

WELCOME TO VATRA



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01 OVERVIEW

Thank you for using VATRA. This manual covers what VATRA does and walks through every control so you can get the most out of it.

VATRA is a five-knob tone, density, loudness, and transient processor for mixing and mastering. It makes audio sound louder, fuller, and more impactful, without traditional compression or limiting. Instead of clamping your dynamics (the usual source of pumping and breathing artifacts), it reshapes the signal and adds harmonic content. Our ears read that as more

loudness, warmth, and presence, with an analog-style character while the original dynamics stay largely intact. VATRA works on individual tracks, busses, and full mixes. New in version 1.1: three selectable Ignite modes, Peak Match for setting the output level, and an Advanced panel with display preferences.

02 INSTALLATION

Windows

- 1 Unpack the downloaded ZIP archive.
- 2 Copy **VATRA.vst3** into **C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3**.
- 3 If Windows asks for administrator permission, allow it.
- 4 Restart your DAW, or trigger a rescan of your VST3 plugins.

macOS

- 1 Run the downloaded **.pkg** installer. It installs the AU and VST3 plugins.
- 2 Step through the on-screen instructions.
- 3 Restart your DAW, or rescan your plugin list.

Pro Tools (AAX)

Windows:

- 1 Unpack the downloaded AAX ZIP archive.
- 2 Copy **VATRA.aaxplugin** into **C:\Program Files\Common Files\Avid\Audio\Plug-Ins**.
- 3 Restart Pro Tools.

On macOS, run the separate AAX **.pkg** installer and step through the instructions. Restart Pro Tools afterwards.

03 QUICK START

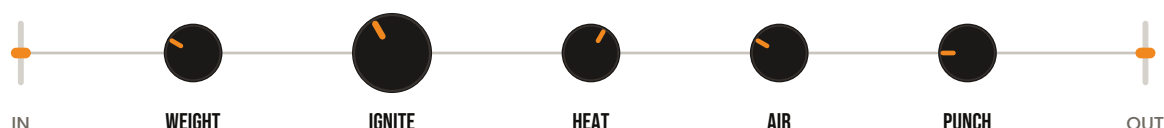
- 1 Insert VATRA on a track, bus, or your master.
- 2 If your source is loud, pull **IN** down until its peaks sit around -6 dBFS. VATRA sounds best with a little headroom.
- 3 Bring up **IGNITE** to its sweet spot (around 11 o'clock 🕒) or push it for more loudness.
- 4 Pick an Ignite mode: **CLEAN** for transparency (the default), **COLOR** for character, **MAX** for maximum density.
- 5 Shape from there: **WEIGHT** for lows, **AIR** for highs, **HEAT** for color, **PUNCH** for attack.
- 6 Use **IN / OUT** for gain staging and to level-match against bypass.

04 HOW IT WORKS

Most loudness tools rely on compression and limiting, which shrink dynamic range and can leave a mix pumping or flat.

I chose a different approach for VATRA. It reshapes the waveform and generates new harmonics, which our ears perceive as louder, warmer, and more present. It never squashes the peaks. Instead it brings out the detail and adds loudness while your transients and groove survive.

Inside, everything runs down a carefully calibrated signal path:



The Ignite stage runs one of three modes: CLEAN, COLOR, or MAX. The signal path stays the same in every mode; only Ignite's character changes. The Ignite Modes section covers the differences.

05 THE CONTROLS

I calibrated the five controls so VATRA can handle single sounds, busses, and complex mixes equally well. On mixes I recommend subtle settings: a little bit of everything usually gives the best results. On individual sounds, feel free to push higher.

IGNITE LOUDNESS

IGNITE is VATRA's dual-stage density engine. It thickens the sound between the peaks and brings low-level detail to the surface, so the source feels louder, larger, and more present, without the pumping you would get from a compressor or limiter. The three small lines on the knob switch the Ignite mode: CLEAN, COLOR, or MAX. See Ignite Modes.



Sweet spot around 11 o'clock. The range extends well past that, so you can push harder when the source calls for it.

HEAT SATURATION

HEAT is a detailed tape emulation. In its lower range it adds saturation and glue, rounding the signal into a warmer, more analog feel. Pushed harder, it brings in grit, all the way to open tape-style distortion when that is the goal.



Sweet spot depends largely on the signal: 1 o'clock is generally good for warmth and roundness, and past 2 o'clock for audible saturation and tape-style distortion.

WEIGHT LOW END

WEIGHT thickens and tightens the bottom end. Rather than pushing the lows up like a plain EQ boost, it saturates them to add body, fullness, and focus while the low end stays tight instead of going muddy or boomy.



Sweet spot 10 o'clock on full mixes and other complex material. On individual tracks, push further to bring out a single instrument's low end.

AIR HIGH END

AIR brings out detail and sparkle up top. It saturates and excites the upper frequencies for a clearer, more open high end, with none of the harsh, piercing edge a plain high-shelf boost can introduce.



Sweet spot 10 o'clock on full mixes and complex material. Push harder on individual tracks to open up the detail in a solo part.

PUNCH TRANSIENTS

A transient shaper that adds impact and snap. PUNCH detects the transients in your signal and emphasizes them, sharpening the attack without thinning the body. It is at its best on individual percussive and rhythmic tracks.



Sweet spot 9 o'clock for most complex material. Go further on individual sounds with a single transient, like a kick or a snare.

IN / OUT LEVELS

IN sets the input gain. **OUT** sets the output level. Both show their value in dB while you hover or drag. Right-click OUT to set it automatically with Peak Match.

VATRA responds to how hard you feed it. Aim for input peaks around -6 to -3 dBFS for best results. You can set the input level at the source or use the IN slider to get there.



