



the whole master chain, in one pass.

Sauce, gain, tone, character, clip and a limiter, in the order you would have patched them anyway — so a mix comes off the bus finished rather than merely louder. Everything reads out live, in text, on one screen.

01 Introduction

Master Sauce is the last plug-in on your mix bus. It takes a mix that is nearly there and makes it sound finished — the quiet half of the arrangement arriving, a middle that holds together, air on top, and a ceiling that never lets go.

ONE PASS, IN THE RIGHT ORDER

Most people build this chain out of five or six plug-ins and then spend the session fighting the order they put them in. Master Sauce is that chain, already in the order that works: **sauce**, gain, tone, **drift**, **character**, clip, ceiling. You get the sound without the assembly, and two knobs decide how much of it you want.

Sauce goes first, and it is the one that opens a mix up. Reverb tails, room, and the back half of the arrangement all arrive, without the loud half getting any louder. A little goes a long way; it ships at 20%.

The **character** section is the part that actually does the mastering. Low settings tighten things up; through the middle it glues, bass and drums locking together and vocals sitting rather than floating; pushed hard it gets forward and thick — the sound of a record that went through a real chain rather than a plug-in. One control, 0 to 200%, with three meters showing where the work is.

Drift is the one you are least likely to notice and most likely to miss. Hardware never sits perfectly still, and that is most of why a record cut through a desk sounds alive where the same mix in the box does not. Drift puts it back, across four bands, and it never repeats itself.

On the end, a soft clipper takes the fastest transients off before the limiter ever sees them, and then a limiter that comes in three — one matched to the desk it was modelled on, one you stop noticing, one that stays out of the way.

Nothing is hidden behind a menu. The whole plug-in is one screen of live text, and if a number matters, it is printed.

CONTENTS

02	Requirements & Setup	p. 3
03	Anatomy of the Interface	p. 4
04	Controls Reference	p. 5
05	Sauce, Drift & Character	p. 6
06	The Three Limiters	p. 8
07	Tips & Troubleshooting	p. 9
08	Specifications	p. 10

THE WHOLE IDEA IN ONE LINE

Put it last, turn up character until the mix stops sounding like a demo, and let the limiter hold the roof.

02 Requirements & Setup

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

PLATFORM	FORMATS	NOTES
macOS 11 or later	AU · VST3	Universal binary — Apple Silicon and Intel, natively.
Windows 10 or later	VST3	64-bit. Needs the Microsoft Edge WebView2 runtime, which Windows 11 already has.

Runs in any AU or VST3 host — Logic Pro, Ableton Live, Reaper, Studio One, Cubase, Bitwig and FL Studio among them. No graphics card needed, and an internet connection only once, to activate.

INSTALLING & ACTIVATING

On macOS run the .pkg and tick the formats you want — the AU goes to `/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components`, the VST3 to `/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3`. On Windows run the .exe; the VST3 goes to `C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3`. Both want an administrator. Restart your DAW afterwards — Logic re-scans itself, most others want a manual rescan in their plug-in preferences. Master Sauce then asks you to sign in once; after that it stays activated on that machine and works offline. **LOG OUT** in the MENU frees the device slot up again so you can move machines.

PLAY SOMETHING THROUGH IT

Put it last on the mix bus, play the loudest section of the song, and the whole face comes alive.

#	STEP
1	Insert it last on the mix bus, after everything else. Leave the defaults alone for a moment and just listen.
2	Play the loudest chorus and set IN so the input RMS bar sits around -12 and the peaks land near 0.
3	Bring CHAR up slowly. Stop the moment the mix locks together and stops drifting — usually somewhere between 80% and 140%.
4	Now move AMOUNT in the SAUCE panel. It starts at 20%; go up until the quiet parts of the arrangement arrive, and no further.
5	Fix the tone with LOW , MID and HIGH . These are broad bands: a decibel is a real move.
6	Raise the limiter DRIVE until you have the loudness you want, then back off 1 dB. Trim OUT to taste.

NOTHING MOVING?

Check audio is reaching the track, that the plug-in is not bypassed in your DAW, and that **SAUCE ON**, **EQ ON**, **CHAR ON**, **CLIP ON** and **LIMIT ON** are lit — each section switches out on its own.

03 Anatomy of the Interface

One screen, nine zones, no pages and no menus to dig through. Drag any corner to resize — it opens at 800 × 760 and holds its proportions all the way up.



FIG.01 — the shipping v1.3.2 interface. Proportions scale with the window.

