standard filters.

Relevant visual feedback appears in the large EQ or Compressor display while you hover over or adjust the smaller modules.

Normal Latency provides the complete chain. Low Latency disables Gate, De-Esser / De-Harsh and Input Rider. Their controls remain unavailable until Normal mode is restored.

Use the power button beside a module name to enable or disable that processing stage.

4. Input Rider

Stabilizes longer-term level movement before compression.

5. Compressor

Shapes the dynamic range and envelope with learned and manual controls.



3. De-Ess / De-Harsh

Controls sibilance in voices or suppresses resonances in other sources after EQ.

6. Saturator

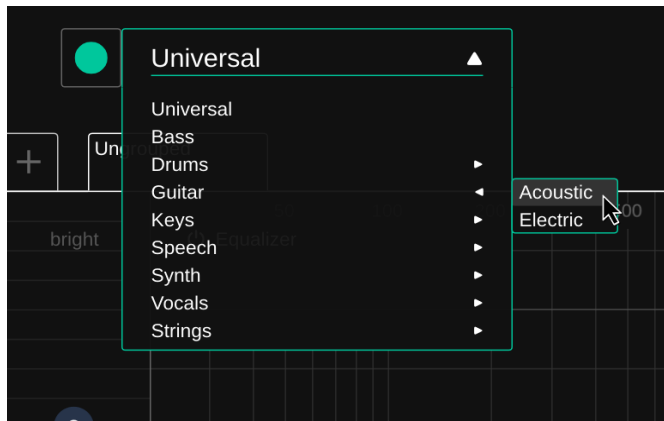
Adds harmonic density and character after dynamics processing.

7. Clipper

Controls final peaks at the end of the chain.

Learning is the shared observation step at the center of smart:chain. It analyzes the selected source and provides the information required to derive EQ and compressor settings, establish level-dependent behavior and prepare the supporting modules.

Run learning



1. Choose a source profile.

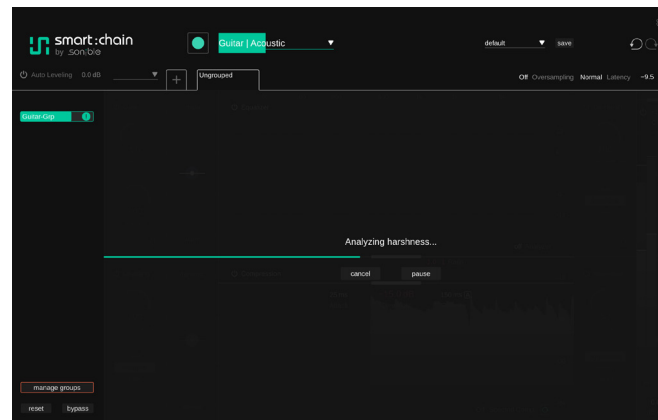
2. Play a representative section of the track.

3. Click the Learn button.

The interface shows analysis progress and what it is currently analyzing.

4. Pause the learning (optional)

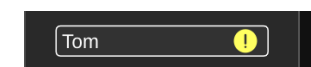
Interrupt temporarily, or cancel to discard the current pass.



5. Check the results

When the pass is complete, all modules and processing controls become available. Gate and De-Esser are disabled by default; their default activation can be changed on the Settings page.

Selecting another profile after learning re-derives profile-dependent processing. Manually chosen character settings for EQ and Compressor are retained. You can learn again at any time when the source, recording or desired reference section changes.



HINT: A warning symbol inside an instance box identifies an instance that has not completed learning. Click the warning icon to start learning for that instance, and make sure its track is playing representative audio.

Groups make it easy to organize related tracks and manage large sessions from a single window. Every instance in a project can participate in session-wide navigation. Select any group tab to access all instances in that group and remotely edit their processing without repeatedly opening individual plug-in windows in the DAW.

A group can contain up to ten instances. Ungrouped instances are not subject to that limit. Moving an instance does not reset its processing settings, output value or previous layer assignment.

Create and populate a group

1. Creating groups

Create a group by clicking the small “+” icon in the tab bar, or click Manage Groups to open the Group Management View and create a group there.



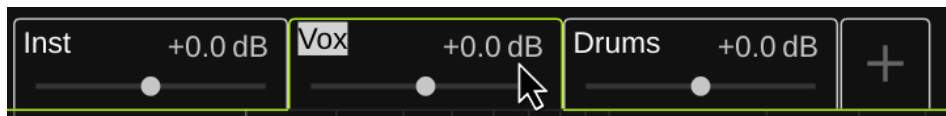
2. Move instances

Drag instances into the new group, or move them between existing groups.



