Crack

User Manual

SURREAL MACHINES

Welcome to **Crack**

Crack is a compact, easy to use transient shaper and dynamics tool whereas its big sister **Impact** (also available from Surreal Machines) is a complete multi-band drum processing channel strip. Both plugins are designed primarily to work on drums but also excel on synths, guitars, vocals or even whole mixes or other groups.

Transient shaping is a process that allows you to quickly sculpt the sharpness of a sound and its dynamics. A transient is the short burst of energy at the beginning of a sound. With a transient shaper you can increase or decrease the beginning (attack) portion of the sound, making it more or less punchy; and you can increase or decrease the decay (sustain) portion of a sound, making the sound fade out slower or quicker (or even bloom in volume). With less sustain the sound will feel tighter and with more sustain the sound becomes fuller and even boofy!

As a transient shaping tool **Crack** is easier to use than a compressor and always works the same way no matter what the overall level of the signal is, as transient shaping is level independent with no need for a threshold. Think of the *Attack* and *Sustain* controls as "contrast dials" for your sound. You can quickly add more punch, make a sound more distant, take away reverb or rattle, make sounds gated in a very natural way, or even smash your sounds up to make them fill the room or bend your sounds in unconventional and creative ways.

What is Crack?

Crack is a workhorse of a plugin. It's great on just one drum or for quickly adjusting a loop. You can load multiple instances across your tracks without worrying about performance as it is cheap on your CPU. **Crack** can also be blended with the dry signal using the Dry/Wet knob, so you can dial in the amount of the effect for each track.

Crack's Key Features:

- A **Transient Shaper** with *Attack* and *Sustain* controls.
- A **Dynamics** section with selectable Thru, Clipping, Limiting or Maximizing dynamics processors.
- **A Dry/Wet** mix control that adjusts blending of the effect.

Table of Contents

Setup

Installing

Get Crack from:

http://www.surrealmachines.com/transient-machines-vstau/

After signing up you will receive a serial number and download link via email.

Double-click the downloaded file and follow the onscreen instructions.

On **Mac** this will be a file named: **Crack Installer.pkg**

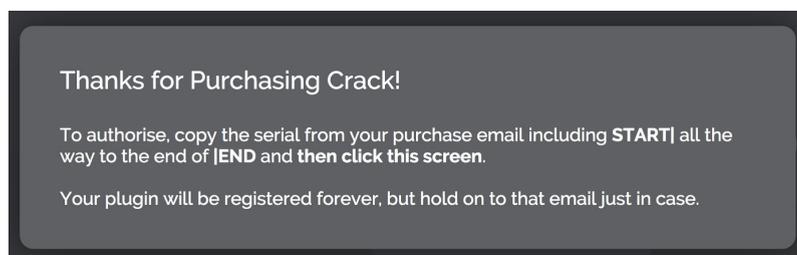On **Windows** this will be a file named: **Crack Installer.exe**

> **Note:** These installers will install both the **32bit** and **64bit** versions of the plugins; **Mac**: as universal binaries, **Windows**: as separate files.
>
> **Note:** If the plugins do not appear in your DAW after install, please restart your computer and load your host again (especially affects **AU** on **Mac**).

Crack works inside your host software or DAW, not as a standalone application. It comes in **VST2**, **VST3** and **AU** formats on **macOS**, or in **VST2** and **VST3** formats on **Windows**. On both operating systems each plugin format is available in **32** and **64 bit** versions (on **macOS** as single universal binaries, on **Windows** as separate files).

Authorizing

Crack is free but you still need to authorize it. Once installed, the first time you load **Crack** an authorization screen will appear with instructions:

Thanks for Purchasing Crack!

To authorise, copy the serial from your purchase email including **START|** all the way to the end of **|END** and **then click this screen**.

Your plugin will be registered forever, but hold on to that email just in case.

You will need to **copy** your serial number, which will look something like this:

START|Your Name|your@email.com|XXXX-XXXX-XXXX-XXXX|END

Then, with your serial in your clipboard, simply **click** on the plugin screen:

That's it!

