

HX15

1/4 REEL 15IPS

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4127 SEED

USER MANUAL

PUT IT ON EVERYTHING.

Alive Medium makes a track sound like it lives on tape: a fraction of a dB here, a breath of wobble there, never the same twice. It is built to sit on most of your tracks and the master at the same time, and every copy you load is a slightly different machine.

01 INTRODUCTION

Alive Medium puts your music on a physical medium. Pick a tape, and the track picks up what tape does to sound: weight in the lows, a softer top, a little movement, a floor of hiss that comes and goes with the music.

SUBTLE ENOUGH TO LEAVE ON THIRTY TRACKS

Most tape plug-ins are made to be heard on one channel. Alive Medium is made to be heard across a whole session. Every part of it is small and follows the music, so thirty copies make a mix warmer instead of muddier. And no two copies are the same: each one carries its own **seed**, a serial number that decides how this machine left the factory a little different from the one on the next track.

There are sixteen **tapes**, invented calibrations running from spotless to ruined: SK-1 and TD-1 at the clean mastering end, the ferric and chrome cassettes in the middle, and four dark, heavy tapes at the far end that crush, warp and sink. Each tape is a different mix of the same nine things tape does, from DRIFT and IRON to SUPPLY and BREATH.

The panel shows all of it. The tape runs in the deck, nine lights show what each part of the machine is doing right now, and the gear view lets you switch any of them off or pull it back, per tape. There is no dry/wet, no limiter and nothing hidden in a menu.

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THE WHOLE IDEA IN ONE LINE

A tape machine for every channel, each one a little different, none of them loud about it.

02 REQUIREMENTS & SETUP

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

PLATFORM	FORMATS	NOTES
macOS 11 or later	AU · VST3	Universal: native on Apple Silicon and Intel.
Windows	VST3	64-bit (x64).

Runs in any AU or VST3 host: Logic Pro, Ableton Live, Reaper, Studio One, Cubase, Bitwig, FL Studio. Stereo or mono. It is light enough to load on every track of a session, which is the point.

INSTALLING & ACTIVATING

Run the installer, then open your DAW and let it rescan its plug-ins (in FL Studio, run a plug-in scan by hand). Load **Alive Medium** on a track and sign in with your sinemill account. That activates the machine you are on; after that it works offline. Each account has a set number of device slots: **Log Out** in the menu (top right) frees this computer's slot, and you can manage your devices at sinemill.com.

PLAY SOMETHING THROUGH IT

The plug-in opens with a tape already in the deck, so it is working the moment audio arrives: the reels turn and the nine lights under the deck start to move.

STEP

- Put it on a track you know well and press play. It opens on **SK-1**, the cleanest tape. Listen for a touch of glue and air, not an effect.
- Set **TRACK** for a single instrument or voice, **BUS** for a group or the mix bus.
- Hover the tapes in the list to read what each one does, then click a few. Switch while it plays; that is how you choose.
- Push **IN** up a few dB to hit the tape harder. The level stays where it was; the tape gets thicker and the lows start to pull on the transport.
- Press **EJECT** to hear the track without it, then load the tape back. Now put a copy on the next track.

CAN'T HEAR IT?

That is mostly by design: compare with EJECT rather than listening for a change. If the deck says **EMPTY**, the tape is ejected and the plug-in is passing audio untouched: click a tape to load it. If the panel asks you to sign in, activation is still pending.

03 ANATOMY OF THE INTERFACE

One small panel in three columns: the tape shelf, the deck, and the inspector. Drag the window's corner to resize it; the proportions stay locked.



FIG.01 – THE V1.0.0 INTERFACE WITH HX15 LOADED

- 1 MASTHEAD**
The loaded tape, the **preset** menu, and the **SEED** with its redraw arrow. Version and the menu (documentation, bug report, log out) sit on the right.
- 2 TAPES**
All sixteen, clean at the top, darkest at the bottom. Click to load. Hover for a description and nine strength bars. The dot marks your default.
- 3 DECK**
The tape running. Hovering anything on the panel explains it here.
- 4 ACTIVITY LIGHTS**
Nine lights, one per feature. The brighter a light, the harder that part of the machine is working right now. Dark means switched off.
- 5 IN · OUT**
How hard you hit the tape, and your output level.
- 6 INSPECTOR**
The loaded tape's type, length and marks for warmth, motion and grit. With the gear on, it becomes the gear view (section 06).
- 7 SUPPLY · TRACK/BUS**
How well the machine is powered, and what it is calibrated for.
- 8 EJECT · RANDOM · GEAR**
Take the tape out, load a random other tape, or open the gear view.

HANDLING

Drag the **IN** and **OUT** bars sideways; hold **Shift** for fine moves, scroll for 0.5 dB steps, double-click for 0 dB. Right-click a tape to make it the default for new instances. IN, OUT, tape, Supply, Track/Bus and bypass are all automatable.