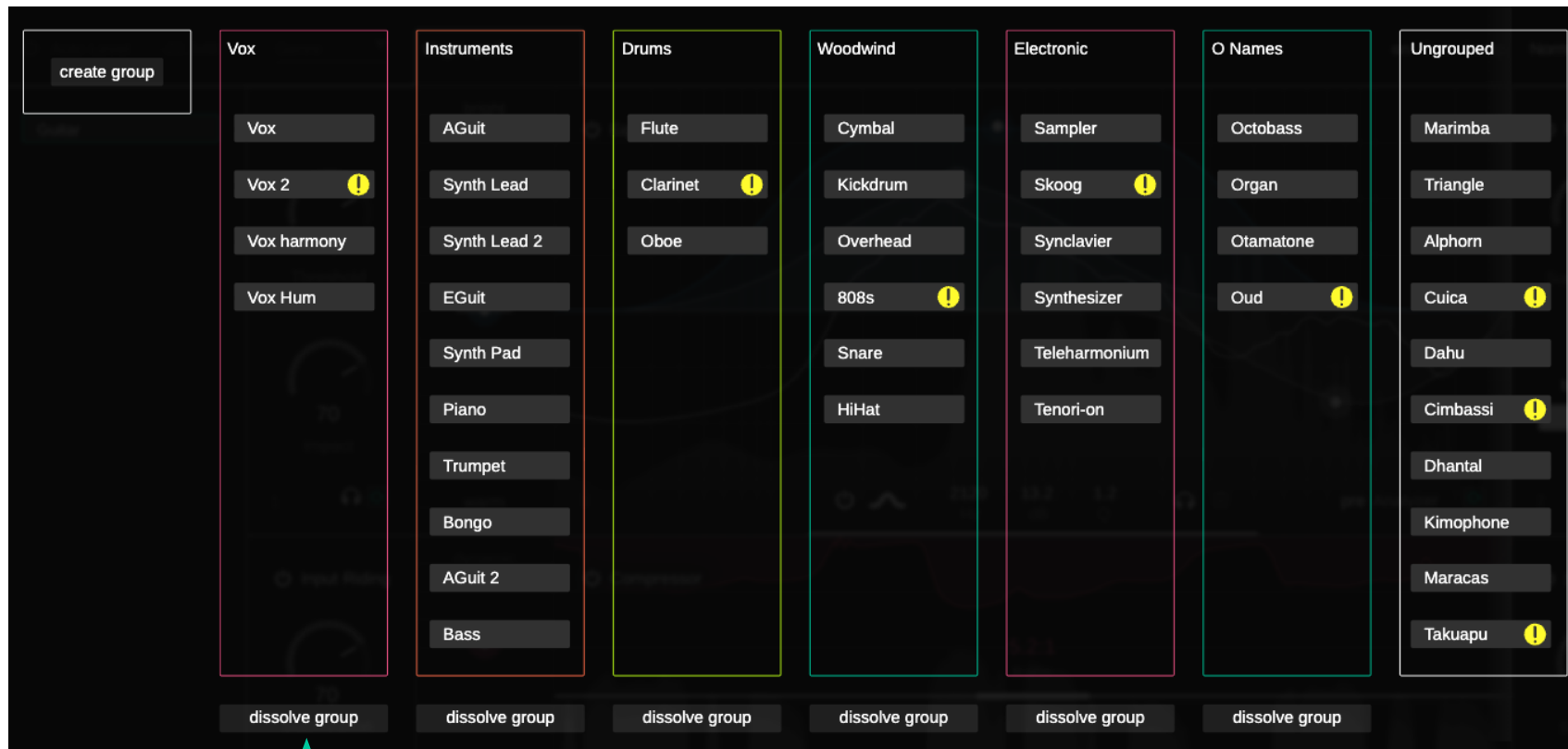
3. Rename/Reorder Group

Double-click a group to rename it and re-order tabs to organize your project.



