Adrestia Audio
Audio plugins built for engineers.

Level Box

Version 0.3.2 · Adrestia Audio · adrestia-audio.com

Level Box gets a track to the right level in one click. It measures the signal, works out the gain it would take to hit the target you chose, and commits that gain when you press SET. Nothing else happens to the audio: no EQ, no compression, no coloration. One switch, CONSOLE, adds the output stage of a classic console channel for those who want it.

Free. AU and VST3 for macOS 11 and later, Apple Silicon and Intel; VST3 for Windows 10 and later, 64-bit. No account, no dongle, no subscription.

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At a glance

1. Insert Level Box first on the track, before your compressors and saturators.
2. Pick **RMS** or **PEAK**, and a target.
3. Play the loudest part of the track. The lamp goes from Measuring to Settling to Stable.
4. Press **SET**. The suggested gain becomes the committed gain, and the track now sits at the target.

That is the whole job. RESET clears everything and you can measure again.

Installing

Requirements

- macOS 11 (Big Sur) or later, Apple Silicon or Intel (one universal installer); or Windows 10 or later, 64-bit
- A host that loads Audio Units or VST3: Logic Pro, Ableton Live, Cubase, Reaper, Studio One, Bitwig, and others. On Windows, VST3 only.

Mac

1. Download the installer from adrestia-audio.com/plugins/level-box.
2. Open it. It is signed and notarized by Apple, so there is no Gatekeeper workaround.
3. It installs to `/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components` and `/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3`.
4. Restart your DAW, or rescan plugins. In Logic: Preferences → Plug-in Manager → Reset & Rescan Selection.
5. Find it under **Adrestia Audio → Level Box**.

Windows

1. Download the installer from the same page, choosing Windows.
2. Run it. The installer and the plugin are code-signed, so Windows opens it without a warning. There is no folder to choose.
3. It installs to `C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3`.
4. Restart your DAW, or rescan plugins.
5. Find it under **Adrestia Audio → Level Box**.

The Windows build is new and has been in few hands, so it is marked beta. If anything looks or sounds off, please write to hello@adrestia-audio.com; every report helps.

Updating: run the newer installer over the old one. Sessions keep loading; settings carry over.

Uninstalling: on a Mac, drag the two plugin files to the Trash. On Windows, use Add or remove programs.

The panel



- **Mode keys**: RMS or PEAK, the way the level is measured.
- **Target keys**: the level to aim for. −18 and −20 dBFS for RMS, −10 and −6 dBFS for PEAK.
- **Readouts**: the suggested gain, with the lamp beside it, and the committed gain, each in its own well. A clip warning shows if the committed gain would push peaks over 0 dBFS.
- **The lamp**: Measuring while it listens, Settling as the reading closes in, Stable when it is ready for SET, Committed after.
- **SET and RESET**: the two keys that do the work.
- **CONSOLE**: a jewel lamp and key beside the Mode and Target keys. Off by default.
- **VU meter**: what leaves the plugin after the committed gain, with real VU ballistics, 0 VU at −18 dBFS.

- **Footer**: the version and a size badge. Click the badge for window-size presets, or drag the window's corner.

Measuring

RMS reads the average level and suits most sources: vocals, guitars, keys, busses. **PEAK** reads the loudest sample and suits drums and anything spiky, where the average says little about how hot it runs.

Level Box needs to hear the loudest part of the track. Play the chorus, the big fill, the section that worries you. The lamp says Stable once the reading has stopped moving; until then, SET waits.

The committed gain is a fixed offset. It does not ride the level and it does not react to the music. If you edit the track later and the level changes, press RESET and measure again.

Controls

Control	What it does
RMS / PEAK	How the level is measured
Target	The level to hit: −18 or −20 dBFS RMS, −10 or −6 dBFS PEAK
SET	Commits the suggested gain and freezes the measurement
RESET	Returns the committed gain to 0 dB and starts a fresh measurement
CONSOLE	Runs the committed level through a console output stage. Off by default
Size badge	Window size, 100 to 200 %

The committed gain can be automated and is saved with the session. Your host's bypass button fades the unit out and in, click-free.

CONSOLE

With CONSOLE off, Level Box is a gain change and nothing else. The output is the input times the committed gain, exactly.

With CONSOLE on, the committed level runs through the output stage of a classic console channel: a class-A line amplifier driving a steel-core transformer, modelled as the circuit and checked against a real channel on our bench. There is no drive control. The target you picked is how hard the stage works. At the RMS targets it is close to transparent, as the hardware is; at the PEAK targets the transformer starts to work on the low end. It is unity gain, so the level leaving the plugin is the level you committed, and the switch is click-free.

It is not the same thing as Saturation Box's transformer. That is an effect you drive as far as you like. This is the stage a hardware Level Box would have, and it stays out of the way at normal levels.