04 CONTROLS REFERENCE

CONTROL	RANGE	WHAT IT DOES
TAPE	16 tapes (def SK-1)	The machine you are running through, and the biggest decision on the panel. Switching is safe mid-playback and never shifts your timing. See section 05.
IN	-24 to +12 dB (def 0 dB)	How hard you hit the tape. More drives more saturation and a harder sag on every low hit. The output is compensated for you, so your level stays put while the character changes.
OUT	-24 to +6 dB (def 0 dB)	Your level, nothing else. It does not change how the tape sounds.
SUPPLY	REG · STK · TRD · FAIL (def STK)	How well the machine is powered, on any tape. Every low hit pulls the tape speed down and back; the worse the supply, the longer the drag: roughly 60, 80, 250 and 340 ms. STK is the tape as calibrated.
TRACK · BUS	track / bus (def track)	TRACK is calibrated for one instrument or voice: a quieter floor, gentler loss, no low cut. BUS is for groups and the mix bus: a touch more loss and hiss, and the rumble below 20-odd Hz rolled off.
EJECT	in / out (def in)	Takes the tape out. The audio passes untouched until you load a tape again. This is the host's <i>Bypass</i> .
RANDOM	—	Loads a different tape at random. A fast way to hear something you would not have picked.
GEAR	on / off	Opens the gear view for the loaded tape: switch each of the nine features on or off and set how much of it the tape uses. See section 06.
SEED	0000 – 9999 (new each instance)	This copy's serial number. Click to type one in, click the arrow to draw a new one. See section 07.
PRESETS	your presets	Save, find and recall your own settings, and set a default for new Track and Bus instances. See section 07.

WHERE IS THE MIX KNOB?

There isn't one, on purpose: Alive Medium is 100% wet and was made to be. If you want it in parallel, put it on a send or use your host's dry/wet. There is no limiter either: IN is level-compensated, so hitting the tape harder does not make it louder.

05 THE SIXTEEN TAPES

The tape matters more than any other setting. Each one is an invented calibration, a different blend of the same nine features, listed from most transparent to most coloured. Hover one to see its nine strength bars.

TAPE	TYPE	CHARACTER
CLEAN		
SK-1	1/2" reel · 30 ips	The cleanest deck here and the default. Mastering grade: a hair of glue and air, almost no noise.
FR-2	Type IV metal · C60	Glassy and cold. A bright, open top with a quick, shimmering flutter.
TD-1	Master band · 38 cm	Clean mastering tape with a deep sag: spotless, but every big low hit pulls the whole mix into a slow dip.
MV/2	Type IV metal · C46	Clean metal. The life of tape without much of the tape.
CHARACTER		
HX15	1/4" reel · 15 ips	Tight lows and glue; holds up over long sessions.
BR-7	Type II chrome · C60	Mid-forward and punchy. Bite for drums and guitars.
LN-44	Type I ferric · C46	Heavy ferric. Hiss, sag and drift, big in the low mids, slow to tire.
Q-12	Thread spool · T-40	Narrow and jittery, crackling, thin in the lows.
SC332	Type I ferric · C60	Warm and dark with a soft top that sits well on anything. The safe first pick.
KX9	Type II chrome · C90	Sweet chrome with a wobble. Melodic on keys and pads; dulls a little as it quietens.
LM-9	Lumen strip · L180	A soft top, warbling pitch, a smeared wide stereo.
PC-60	Palm cell · P60	Boxy mids, loud hiss, nervous flutter. Lo-fi on purpose.
THE DARK END		
RST-3	Type I ferric · C60	Corroded and gritty. Jittery, crackling, thin lows, a bitter bite in the mids.
ASH-0	Type I ferric · C120	Burnt out and dark. Crushed lows, a slow warp, loud hiss with crackle.
SOOT-8	Type I ferric · C120	Sub-heavy and blown. The low end is driven into the ground; everything else sinks under it.
VD-00	Type I ferric · C180	A black hole. Deep slow warble, a thick noise bed, the top end all but gone.

THE DARK END

ASH-0, SOOT-8, VD-00 and RST-3 are the dark end of the list: black, heavy and slow, each with a deep sag on every low hit. Put one on drums or a bass and push IN.

06 THE NINE FEATURES

Every tape is built from the same nine things tape does, in different amounts. Each one follows the music, so its light under the deck moves with what you play.

FEATURE	WHAT YOU HEAR
DRIFT	The magic. No machine ever holds its calibration. There is always a slight, restless misalignment, and that is most of why tape sounds deep where the same track in the box sounds flat. DRIFT puts it back. You are unlikely to notice it and very likely to miss it, and it never repeats itself.
ERASURE	Self-erasure. Loud, bright material softens its own top end.
IRON	Transformer saturation. Lows are pushed into a soft knee: rounder transients, more weight.
FATIGUE	Loud passages tire the tape. It dulls slowly and recovers when things calm down.
LOSS	Playback loss. The top end dips and the lows follow a little, as fatigue and hiss build up.
MOTION	Wow and flutter. Slow and fast pitch wobble from the transport.
SUPPLY	Power sag. Every low hit pulls the tape speed down and back; harder with more IN. The SUPPLY switch sets how long each drag lasts, from a quick dip of roughly 60 ms on REG to a heavy 340 ms crawl on FAIL.
CROSSTALK	Channel bleed. A dark, slightly late copy of each side leaks into the other.
BREATH	The noise floor. Tape hiss that swells as the music gets quiet.