Group Management

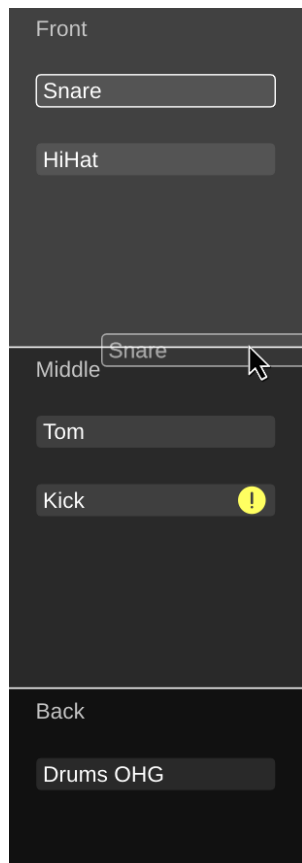
The group-management view displays all user-defined groups and the Ungrouped list in one horizontally scrollable workspace. Drag an instance card to another group box to change membership. Select Dissolve Group to remove the group structure; its members return to Ungrouped without losing their individual plug-in settings.



↳ Dissolve groups

Dissolve a group in the Group Management window

Within a user-defined group, sources can be placed in three perceptual depth layers. Moving an instance between Front, Middle and Back automatically adapts its EQ and Compressor processing. When Auto Leveling is active, its level is adjusted as well. This semantic approach helps related tracks separate more naturally without requiring multiple individual parameter changes. Use the Layers as a musical starting point, then refine individual modules when a source needs a more specific treatment.



Front

For sources that should feel present, focused and dynamically direct.

Middle

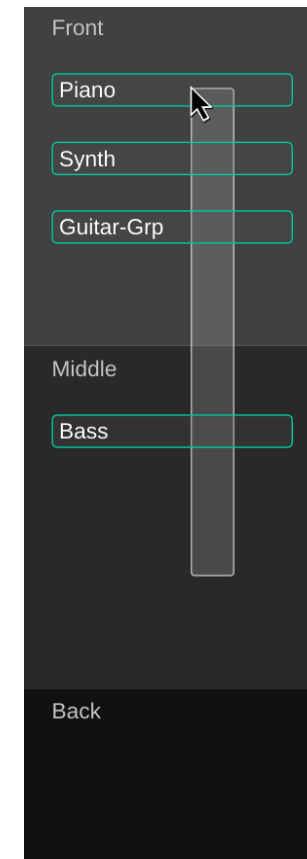
For a balanced, supporting position between lead and background elements.

Back

For sources that should feel softer, smoother and less dominant.

- Drag an instance card to another layer.
- Select an instance card to bring that instance into the processing editor.
- Double-click an instance name to rename it.
- Instance names are automatically retrieved from the DAW if supported by the host.

HINT: A warning symbol inside an instance box in the Instance Panel identifies a source that has not completed learning. Click the warning icon to start learning for that instance and make sure its track is playing representative audio.

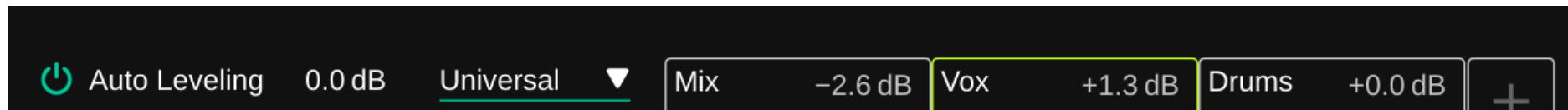


Multi-selection

Drag a selection rectangle across instance cards, or use the supported modifier-click in your host (Mac: Cmd-click, Windows: Ctrl-click) to extend the selection. Learning and bypass can then be changed for all selected instances at once.

Auto Leveling analyzes relationships between learned smart:chain instances and creates a genre-aware rough balance across the project. It is designed to eliminate repetitive gain staging at the start of a mix, not to replace the final balance decisions of the engineer.

For reliable results, select the correct source profile for every participating track. smart:chain combines the learned level information with source and genre context to generate a musical starting balance across the session. Auto Leveling works independently of user-defined groups and includes both grouped and ungrouped instances. When enabled, Gain Compensation is always on so that tonal and dynamics processing does not undermine the calculated relationships.



Enable Auto Leveling

1. Insert smart:chain on all relevant source tracks and select an appropriate profile for each one.
2. Complete learning for every participating source. Auto Leveling is unlocked once at least two instances are learned.
3. Make sure Auto Leveling is enabled in the upper left.
4. Choose the genre profile that best matches your mix.
5. Play the mix, evaluate the generated starting balance and use overall, group and instance trims for creative refinement.