1 MASTHEAD

Name, version, and MENU — documentation, report a bug, and log out.

2 PRESET ROW & SIGNAL PATH

Click the preset name to open the list. **INIT** returns every control to its default; **RELAXED** is the shipped starting point. **SAVE AS** stores the current settings under a name of your own — reuse a shipped name and yours takes over, and deleting it brings the shipped one back. **DELETE** removes one of yours, and goes dim when there is nothing of yours to remove. Under it, the chain in order, left to right — a stage that is switched out goes dim on the path, so you always know what is actually running.

3 EQ RESPONSE & DRIFT

The curve you are actually applying, redrawn live from 20 Hz to 20 kHz, over the three band sliders — and under them, drift's four band settings. Watch the curve: it never sits perfectly still.

4 CHARACTER

The amount knob, plus a gain reduction meter each for high, mid and low — watch which part of the spectrum is working hardest.

5 SAUCE

One AMOUNT slider and its two switches. The first stage in the chain, even though it sits here on the face.

6 LIMITER

Drive, how much the limiter is taking off, the clipper switch and the mode row. If GR sits pinned, you are past the useful part.

7 INPUT & OUTPUT

Peak and RMS for both channels at each end of the chain, plus the two gain trims — the whole gain staging in one column.

8 FIELD

The one thing on the face that is not a measurement. It moves with the music and changes its whole texture with the character setting.

9 STATUS LINE

Tells you at a glance whether the level is normal, sitting in the target window, or over.

HANDLING

Click anywhere on a slider track to jump there, or drag along it. Values land on clean steps — half a decibel for the gains and the EQ, one percent for character. Double-click a track to reset that control to its default; double-click its printed value to type an exact number. Switches are a single click. **INIT** resets everything at once. Every control except MODE is automatable, and every move is recorded properly, so your DAW's undo and automation both behave.

04 Controls Reference

CONTROL	RANGE	WHAT IT DOES
AMOUNT (sauce)	0 — 100% (def 20%)	How far open the mix gets. 20% is a nudge, 100% is an effect. See section 05.
SAUCE ON	on / off (def on)	Takes the whole sauce stage out. The honest A/B for it.
TRIM ON	on / off (def on)	Keeps AMOUNT from just reading as "louder". Leave it on.
IN	-12 to +12 dB (def 0.0 dB)	Sets how hard everything downstream works. Aim for peaks near 0.
LOW	-6 to +6 dB (def 0.0 dB)	Weight and warmth underneath everything. One dB adds body; three is a different record.
MID	-6 to +6 dB (def 0.0 dB)	Where the song lives. Up for forward, down to open out a crowded mix.
HIGH	-6 to +6 dB (def 0.0 dB)	Air and detail on top — the polish people hear as "expensive".
EQ ON	on / off (def on)	Switches the three bands out as a unit, so you can hear the tone move on its own.
DRIFT L • M • PRS • H	0 — 12 each (def 1 • 2 • 3 • 5)	How much movement the low, mid, presence and high bands get. 0 holds a band still; 12 is as far as it goes. See section 05.
DRIFT ON	on / off (def on)	Takes drift out entirely, and the fastest way to hear what it was giving you.
CHAR	0 — 200% (def 100%)	How much mastering. 0% is untouched, 100% is glued and finished, 200% is thick and obvious. See section 05.
CHAR ON	on / off (def on)	A/B the character section against the dry mix without losing your setting.
CLIP ON	on / off (def on)	Rounds off the fastest transients before the limiter sees them. No settings.
DRIVE	0 — 12 dB (def +5.0 dB)	Loudness lives here. A decibel or two of GR is transparent; six is an effect.
MODE	ORIGINAL • INVISIBLE • CLEAN (def ORIGINAL)	Which limiter you are using — three different machines behind one DRIVE knob. See section 06.
LIMIT ON	on / off (def on)	Takes the limiter out, for handing off with the headroom intact.
OUT	-12 to +12 dB (def 0.0 dB)	Final trim, after everything. For matching levels when you A/B.

05 Sauce, Drift & Character

Two knobs do almost all of the work. **AMOUNT** opens the mix up at the front of the chain; **CHAR** decides whether the record sounds finished at the back of it. **DRIFT** sits between them and does not ask for much — it is the reason the whole thing stops sounding like software.

