

THE_BALANCE 2

USER MANUAL

Hear the perfect tonal balance, then match your mix to it in one click.

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What It Is

THE_BALANCE 2 is your tonal-balance command center: a five-band tone-shaping and reference-matching plugin that takes the guesswork out of getting a track to *sit right*. It splits your signal into five frequency bands, lets you push or pull each one by up to ± 12 dB, and gives you a clear, glowing visual of exactly how your sound is balanced from lows to highs.

But here's the part that changes your workflow. THE_BALANCE 2 doesn't just let you EQ by feel — it can *listen to a reference* and do the heavy lifting for you. Point it at a commercial track you love (or a live sidechain source), let it analyze the tonal curve, and hit AUTO MATCH. It measures your track's five-band balance, compares it to the target, and sets the band gains to move you toward that sound — hands-free, while audio plays. Load one of 81 PHIL'S PROFILES (mix/master, vocal, drums, bass, guitar, synth/keys) and you've got a pro-tuned target in a single click.

In a mix, this is the difference between *"something's off and I can't hear what"* and *"oh, my low-mids are bloated and my top is dull — fixed."* It's a multiband EQ and tone-matching processor with real visual guidance, not a stereo or width tool. Think of it as a second set of trained ears that points at the problem and offers to fix it.

Why You'll Love It

- **Reference tone-matching that actually works:** analyze any reference — an imported audio file or a live sidechain — build a target profile, and auto-match your track's five-band balance to it.
- **Hands-free balancing:** AUTO MATCH listens while audio plays and sets the band gains for you.
- **You stay in control:** MATCH AMOUNT and UNMASK AMOUNT blend the effect from a subtle nudge to a full transformation.
- **81 pro profiles built in:** mix/master, vocal, drums, bass, guitar, synth/keys — plus save-your-own user profiles.
- **Multi-file reference averaging:** drop several reference tracks and it blends them into one target curve.
- **UNMASK mode** carves space for a sidechain source so two sounds stop fighting over the same frequencies.
- **Auto-detected low cut:** analyzing a reference can set the FILTER to match its low-end rolloff.
- **A live BALANCE SCORE** tells you at a glance how close your track sits to the target.
- **Trust your ears, not the loudness:** GAIN MATCH and the input/output difference meter keep your A/B level-honest.
- **Musical by design:** simple ± 12 dB per band keeps your moves easy to read and hard to overdo.

The Interface at a Glance

The heart of THE_BALANCE 2 is a large central balance display, split into five columns — one per band. In each column you'll find a draggable gain bar (your EQ move), a soft glow showing where the loaded reference sits, and a glowing line tracing your track's live balance. Below the display, a frequency bar labels the four crossover points for the current profile type and holds the five S (solo) buttons. Drag a bar up to boost a band, down to cut it.

The top bar shows a hint line on the left that explains whatever control you're hovering over. On the right sit the Undo and Redo arrows, the gear icon (SETTINGS), the robot icon (THE_CHAT) and the power button (bypass).

Below the display you'll find the profile browser with PHIL'S PROFILES and YOUR PROFILES, a category column and search, and the working controls: AUTO MATCH, UNMASK, RESET, MATCH AMOUNT, UNMASK AMOUNT, OUT, CREATE PROFILE, SHOW SIDECHAIN, GAIN MATCH, the FILTER with its power button, SPECTRUM, and the BALANCE SCORE. The level and difference meter sits at the right edge, and the resize handle is in the bottom-right corner.

When you click AUTO MATCH or UNMASK, a focused panel opens with a clear start button (START MATCHING or START UNMASKING), a running state (PROCESSING... or LISTENING...) and DONE / ABORT buttons, so you always know where you are in the analysis. CREATE PROFILE opens its own larger panel. Each panel has an X to close it. Remember: live meters and waveforms only animate while audio is actually playing.

Controls — In Depth

5-Band Gain Sliders (the balance bars)

What it does: Five gain bars across the main display, each boosting or cutting one frequency band. The lowest and highest bands behave like shelves, the three middle bands like broad bells. Where the bands split depends on the profile type of the loaded profile (or the type you pick in CREATE PROFILE) — see the table below. Grab a bar by its handle and drag it up or down; each bar shows its value in dB. Double-click a band to reset it to 0 dB.