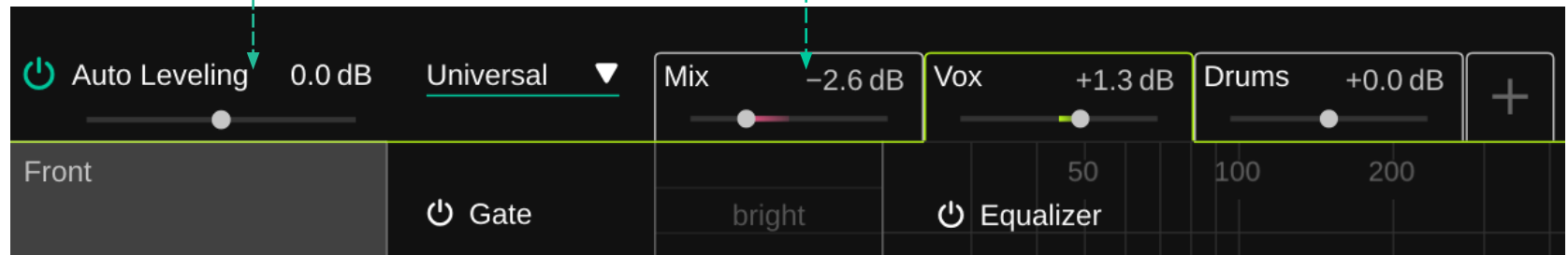
Three trim parameters let you refine the automatic balance while keeping its underlying level relationships intact.

Mix Trim

Offsets the overall Auto Leveling output. It changes the level of the complete calculated mix without changing relative track or group balance.

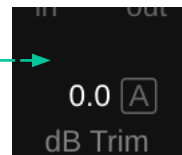
Group Trim

Offsets every member of a user-defined group after Auto Leveling. The trim value appears in the group tab.



Output Trim

Offsets the individual learned track after Auto Leveling. It replaces Output Gain in the visible output section while Auto Leveling is active.



Changing the genre recalculates automatic gains but keeps manual trim values. For predictable results, use the automatic balance first, then make broad adjustments with Group Trim and precise corrections with Output Trim.

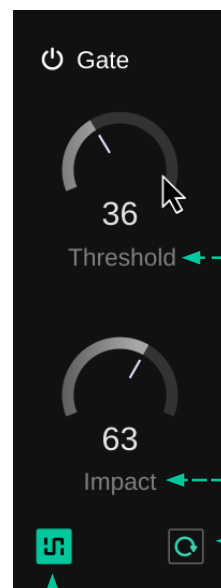
HINT: Output Gain and Output Trim are separate parameters. Output Gain is used when Auto Leveling is off; Output Trim is used when it is on.

The Gate is the first stage of the chain. It reduces background noise, spill and other unwanted signal between desired events before this content reaches the remaining processors. With supported profiles, smart gating detects the presence of the selected source instead of relying on level alone; other profiles use conventional level-based gating.

When you hover over the Gate module, the Compressor display temporarily shows the Gate visualization: the open/closed activity and a level or detection-probability overlay help you set the control in context.

The Gate needs some warm-up time and starts listening to your audio as soon as it is enabled. A listening indicator remains visible until reliable detection is available.

The module adds latency and is unavailable in Low Latency mode.



Threshold

Sets when the Gate opens. In Smart mode it controls source-presence detection; in Level mode it follows the signal level.

Impact

Controls how strongly unwanted content is reduced when the Gate closes.

Re-Listen

Re-Analyzes the signal to update source-aware detection.

Mode

Switches between source-aware and conventional level-based operation. If the selected source profile does not support smart gating, Smart mode cannot be enabled.

HINT: Use the lowest Impact that solves the problem. Strong gating can remove natural decays or room tone.

The Equalizer is the main spectral-shaping stage. Its learned smart:filter identifies spectral areas that need attention and, in a user group, incorporates the relationship to other sources and their Front / Middle / Back placement. Standard filters provide precise corrective or creative shaping on top of the intelligent result.