Working with it

Every track, before you mix. Plugins sound best at the level they were designed for. Too hot and you get distortion you did not ask for; too quiet and the detail sinks into the noise. Level Box on every track, set once, means your compressors, EQs and saturators all see what they expect.

Which target. −18 dBFS RMS is the usual operating level and the right place to start. −20 for dense material that reads hot. For drums and percussion, PEAK at −10 keeps the transients clear of the top; −6 if you want them hotter into the next stage.

Gain, not loudness. Level Box sets the level into the chain, not the balance of the mix. Set every track to target, then mix with the faders.

CONSOLE on a whole mix. Leave it off while you set levels, then turn it on across the tracks you want a little weight on. At operating level it is subtle by design.

Questions

Is it really free? Yes. Your email gets you the download and release announcements, nothing else; one-click unsubscribe.

Does it touch my audio? Only when you press SET, and then only as a single static gain. With CONSOLE off the output is bit-identical to the input times the gain.

Does it add latency? No. There is no oversampling and nothing to report, with CONSOLE on or off.

Why does SET stay grey? The reading has not settled. Play the loudest part of the track a little longer, or play it again.

Windows? Yes, VST3, 64-bit, on the same download page. It is marked beta because it is new and has been in few hands. Please tell us how it goes, good or bad.

Something is wrong. Write to hello@adrestia-audio.com.

Characteristics

Every figure here is produced by the plugin's own offline test harness against the shipping code, on an Apple M1, and is regenerated for each release. These are from version 0.3.0, the release that introduced CONSOLE. Unless stated: sine at the stated output level, 48 kHz, into a bridging load.

General

Item	Value	Conditions
Latency	0 samples	no oversampling, nothing to report, CONSOLE on or off
CONSOLE off	bit-identical	the output is the input times the committed gain, and the stage costs nothing
Unity	0.00 dB	with CONSOLE on, the committed level is the level out
CPU	0.47 %	of one M1 core per stereo instance at 48 kHz with CONSOLE on; 200 instances is under one core
Response	flat, 20 Hz to 20 kHz	+0.3 dB at 10 Hz; clips above +30 dBu into a bridging load
Aliasing	−120 dBc	worst spur, 15 kHz at +24 dBu
Bench	within 2 dB	second harmonic against a real console channel at 20 Hz, from +18 dBu up

Distortion against level, CONSOLE on

Total harmonic distortion in percent against the level leaving the plugin, per test frequency. The bench columns are a real console channel measured at the same levels through an interface whose own floor is about 0.0015 % at 1 kHz and 0.05 % at 20 Hz, so the unit's own distortion is at or below them.

Level	1 kHz	1 kHz bench	100 Hz	50 Hz	20 Hz	20 Hz bench
+0 dBu	0.0001	—	0.0001	0.0003	0.0016	—
+2 dBu	0.0001	—	0.0002	0.0004	0.0020	—
+4 dBu	0.0001	—	0.0002	0.0005	0.0026	—

Level	1 kHz	1 kHz bench	100 Hz	50 Hz	20 Hz	20 Hz bench
+6 dBu	0.0002	—	0.0003	0.0007	0.0033	—
+8 dBu	0.0002	—	0.0004	0.0008	0.0041	—
+10 dBu	0.0003	—	0.0005	0.0011	0.0052	—
+12 dBu	0.0003	—	0.0006	0.0013	0.0066	0.049
+14 dBu	0.0004	0.0016	0.0007	0.0017	0.0083	0.051
+16 dBu	0.0005	—	0.0009	0.0021	0.011	0.051
+18 dBu	0.0006	0.0012	0.0012	0.0027	0.014	0.053
+20 dBu	0.0008	—	0.0015	0.0034	0.018	0.057
+22 dBu	0.0010	0.0017	0.0018	0.0043	0.023	0.064
+24 dBu	0.0013	—	0.0023	0.0055	0.030	0.076
+26 dBu	0.0017	—	0.0030	0.0070	0.040	—

Second harmonic leads at every frequency, from the standing current through the core. At 20 Hz the model is within 2 dB of the bench from +18 dBu up and reads a little high below that. The bench unit's 20 Hz figures include a steady third harmonic of about 0.05 % that does not change with level; it is at the measurement chain's floor and is not in the model.

Terms of use

Level Box is provided as is, without warranty of any kind. Audio software can clip, crash, feed back, or otherwise behave in ways you didn't plan for; you are responsible for your levels, your monitors, your hearing, and your session backups. To the fullest extent allowed by law, Adrestia Audio LLC is not liable for any damage, loss of work, or other harm that results from using it.

It is free to use for any music project, personal or commercial. Please don't redistribute the installer, resell it, or strip the branding.

Downloading asks for an email address, used only for release announcements, with a one-click unsubscribe in every message.

The full terms and the privacy policy are at adrestia-audio.com/terms and adrestia-audio.com/privacy. Questions: hello@adrestia-audio.com.

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