SAUCE — WHERE TO PUT AMOUNT

SETTING	WHAT YOU GET
10 — 25%	The shipping setting and the safe one. Room and tails come forward, the mix breathes, and nothing sounds processed. If you are unsure, stop here.
25 — 60%	Openness you can point at. Quiet detail arrives, the arrangement fills out front to back, and dense sections stop closing in. Watch the low end — this is where it starts to matter.
60 — 100%	A sound rather than a treatment. Everything is present all the time, which is a real effect and occasionally exactly right. Loops and electronic material take it best.

SAUCE AND CHARACTER ARE NOT THE SAME MOVE

Sauce brings the quiet up. Character holds the loud together. If a mix sounds small, try sauce first; if it sounds loose, try character first. Doing both hard at once is what makes a master sound flat.

DRIFT — WHERE TO PUT L, M, PRS AND H

Hardware never sits perfectly still, and that restlessness is most of why a record that went through a desk sounds alive. Drift puts it back, separately across the low, mid, presence and high bands. It ships on, restrained at the bottom and generous at the top, which is where it flatters most material.

SETTING	WHAT YOU GET
0	That band held perfectly still. Reach for it on the low band if a bass-heavy master feels unsteady, and to hear exactly what drift was doing.
1 — 4	The shipping range for the low, mid and presence bands. Depth and separation without anything you could point at. Leave it here unless you have a reason.
5 — 12	Air, width and motion you can hear, and where the top band already lives. Wonderful on pads, strings and anything static; go carefully on solo piano and close-mic'd vocals.

Presence is new here — the upper mids, where a vocal sits, previously moved along with the mids. If a master feels stiff through the vocal, that is the one to lift first.

IT NEVER REPEATS — AND THAT IS THE FEATURE

No two instances of Master Sauce drift the same way, and no session repeats the last one exactly. Two copies on two busses will not agree with each other, which is precisely what stops a mix sounding stacked and identical. If you need a bit-for-bit identical render twice, switch **DRIFT ON** off.

05 Character

CHARACTER — WHERE TO PUT CHAR

SETTING

WHAT YOU GET

0 — 60%

Tidying up, not making a statement. The mix stops wandering, levels settle, the low end firms up. You notice it most when you switch it out. **Good for acoustic · jazz · anything already well mixed.**

60 — 130%

The part everyone actually wants. Bass and drums lock together, the vocal sits in the track instead of on top of it. Start at 100% and go looking. **Good for pop · rock · hip-hop · most mixes.**

130 — 200%

Forward, thick, unmistakably processed. Midrange gets dense, the top gets grit, quiet detail comes up to meet everything else. **Good for electronic · punk · deliberate crush.**

Both knobs are safe to ride and safe to automate — sweep either one through a chorus and nothing clicks, steps or zips. The three band meters beside CHAR tell you which part of the spectrum is doing the work at any setting.

THERE IS NO MIX KNOB

Master Sauce is meant to be the whole bus, not a parallel effect — for a blend, run it on a send or use your host's dry/wet on the insert. MODE is the one control your DAW cannot automate; pick it for the song and leave it.

06 The Three Limiters

One **DRIVE** knob, three different machines behind it. Switch between them on the MODE row at the bottom of the limiter panel and listen at matched loudness — they are close in level and a long way apart in behaviour.

ORIGINAL *the one this plug-in was built to be*

Matched to the hardware chain Master Sauce was modelled on, and the reason it sounds the way it does. It leans into the programme a little — you hear the limiting as part of the sound rather than as an absence. This is the default, and for most records it is the right answer.

GOOD FOR POP • ROCK • HIP-HOP • ANYTHING WANTING ATTITUDE

INVISIBLE *you stop noticing it is there*

Looks further ahead and spreads its work over a longer window, so gain moves arrive gradually instead of grabbing. Transients keep their shape and the mix keeps its depth even when it is working hard. It costs the most look-ahead of the three; your DAW compensates for it automatically.

GOOD FOR ACOUSTIC • ORCHESTRAL • DYNAMIC MIXES • LOUD MASTERS THAT MUST NOT PUMP

CLEAN *gets out of the way and stays out*

A short window and a fast recovery. It catches what it has to and hands the sound straight back, so the front edge of a drum stays where you put it. The most neutral of the three, and the one to reach for when something else in the chain is already providing the character.

GOOD FOR ELECTRONIC • DRUMS • STEMS • MIX-BUS DUTY UNDER A MASTERING CHAIN

PICK ONE AND LEAVE IT

The three need different amounts of look-ahead, so MODE is deliberately not automatable — a host cannot re-time itself mid-song. Choose the mode for the song, then work the DRIVE knob. And with **CLIP ON** lit, the clipper has already taken the fastest peaks off before any of them see the signal, which is why all three stay composed at settings that would otherwise be silly.