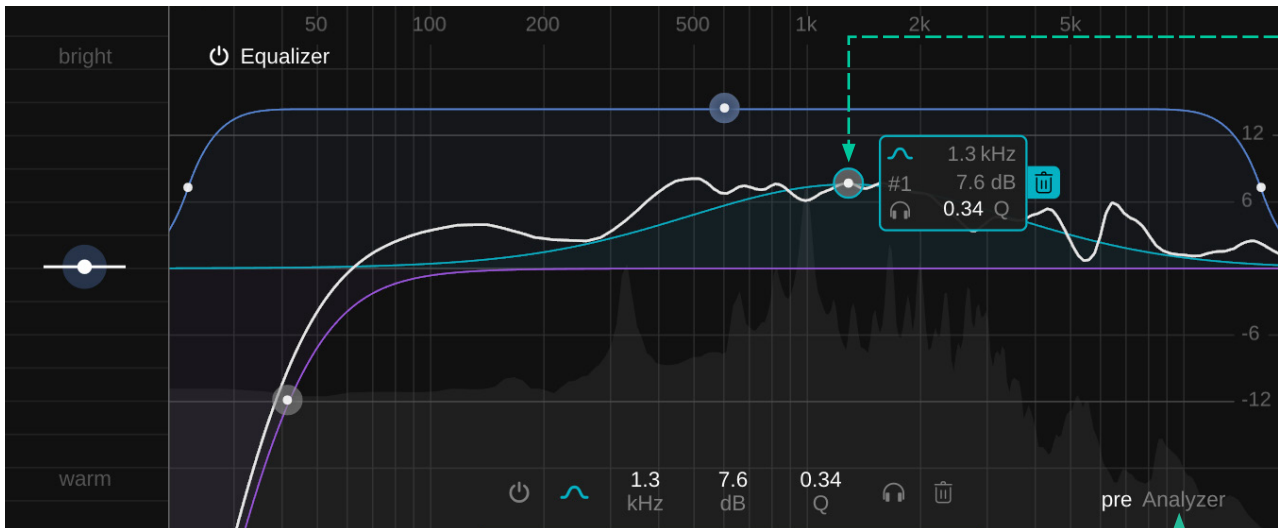
Warm / Bright character slider

Re-weights the learned result toward a softer, fuller balance or a clearer, more present balance. It does not move standard filters.

smart:filter Weighting Curve

Re-weights the learned result toward a softer, fuller balance or a clearer, more present balance. It does not move standard filters.

- **Center frequency:** Defines the frequency region covered by the weighting curve.
- **Impact:** Increases or decreases the influence of the learned filter.
- **Width and borders:** Adjusts the overall range of the weighting curve. Use the mouse wheel over the thumb or drag the left and right border handles to define the covered spectrum.
- **Slope** (Mouse Wheel over right or left white points): Shapes the transition at the left and right borders of the weighting curve.
- **Adaptive:** Controls the amount of continuous adaptation of the filter to changing audio. Higher values let smart:filter follow heterogeneous source material more actively.
- **Smoothing:** Smooths out small peaks and narrow irregularities in the computed response for a broader, more even curve.
- **Split** (Plus Sign): Adds a second weighting curve so different frequency regions can use independent impact, width and adaptation settings. Remove the additional curve by clicking the trashcan icon.



Standard Filters and Analyzer

Standard filters are independent of the learned smart:filter. Use them for narrow resonances, corrective cuts or deliberate tonal moves that should remain exactly where you place them.

Thumb:

- Double-click in the EQ display to create a filter at the chosen frequency and gain.
- Right-click a thumb to disable the filter. Double-click the thumb or use the trash icon to delete it.
- Drag a filter thumb horizontally or vertically to adjust frequency and gain.
- Use the mouse wheel over a thumb, or Alt plus vertical drag, to change Q.
- Hold Shift while dragging to lock the frequency axis.

Controls:

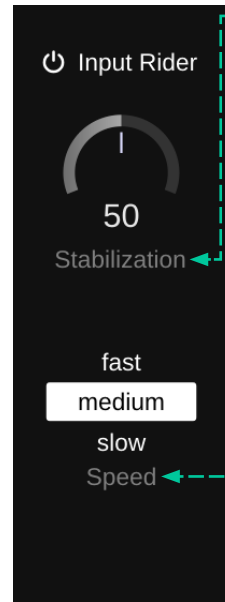
- Select the filter icon to choose Low Cut, Low Shelf, Bell, Flat Top, Tilt, High Shelf or High Cut.
- Use Band Solo to monitor the selected frequency region.
- Drag a displayed value or enter an exact value; double-click a parameter to restore its default.

Analyzer

The Analyzer shows the real-time spectrum and can display the signal before processing, after processing, both spectra or no spectrum. Use the Pre to understand the source and Post or Both to evaluate how the complete EQ stage changes it.