Range/units: 5 bands, each -12.0 to +12.0 dB, default 0.0 dB, 0.01 dB steps.

Profile type	Crossover points
MIX/MASTER	125 Hz, 500 Hz, 2000 Hz, 8000 Hz
VOCAL	120 Hz, 350 Hz, 1500 Hz, 6000 Hz
DRUMS	90 Hz, 300 Hz, 2500 Hz, 10000 Hz
BASS	60 Hz, 140 Hz, 600 Hz, 3000 Hz
GUITAR	110 Hz, 350 Hz, 1800 Hz, 6000 Hz
SYNTH/KEYS	100 Hz, 400 Hz, 1600 Hz, 8000 Hz

In your music: This is the core tone control — what you see on these bars is what you hear. Tame harsh highs, add low-end weight, scoop boxy mids, or hand-draw a target curve. It's also where AUTO MATCH and UNMASK write their results.

Pro tip: Make moves *smaller* than you think — ± 2 to 4 dB across these wide bands reshapes a mix dramatically. If you're reaching for the rails, the problem is probably narrower than a full band.

FILTER (low cut + high cut)

What it does: A two-handle filter bar. The left handle sets the low cut (removes everything below it), the right handle sets the high cut (removes everything above it). Both slopes are steep, 24 dB per octave. The power button switches the FILTER on and off; while it's off, the bar is greyed out. When you analyze a single reference file or a sidechain capture in CREATE PROFILE, the plugin detects the reference's low-end rolloff: if it finds one above about 25 Hz, it switches the FILTER on and sets the low cut there; if it doesn't, it switches the FILTER off. Blending several reference files leaves the FILTER as you set it.

Range/units: Each handle 20 Hz to 20 kHz; defaults 20 Hz (low cut) and 20 kHz (high cut), which means no filtering. The power button is off by default. Double-click the bar to reset both handles; right-click to type a low-cut frequency.

In your music: Clears sub rumble and gives your low end the same extension as your reference, so kicks and bass translate instead of muddying the bottom. The high cut tames fizz on sources that don't need the top octave.

Pro tip: Let a reference set the cutoff first, then nudge by ear. On a full mix, 25–35 Hz cleans rumble without thinning the sub; on a vocal or guitar, you can go much higher.

OUT (master output)

What it does: Output gain applied after band processing, with smooth ~50 ms ramping so changes never click.

Range/units: -inf (fully down) to +6.0 dB, default 0.0 dB, 0.01 dB steps. Drag or use the mouse wheel; double-click to return to 0 dB; right-click to type a value.

In your music: Compensates level after you've boosted or cut bands, so processed and bypassed signals match — clean gain staging.

Pro tip: Set OUT *after* you've matched tone, not before. Pair it with GAIN MATCH for an automatic, level-honest output trim.

S — Per-band Solo

What it does: Solos one band so you hear it in isolation, darkening the other four on the display.

Range/units: 5 "S" buttons in the frequency bar, one under each band. One band at a time; click the lit S again to un-solo. Default: none.

In your music: Hunt down a resonance, harshness, or rumble by ear before you commit a gain move.

Pro tip: Solo the highest band on a busy mix to spot harsh cymbals or sibilance, then un-solo and pull that band down a touch.

PROFILE BROWSER (PHIL'S PROFILES / YOUR PROFILES)

What it does: Browse and load reference tonal-balance profiles. A profile loads as soon as you click it. Loading one recalls its stored reference curve (your match target), its band layout, and its FILTER settings. It doesn't touch your band gains.

Range/units: Scrollable list with a category column (ALL, plus MIX/MASTER, VOCAL, DRUMS, BASS, GUITAR, SYNTH/KEYS) and a search field. PHIL'S PROFILES holds 81 factory profiles: 33 DRUMS, 15 SYNTH/KEYS, 10 BASS, 8 GUITAR, 8 VOCAL and 7 MIX/MASTER. The factory list refreshes online when the plugin starts, so it can grow over time; offline, you get the last list it downloaded, or a starter set of 40 if it has never been online. YOUR PROFILES holds the profiles you save with CREATE PROFILE, filed under the profile type you chose.

In your music: One click loads a pro-tuned target for your source type — a fast head-start on a balanced sound.