07 Tips & Troubleshooting

PLACES TO START

FINISHED-SOUNDING MIX BUS

AMOUNT 20% · CHAR 110% · LOW +1.0 · HIGH +1.5 · DRIVE +5.0 · MODE ORIGINAL. The default chain with a little weight and air. Start every song here.

LOUD REFERENCE MASTER

IN +3.0 · AMOUNT 35% · CHAR 150% · MID +1.0 · DRIVE +9.0 · MODE INVISIBLE. Competitive loudness that does not pump. Check GR is still moving rather than pinned.

IF SOMETHING'S OFF

IT'S PUMPING

DRIVE is too high, or IN is feeding it too hard. Drop DRIVE until GR peaks around 3 dB instead of sitting there, and try MODE INVISIBLE.

THE LOW END GOT FLABBY

Pull LOW back and lower CHAR. A big bass boost gives the character section too much to chew on.

THE NOISE FLOOR CAME UP

AMOUNT is too high — lifting quiet material lifts all of it. Below 30% on anything with room noise or tape hiss.

TWO RENDERS DON'T MATCH EXACTLY

That is drift working as designed — it never repeats. Switch **DRIFT ON** off if you need an identical render twice.

GLUE ONLY, NO LOUDNESS

AMOUNT 15% · CHAR 70% · DRIVE 0.0 · LIMIT ON off. All the cohesion, full headroom left for whoever masters it.

OPEN A SMALL, DENSE MIX OUT

AMOUNT 45% · CHAR 90% · LOW +1.5 · MODE CLEAN. Sauce doing the lifting, character only holding it together, and a limiter that stays out of it.

IT SOUNDS SMALLER, NOT BIGGER

You are past the useful part of CHAR. Back it off in steps of 20% until the depth comes back.

IT SOUNDS FLAT AND AIRLESS

Sauce and character are both working hard. Pick one to lead — usually drop AMOUNT and leave CHAR where it is.

I CAN'T FIND THE DRIFT CONTROLS

Upgrading from an earlier version? Your DAW needs to rescan its plug-ins once before the new controls appear — and the presence band is new here, so a 1.3.0 session will not carry its setting across.

IT SEEMS TO DO NOTHING

Check the input meter is moving, then that SAUCE ON, EQ ON, DRIFT ON, CHAR ON, CLIP ON and LIMIT ON are lit. Level-match with OUT first.

GOLDEN RULE

Always A/B at the same loudness. Louder wins every time, which is exactly why it tells you nothing — trim OUT until the two match, then decide.

08 Specifications

Type	Mix bus and mastering processor — sauce, gain, three-band EQ, drift, character, soft clipper, limiter
Formats	AU · VST3 on macOS · VST3 on Windows
Platforms	macOS 11 or later, Universal (Apple Silicon and Intel) · Windows 10 or later, 64-bit
Latency	Reported to the host so it compensates automatically. About 4 ms in ORIGINAL, 5 ms in CLEAN and 9 ms in INVISIBLE; about 3 ms with the limiter switched out, and none at all when the plug-in is bypassed.
Channels	Stereo in, stereo out
Controls	AMOUNT · SAUCE ON · TRIM ON · IN · LOW · MID · HIGH · EQ ON · DRIFT L · DRIFT M · DRIFT PRS · DRIFT H · DRIFT ON · CHAR · CHAR ON · CLIP ON · DRIVE · LIMIT ON · OUT — all automatable · MODE, which is not, by design
Metering	Input and output peak and RMS, both channels · limiter gain reduction · gain reduction for low, mid and high · live EQ response curve
Interface	Resizable from 800 × 760, proportions locked
Licence	Device slots shown in the activation panel · internet needed for activation only

SUPPORT

support@sinemill.com, or start at sinemill.com. Tell us your Master Sauce version — it is in the header — plus your DAW and your macOS or Windows version, and it saves a round trip.

ABOUT SINEMILL

Master Sauce is part of the sinemill suite: small plug-ins with real character, each one built around a single idea and a look of its own. Here the idea is that the last plug-in on the bus should be one plug-in, and it should show you everything it is doing.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

A small surface over a deep machine. Character you choose once and then shape with a handful of knobs — and above all, audio that never pops, clicks or steps.