The Input Rider applies smooth gain corrections before the Compressor. It follows longer-term level changes rather than reshaping individual transients, helping inconsistent performances reach the Compressor at a more stable level and making its response more predictable. When hovering over the module, the gain changes applied by the Input Rider appear as a curve inside the Compressor visualization. Use this view to see how often and how strongly the module is correcting the source.

The Input Rider depends on the level information gathered during learning and remains unavailable beforehand.



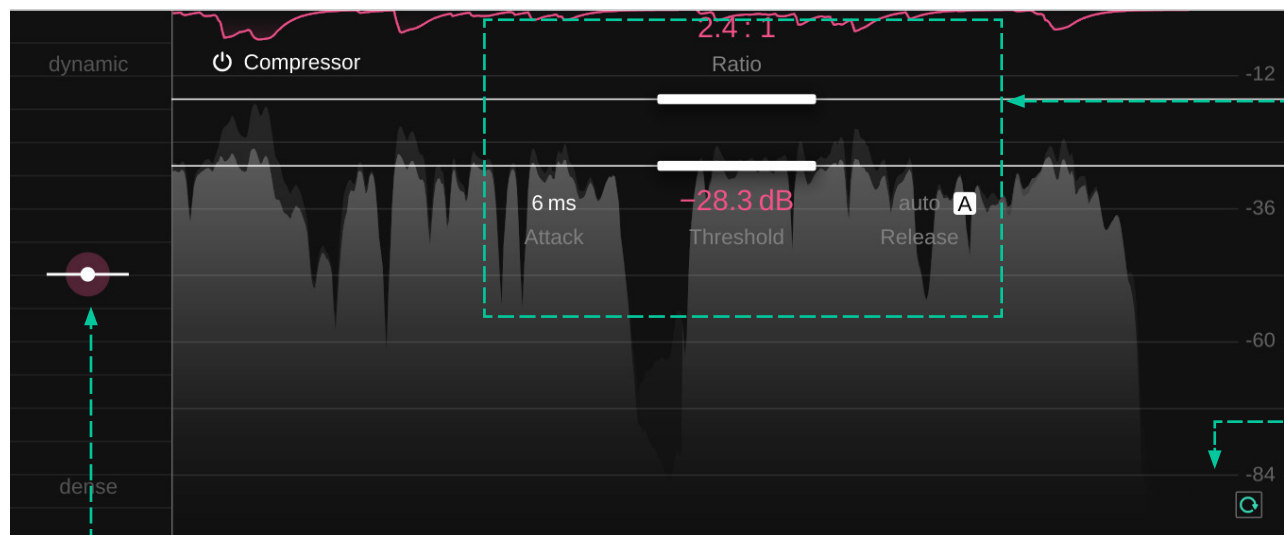
Stabilization

Sets the strength of the applied level correction. Lower values retain more of the original movement; higher values create a more even level.

Speed

- **Slow** provides gentle, transparent macro-level control
- **Medium** is a balanced starting point
- **Fast** follows phrases and notes more responsively.

The Compressor is the main dynamics-shaping stage. Learning derives a source-specific starting point for Ratio, Threshold, Attack and Release. The Dynamic / Dense character slider provides a musical way to move between open and controlled behavior, while the individual parameters remain available for detailed envelope shaping.



Dynamic / Dense character slider

Moves through coordinated settings. Dynamic retains more natural level movement and transient detail; Dense creates a more even and compact result.

Manual parameter changes

Editing detailed compressor parameters disconnects the Dynamic / Dense character slider from the learned position. The slider indicates this inactive relationship. Touching it again returns the parameters to the learned mapping before applying the newly selected character.

Ratio

Sets the strength of gain reduction above the threshold.

Threshold

Sets the level at which compression begins.

Attack

Sets how quickly compression responds and therefore how much initial transient passes through.

Release / Auto Release

Sets recovery time manually or lets smart:chain adapt it to the signal.

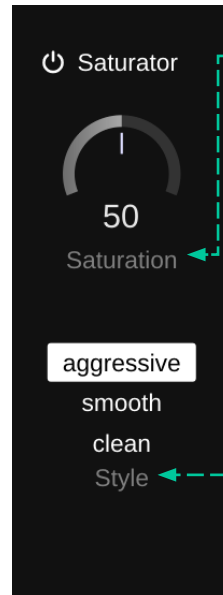
Re-Derive

Re-Derive recomputes intelligent compressor settings after relevant upstream changes, such as manual EQ or De-Esser / De-Harsh adjustments. It does not run a new audio-learning pass.