Value Display set to Always

THE METERS METERING

The IN and OUT meters show peak level in dBFS. Hover over a meter to see the scale. The cap at the top lights up when a sample reaches 0 dBFS. Peak hold marks the recent maximum, and the IN meter can read the signal before or after the IN slider. Both settings are in the Advanced panel.

06 IGNITE MODES

Ignite comes in three modes: CLEAN, COLOR, and MAX. All three share the same knob and the same job: more density and loudness. What changes is the character.

Hover the Ignite knob and three small lines appear. Click one to switch modes. Hovering a line shows its name in place of the value readout. Switching is smooth while audio plays, so you can A/B the modes in context. The mode is saved with your presets and project, and you can automate it. You can also switch modes in the Advanced panel.



CLEAN

CLEAN is the default mode. It follows your material and lifts it transparently: more density and loudness with the least change in tone. This is the recommended mode for finished mixes and mastering. Projects and presets made with VATRA 1.0 open in CLEAN and sound the same as before.

COLOR

COLOR sits between the other two. It adds a noticeable harmonic character of its own. Try it on drums, percussion, and anything that should feel more up front and lively than CLEAN leaves it.

MAX

MAX is the boldest of the three. It is the densest and loudest mode, and it colors the sound a lot. I don't recommend it on finished mixes or in mastering, because it changes the tone too much for that job. Where it shines is material that welcomes heavy thickening: drum busses, individual drums, bass, aggressive synths, parallel processing. A little goes further here than in the other modes, so start low and work up.

07 PEAK MATCH

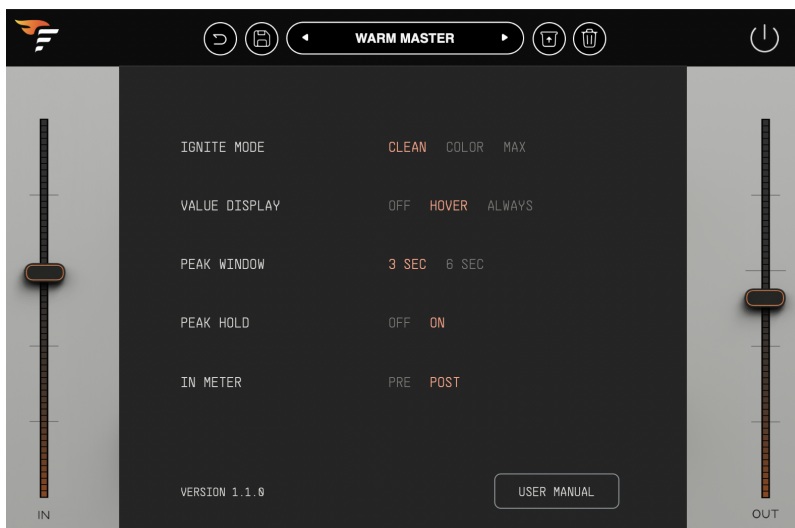
Peak Match sets your output level for you. Right-click the OUT handle or the OUT label, then play the loudest section of your material. VATRA measures for 3 or 6 seconds (set the length in the Advanced panel) and moves OUT so the processed peaks line up with the peaks of the untouched input.

Peak Match matches peaks so your levels and headroom stay put. It measures against the untouched input, before IN. Changing the mode, changing the Peak Window, or bypassing VATRA during the measurement cancels it.

08 ADVANCED PANEL

Click the VATRA wordmark or right-click an empty part of the background to open the Advanced panel. The same actions close it.

Everything in the panel is a global preference: it applies to every VATRA instance and is not saved in presets.



The Advanced panel with its default settings

IGNITE MODE: CLEAN, COLOR, or MAX. Same as the lines on the Ignite knob.

VALUE DISPLAY: value readouts Off, on Hover, or Always. This also controls when the Ignite mode lines are visible.

PEAK WINDOW: how long Peak Match listens, 3 or 6 seconds.

PEAK HOLD: keeps a marker at each meter's recent maximum.

IN METER: PRE shows the signal before the IN slider, POST after it.

USER MANUAL: opens this manual.

VERSION: the installed VATRA version.

09 PRESETS

VATRA ships with 10 presets to help you get started. I highly recommend playing with the controls, though. VATRA is built to be tweaked by hand with these five knobs, and for the best results on any signal it is best to go by ear, setting each control until you like what you hear. The presets are there to show what is possible and give you a starting point.

A fresh instance shows INIT in the preset display. When you change anything after loading a preset, an asterisk appears next to its name. Presets loaded from disk show their filename. Your Ignite mode is saved in each preset. All factory presets use CLEAN, so they sound the same as they did in VATRA 1.0.

10 RECOMMENDED STARTING POINTS

CONTROL	START AT	NOTES
IN	peaks -6 to -3 dBFS	Pull down first on loud or normalized sources
IGNITE	 11 o'clock	Push for more loudness and detail
HEAT	 1 o'clock	Higher drives into open distortion
WEIGHT	 10 o'clock	More on individual tracks
AIR	 10 o'clock	More on individual tracks
PUNCH	 9 o'clock	Higher on kick / snare / bass

Start in CLEAN. Try COLOR on drums and percussion. Reach for MAX when a drum bus or a single source wants heavy color. Keep it away from finished mixes.

11 VERSION HISTORY

VATRA 1.1

- Three Ignite modes: CLEAN, COLOR, and MAX
- Peak Match: right-click OUT to match output peaks to the input
- Advanced panel with global display preferences
- Value readouts on all controls
- Redesigned IN and OUT meters with peak hold
- Preset name display with INIT and a modified marker
- AAX support for Pro Tools on macOS and Windows
- Fixed a rare crash in some Windows hosts

VATRA 1.0

- First release