Installing the plugin for **multiple users** only:

The above procedure will authorize **Crack** for a single user on the computer. This is usually just what you want. However, if you need **Crack** available to all user accounts on one computer (for example in a classroom setting) you can either register it using each user account or you can manually move the authorization file to the correct location:

Mac

Move:

~/Library/Application Support/Surreal Machines/Crack/license.txt
To:

/Library/Application Support/Surreal Machines/Crack/license.txt

Note: ~ refers to your HOME folder

Windows

Move:

C:\Users\<user>\AppData\Local\Surreal Machines\Crack\license.txt
To:

C:\ProgramData\Surreal Machines\Crack\license.txt

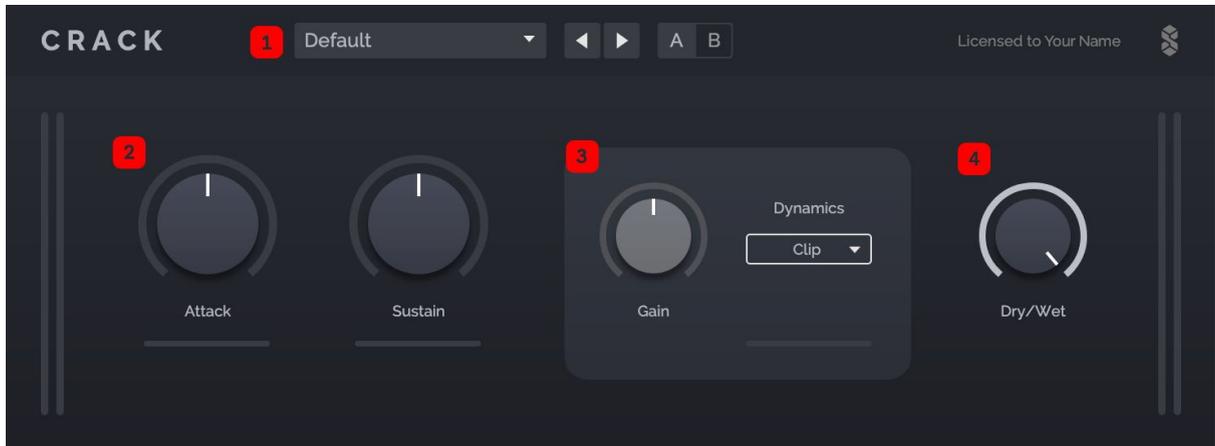**Note:** <user> refers to your Windows user folder

Uninstalling

Mac

To uninstall **Crack** on macOS, you should manually remove the plugins from the macOS System Library plugin folders that you installed them in.

Windows

On Windows you can run the **Crack** uninstaller. You can find a shortcut to it in the Start Menu or by searching on the Start Screen.

Overview

 1 The **Presets Toolbar** allows you to store and recall plugin wide presets, as well as setting the display scaling of the interface.

 2 The **Transient Shaping** processor is the core of Crack, featuring *Attack* and *Sustain* dials to control these aspects of the sound.

 3 **Dynamics** provides a final step to shape loudness, with four modes providing further possibilities for colouration and control of the signal.

 4 The **Dry/Wet** control allows you to tweak the balance between dry and processed sound.

Controls

Common Control Features

- **Mouse over** a control to reveal its value.

- Adjust values using your **scroll wheel** or by **clicking a value to edit**.

- Hold **shift** for **fine adjustments** to dials and sliders whilst mousing.

- Use **arrow keys** to **adjust controls** and **move through menu items** that your mouse is over.

- All controls can be **reset to default** value by **double-clicking** on them.

- Every single part of the **Crack** plugin can be **modified in real time** on the fly without causing any clicking or disruption to your audio.

- Note that some of the controls in **Crack** allow for **extreme settings**. **Crack** gives you deep control, so be careful when experimenting or with controller mappings, especially when using **Thru**.

- The **UI** can be resized via the Preset Menu under *Zoom*.

Reference Section

Presets Toolbar

This section deals with the preset menu built into **Crack**, not the menu that some hosts provide. Refer to your host's documentation for information.