The Saturator enriches the processed signal with additional harmonics. Depending on the selected character, it can add subtle density, warmth and perceived presence or create a more obvious, driven texture. Because the module follows compression, it receives an already controlled signal and can be used as the final tonal enhancement before peak control.

While adjusting the Saturator, watch the distortion feedback in the Equalizer display and compare at a consistent perceived level. The Saturator module depends on the level information gathered during learning and remains unavailable beforehand

HINT: The Saturator can increase peak and perceived level. Keep Gain Compensation enabled for fair comparisons, then verify the final output meter and Clipper.



Amount

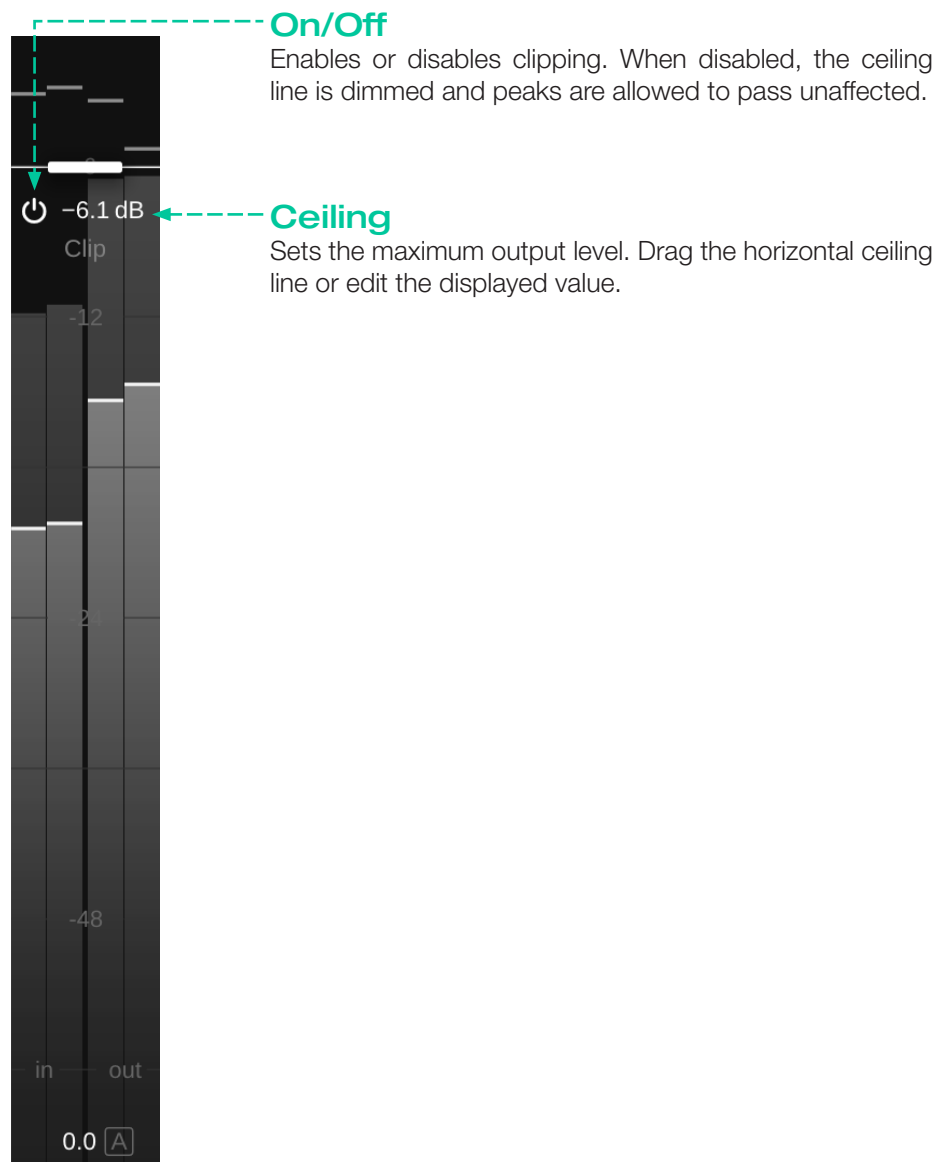
Sets how strongly the Saturator circuit colors the signal and generates harmonics.