Pro tip: Pick the profile that matches what you're processing (e.g., KICK HIP HOP on a kick, 808 LOW on an 808). The band layout retunes to that source, so matches land where they matter.

AUTO MATCH

What it does: Opens a panel that listens to your playing audio, measures its five-band balance, compares it to the loaded reference profile, and computes the per-band gain changes to match. It measures the signal coming into the plugin, before the bands and the FILTER, so your current settings don't skew the result. Click START MATCHING, let the music play, then click DONE to apply — or ABORT to throw the measurement away. It takes one reading per second of audio, ignores silence, and averages up to the first two minutes. When the result lands, the panel closes and MATCH AMOUNT becomes active. If it heard nothing usable, you'll see "No Audio Detected".

Range/units: Toggle button + panel with START MATCHING → PROCESSING... → DONE / ABORT.

In your music: Automatically sets the five band gains to move your track toward the reference's tonal balance — no manual EQ guesswork.

Pro tip: Loop your busiest, most representative 8–16 bars while matching. A sparse intro gives the analyzer too little to work with.

MATCH AMOUNT

What it does: Scales how much of the computed match is applied — the match curve is multiplied by this before being written to the bands. Every move of MATCH AMOUNT rewrites all five bands from the stored match, so it replaces any band moves you made by hand.

Range/units: 0% to 100%, default 50%, 1% steps (greyed out until a match exists).

In your music: 0% = flat bands, 100% = full match. Dial a subtle nudge or a full transformation.

Pro tip: 50–70% usually sounds more natural than 100% — it moves you toward the reference while keeping your track's character.

UNMASK

What it does: Opens a panel that listens to your track and the sidechain input at the same time, finds the bands where both are strong, and computes cuts that carve space in your track for the sidechain source. UNMASK only ever cuts, never boosts. At 100% the deepest possible cut is 10 dB in the lowest band, easing to 5 dB in the top band. The panel shows both signals as waveforms. Click START UNMASKING, play the section, then DONE to apply or ABORT to discard; it averages up to the first minute it hears. When the result lands, the panel closes and UNMASK AMOUNT and SHOW SIDECHAIN become active.

Range/units: Toggle button + panel with START UNMASKING → LISTENING... → DONE / ABORT.

In your music: Reduces frequency masking between your track and a sidechain source — make room for a vocal in an instrumental so both stay clear.

Pro tip: Route the vocal (or lead) to the sidechain and run UNMASK on the instrumental bus. Instant pocket, no manual notching.

UNMASK AMOUNT

What it does: Scales how strongly the computed unmask curve is applied to the band gains. Like MATCH AMOUNT, every move rewrites all five bands — so whichever of the two you moved last is what you hear.

Range/units: 0% to 100%, default 50%, 1% steps (greyed out until an unmask analysis has run).

In your music: Higher values create more separation between your track and the sidechain source.

Pro tip: Start low (25–40%) and raise until the masked element pops through. Too high and the instrumental can sound hollowed-out.

GAIN MATCH

What it does: Hold while audio plays, release to auto-adjust output gain. While you hold it, it reads the input/output difference meter; when you let go, it moves OUT by the average difference so your output level matches your input level.

Range/units: Momentary button.

In your music: Removes loudness bias so a "better" tone isn't just a "louder" tone when you A/B.

Pro tip: Always GAIN MATCH before bypass comparisons — your ears can't be trusted when one side is even slightly louder.

RESET

What it does: Resets all five band gains to 0 dB (flat).

Range/units: Momentary button.

In your music: Instant return to neutral so you can start a balance move from scratch.

Pro tip: RESET only zeroes the bands — your FILTER, OUT, and loaded profile stay put. Changed your mind? The Undo arrow in the top bar brings your bands back.

Undo / Redo

What it does: The two arrows in the top bar step back and forward through changes to the five band gains — your own drags as well as RESET, AUTO MATCH and UNMASK results.

Range/units: Two buttons; an arrow dims when there's nothing to undo or redo.

Pro tip: Try a bold move, listen, and step back with Undo if it doesn't win.

SHOW SIDECCHAIN

What it does: Shows the sidechain's five-band balance from your last UNMASK or FROM SIDECCHAIN capture as an orange glow on the main display.