The **Presets** menu at the top of the plugin window shows the name of the currently loaded preset. On plugin load this reads *Default*. Clicking on the menu will reveal the following items:
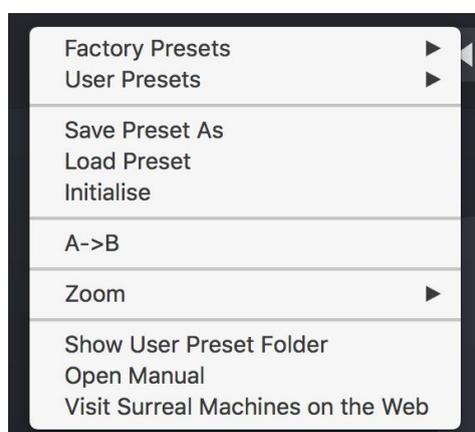
- **Factory Presets** contains all of the plugin presets that come with **Crack**.

- **User Presets** contains all of the presets saved in the user preset folder for **Crack**.

- **Save Preset As** brings up a dialog window to save a new preset - by default the location is the user preset folder for **Crack**, although you can choose to save presets anywhere.

- **Load Preset** brings up a dialog window to load a preset from anywhere on your computer - for example, a preset that someone has sent to you.

- **Initialise** will reset the entire plugin to the default state.

- **A->B** or **B->A** will send the A setting to the B setting or vice versa.

- **Zoom** allows you to choose the display scaling of the **Crack** UI. **Crack** will recall whichever display scaling you select for that instance of the plugin. This means you can have different scalings for different plugin instances in the same DAW session, and these will always be recalled. To set a display scaling as the default for all new instances of **Crack** across all DAWs and

sessions, choose "*Use as Default*" from the **Zoom** menu and the scaling selected at that time will be the default for all new instances of **Crack** on your computer.

- **Show User Preset Folder** will open the user preset folder for **Crack** in your computer's file browser - useful for finding your presets in order to send them to other people, or for your own file management (e.g. backup).

- **Open Manual** opens this manual in your default PDF reader.

- **Visit Surreal Machines on the Web** opens the Surreal Machines website in your default internet browser - here you can login to your Surreal Machines account and manage your plugins, or find more information such as news of software updates or special features and tutorials.
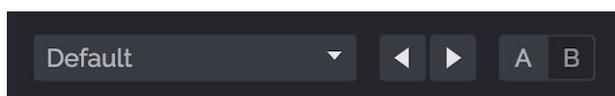
The **arrows** to the right of the presets menu cycle through the presets in the currently loaded folder (for example the Factory or User presets folders).

The **AB toggle** to the right of these arrows selects between two different settings for the plugin - an A state and a B state. This means you can create two different sounds and quickly switch between them for easy comparison.
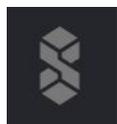
Finally, at the top right of the plugin window next to the licensee name, you can click on the Surreal Machines **logo** to read the all important credits screen and find the plugin's version number.

Transient Shaping

This part is the heart of the **Crack** plugin. With just two dials you can sculpt the sonic impact of your input material in a very musical way. Transient shaping can be utilised in both a subtle way, for controlling how sounds fit into a mix, and also in a much more aggressive manner to achieve radical transformations and creative effects.


Attack

In the middle (set to zero) the **Attack** Dial has no effect. Positive increments in dB (moving the dial to the right) will generally result in more punch, making the sound sharper and more aggressive. Negative decrements in dB (moving the dial to the left) will result in less punch, which can make a sound softer or more distant.

Sustain

In the middle (set to zero) the **Sustain** Dial has no effect. Positive increments in dB (moving the dial, to the right) will result in a louder tail, making the sound fuller, louder and greater in length. Negative decrements in dB (moving the dial to the left) will result in a quieter tail, which can make a sound sharper, gated and crisper.

Dynamics

The Dynamics processing comes after the transient shaping in the **Crack** signal path. It is there to help tame the output level, but can also be used in more creative ways.
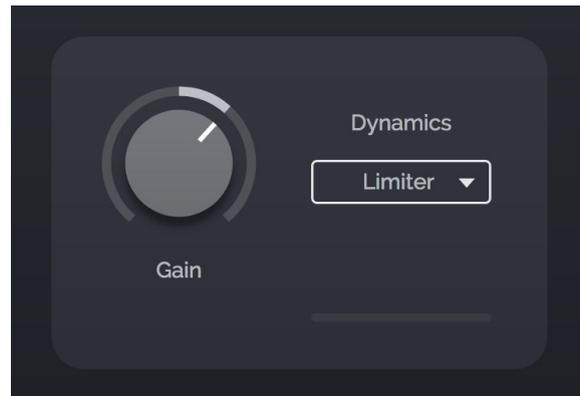
Dynamics Type

*There are four types of Dynamics processing available from the **Dynamics** drop-down menu:*

- **Thru** passes your signal through untouched. This option might be useful if you want to add your own dynamics processing in another plugin after **Crack**, or whenever you want to leave the output of the transient shaper exactly as it is. However, be careful with this option, as the output untouched from Crack might be very hot.