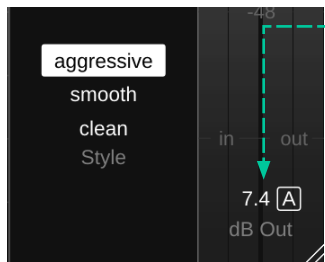
Style

- **Clean** adds restrained density while keeping the original signal character largely intact.
- **Aggressive** creates stronger, more audible harmonic energy and edge.
- **Smooth** produces a warmer, rounder and more polished coloration.

The Clipper is the final processing module in smart:chain. It limits peaks that exceed the selected ceiling, helping prevent unexpected overs and keeping the processed track within a defined maximum level. Use it for controlled peak containment rather than as a replacement for compression or proper level balance.

Because the Clipper follows the Saturator and the output level control, verify its activity after changing Amount, Output Gain or Output Trim. A small amount of occasional clipping can provide peak safety; sustained clipping is likely to change the sound audibly.





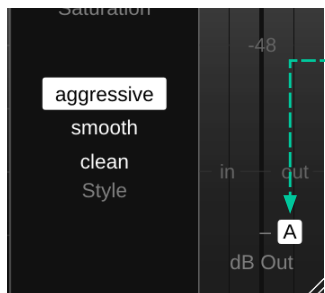
Output Gain

Applies manual gain before the Clipper when Auto Leveling is off.



Output Trim

Offsets the calculated individual track level when Auto Leveling is on. Output Gain and Output Trim are separate parameters and only the relevant control is visible.



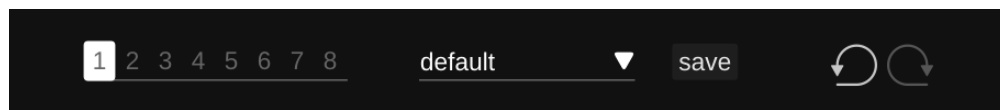
Auto Gain

Applies a global gain compensation to offset cumulative level changes caused by EQ, Compressor and Saturator. Auto Leveling requires Gain Compensation and keeps it enabled while active.



Input / Output Meters

Show peak levels and numerical dB readouts. In multi-selection, meters for the selected instances are displayed together where supported.



States

Store up to eight complete plug-in states for fast comparisons. A state includes parameters and its learned observation, but not project group membership or shared group settings. Drag one slot to another to copy it.

Preset Menu / Save

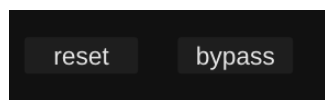
Loads or saves the complete preset content provided by the plug-in. Use presets for reusable starting points; learn the actual source afterward when needed.

Undo / Redo

Steps backward or forward through recent actions.

Settings

Opens global defaults, graphics and information options. A notification mark can indicate an available update.

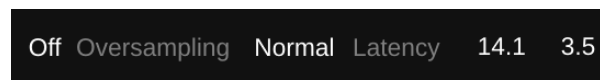


Reset

Returns the current plug-in instance to its default state.

Bypass

Bypasses processing for the current instance. In multi-selection it applies to all selected instances.



Oversampling

Enables oversampling for the current instance. Note that oversampling will significantly increase CPU load. Only enable it when the additional processing quality is required, for example when working with strong compression or other settings that may produce noticeable aliasing.

Latency

Normal mode provides the complete chain. Low Latency disables Gate, De-Esser / De-Harsh, Input Riding and oversampling. The controls remain unavailable until Normal mode is restored.

Learning does not complete

Confirm that the track is playing audible, representative material and that the correct source reaches the plug-in. Pause or cancel, choose a better section and start again. De-Esser listening may need additional sibilant material after the main pass.

Auto Leveling is unavailable

At least two instances must have completed learning. Check warning symbols, start playback for the affected tracks and learn each source. Also verify that the instances belong to the same DAW project context.

Gate or De-Esser is unavailable

Switch from Low Latency to Normal. If the module is still listening, play suitable source material. Source-aware Gate is not available for every profile; use Level mode when necessary.

The interface is blank or unstable

Open Settings and disable Use OpenGL, then reopen the plug-in window. Update the graphics driver and smart:chain if the issue persists.

The automatic balance sounds wrong

Check that all relevant tracks carry smart:chain, use the correct source profiles and have completed learning from representative sections. Reset extreme manual trims, select the nearest genre and audition again.

Need more help?

Consult the current support resources at sonible.com or contact support@sonible.com. Include the operating system, host version, plug-in format, smart:chain version and a concise reproduction sequence.

www.sonible.com/smartchain

All specifications are subject to change without notice.

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