THE GEAR VIEW



FIG.02 — THE GEAR VIEW FOR HX15

Click the **gear** to open it for the loaded tape. Each feature gets a switch and a bar: click the name or its light to turn it on or off, and drag the bar to set how much of what *this tape* does it runs at. 100% is the tape's own maximum, so you can only pull a feature back, never past the calibration.

Hold **Shift** for fine moves; double-click returns to 100%. The live activity shows inside each bar. Settings are kept per tape and saved with your session.

07 PRESETS & SEEDS

THE SEED

Real machines leave the factory slightly different, and so does every copy of Alive Medium. The four-digit **SEED** in the masthead is this copy's serial number: it decides exactly how this machine differs from the one on the next track, which is why thirty copies of the same tape still sound like thirty machines.

Each new instance draws its own. Click the arrow next to it to draw a fresh one (the same tape, a slightly different machine), or click the number to type one in. The same seed on the same tape always gives you the same machine, so if you love one, write it down or save it in a preset.

PRESETS

Click the preset name in the masthead (it reads PRESETS until you load or save one) to open the browser.

TO	DO THIS
Save	Type a name and, if you like, an author , then save . Tick seed to store this machine's serial number with it; leave it off and the preset keeps each instance's own seed.
Find	Type in the search box to filter by name or author. Click the ★ on a preset to make it a favourite; the ★ next to the search box shows favourites only.
Load	Double-click a preset, or select it and press load .
Set a default	Select a preset and press set track default or set bus default . New instances in that mode open on it.
Delete	Select it and press delete .

THE DEFAULT TAPE

Right-click any tape in the list and choose **Set as default for new instances**. A dot marks the current default. Out of the box it is SK-1.

EVERYTHING TRAVELS WITH THE SESSION

Tape, IN, OUT, Supply, Track/Bus, seed and your gear settings are all stored in the project, so a session opens exactly as you left it, down to every machine's serial number.

08 TIPS & TROUBLESHOOTING

PLACES TO START

SK-1 ON EVERYTHING

Put SK-1 on every track, TRACK mode, IN at 0 dB. Nothing jumps out; after a minute, bypass them all and the mix goes flat. This is what it was made for.

A DARK TAPE ON DRUMS

ASH-0 or SOOT-8 on the drum bus in BUS mode, IN at +4 to +6 dB. The kick starts pulling the whole kit down with it. Back IN off until it breathes rather than pumps.

MIX BUS WITH A SLOW SAG

TD-1 on the mix bus, BUS mode, SUPPLY on TRD or FAIL. Clean, but every big low hit leans the whole record back for a moment.

IF SOMETHING'S OFF

TWO RENDERS DON'T NULL

By design. Every copy differs, and much of what it does moves over time. To compare a change, use EJECT rather than a null test.

NOT SHOWING UP IN FL STUDIO

Open the plug-in manager and rescan after installing, then add Alive Medium from the list.

KEYS AND PADS

KX9 or LM-9 in TRACK mode. If the wobble is too much, open the gear view and pull MOTION back to 50%.

TAPE WITHOUT THE HISS

Any tape, gear view, BREATH off. Everything else about the tape stays.

AUDITION MACHINES

Found the right tape but not quite the right copy? Click the arrow by the SEED a few times while it plays: same tape, a slightly different machine each time.

TOO MUCH LOW-END MOVEMENT

Lower IN, set SUPPLY to REG, or pull SUPPLY back in the gear view.

THE PANEL ASKS ME TO SIGN IN

Sign in once with your sinemill account. If all your device slots are used, free one at sinemill.com or with Log Out on another machine.

GOLDEN RULE

Judge it across the session, not on one track in solo. It is the thirty small machines together that make the record sound like it was made somewhere.

09 SPECIFICATIONS

Type	Tape-medium effect for tracks, buses and the master
Formats	AU · VST3
Platforms	macOS 11 or later (Apple Silicon and Intel) · Windows x64
Latency	Fixed 2.7 ms, reported to the host and the same on every tape and setting. It gives the tape room to wobble both ways.
Channels	Stereo and mono
Tapes	16 calibrations, each with 9 features you can switch and scale
Controls	Tape · IN · OUT · Supply · Track/Bus · Bypass (Eject) — all automatable
Mix	100% wet. No dry/wet, no limiter
Metering	Nine live activity lights, one per feature
Presets	User presets with name, author, favourites, search and Track/Bus defaults
Interface	Resizable, aspect-locked, from half to two and a half times its base size
Licence	sinemill account · internet needed for activation only

SUPPORT

support@sinemill.com, or start at sinemill.com. Tell us your Alive Medium version (it is in the top-right corner), your DAW and your operating system, and it saves a round trip. **Report a Bug** in the plug-in's menu works too.

ABOUT SINEMILL

Alive Medium is part of the sinemill suite: small plug-ins with real character, each built around a single idea and a look of its own. This one's idea is that the medium is part of the music, and that it should be everywhere without ever getting in the way.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

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