- **Clip** applies brick wall clipping to your sound which is sometimes exactly the sound you are after to add a bit of edge to your transients!

- **Limiter** mode applies a limiter effect that softens the spikes in your sound so that nothing is lost but the output level is controlled. The dynamic range will be at its fullest but the signal will be a bit less aggressive. If the Limiter is pushed with positive gain, it may pump and can make your signal very loud without adding distortion.

- **Maximizer** mode when set on full will try to make the sound as loud as possible all the time (and therefore the same volume). However don't worry, you can dial that down with the **Amount** control (with **Maximise** selected the **Gain** dial is replaced with the **Amount** dial).

Gain/Amount

Gain is the level of the wet signal +/- 10 dB. Often you will be adding a lot of volume to your signal and you want to turn it down! However feel free to experiment and distort the clipper or pump the limiter. When Maximize is selected, the **Gain** knob is replaced with **Amount**, so that you can dial in the effect. When **Amount** is at the lowest setting, the effect is almost (but not completely) neutral.

There is also a **Gain Reduction** meter below to help visualize the effect of the Dynamics processing.

Dry/Wet

You can adjust the level of the Wet transient-shaped signal in relation to the dry signal with the **Dry/Wet** control. You can use this like a 'parallel compression' effect. Low wet percentages are sometimes perfect for bringing just a little extra life to an otherwise ordinary sound.

Parameter Listing

Parameter Name	GUI Element	Value
Attack	**Attack** dial	-15 dB to +15 dB
Sustain	**Sustain** dial	-20 dB to +20 dB
Dynamics Type	**Dynamics** menu	- Thru - Clip - Limiter - Maximizer
Wet Gain	**Gain** dial Only visible when Dynamics is *not* set to Maximizer mode	-10 dB to +10 dB
Maximizer Amount	**Amount** dial Only visible when Dynamics is set to Maximizer mode	0 % to 100 %
Dry/Wet	**Dry/Wet** dial	0 % to 100 %

Technical Information

System Requirements

Crack has been tested in most of the compatible plugin hosting digital audio software for Windows and macOS.

If you find a bug please contact support@surrealmachines.com.

Mac

macOS El Capitan (10.11) or higher
32 bit or 64 bit VST 2.4, VST 3 or Audio Unit host
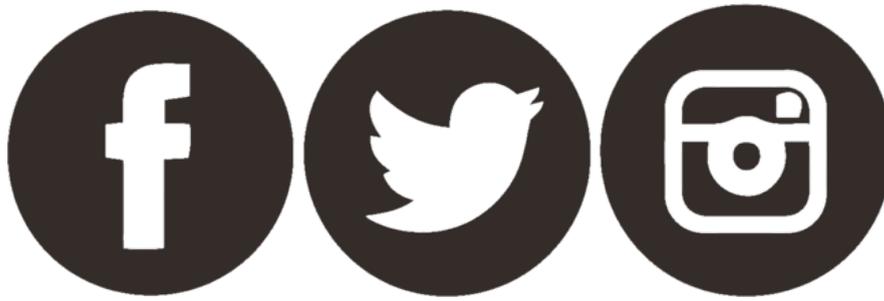Minimum Intel i5 CPU and 4GB RAM or more recommended

Windows

Windows 8 or 10
32 bit or 64 bit VST 2.4 or VST 3 host
Minimum Intel i5 CPU and 4GB RAM or more recommended

> **Note: Crack** may work well on other configurations, but the above details are the recommended (and supported) minimum specifications.

surrealmachines.com

VST is a trademark and software of Steinberg Media Technologies GmbH
Audio Unit is a trademark of Apple, Inc.