Range/units: Toggle (greyed out until a sidechain capture or unmask analysis has run).

In your music: Visually compare the sidechain source against the reference and your track while balancing.

Pro tip: After UNMASK, turn it on to see where the sidechain's energy sits against your track's live balance line — that's where the two sources collide.

SPECTRUM

What it does: Toggles the full-width, real-time spectrum analyzer behind the balance display. The button reads SPECTRUM: OFF or SPECTRUM: ON; the analyzer is hidden by default.

Range/units: Toggle button, off by default. Shows a filled spectrum from 20 Hz to 20 kHz of your output *and* the sidechain input together, in different colours. The analyzer uses its own 20 Hz–20 kHz scale, so it doesn't line up exactly with the five band columns.

In your music: Lets you see the actual frequency content behind the five balance bars — confirm where energy really sits, spot a buildup or a hole, and watch your track against the sidechain while you match or unmask.

Pro tip: Flip SPECTRUM on while running AUTO MATCH or UNMASK to watch the spectral overlap in real time, then hide it again for a clean, distraction-free balance view once you've made your moves.

CREATE PROFILE

What it does: Opens a panel to build a new reference profile:

- **Where is your reference audio coming from?** Choose FROM AUDIO FILE or FROM SIDECCHAIN.
- **FROM AUDIO FILE:** drop one or more reference tracks onto the drop zone ("Drop one or more reference tracks"). Use the two handles on the waveform to pick the section to analyze. Each file gets its own section; click a name in the file list to show its waveform, or its x to remove it. Several files are averaged with equal weight. Then click the CREATE PROFILE button in the panel.

- **FROM SIDECHAIN:** route the reference to the sidechain input, click START ("CLICK START TO BEGIN RECORDING"), play it, then DONE (or ABORT). With **MATCH AFTER ANALYSIS?** ticked (default), it also matches your track to the capture right away, using the current MATCH AMOUNT — so play your track at the same time.
- **What profile type fits your reference best?** MIX/MASTER, VOCAL, DRUMS, BASS, GUITAR, SYNTH/KEYS. This sets the band layout.
- **Do you want to save the reference or just use it once?** USE TEMPORARY loads the result as your current target without saving. SAVE AS PROFILE asks for a name ("ENTER YOUR PROFILE NAME HERE") and stores it in YOUR PROFILES under the chosen type. If the name already exists, you're asked before it's overwritten.

Range/units: Toggle button opening the creation panel.

In your music: Capture the tonal balance of any reference and save it as a reusable target for future tracks.

Pro tip: Drop *three or four* tracks by the same artist or in the same genre — the averaged curve is more reliable than any single song.

Bypass (power button)

What it does: Bypasses all processing with a short crossfade, so there's no click. A "BYPASSED - CLICK ANYWHERE TO RE-ENABLE PROCESSING" overlay covers the plugin; click anywhere to switch processing back on.

Range/units: Power button in the top-right corner; lit means processing is on.

In your music: Instant A/B of processed vs. unprocessed.

Pro tip: GAIN MATCH first, then bypass — that's the only fair comparison.

Interface Zoom

What it does: Drag the handle in the bottom-right corner to resize the plugin window. Reset Zoom in SETTINGS returns it to its default size.

Range/units: 60% to 300%. No audio effect.

Pro tip: Size it up while doing fine band moves; the bigger display makes small differences obvious.

SETTINGS

What it does: The gear icon opens the Settings panel: Language (English, Deutsch, Francais, Espanol, Italiano — this sets the language of the hint line), Show Tooltips (turns the hint line on or off), Reset Zoom, Tutorial (opens the THE_BALANCE 2 tutorials page in your browser), plus your version and registration. On first launch, a welcome screen lets you pick your language and WATCH THE WALKTHROUGH.

Range/units: Opens a panel. No audio effect.

Pro tip: Set your language once and leave the tooltips on while you learn the workflow.

THE_CHAT (AI assistant)

What it does: The robot icon in the top bar opens THE_CHAT, an assistant you can ask about THE_BALANCE 2 and how to use it. It sees your current settings, so its answers can refer to your session. It needs an internet connection.

Range/units: Opens a chat panel. No audio effect.

Pro tip: Describe your source and your goal ("drum bus sounds boxy, what should I try?") instead of asking about a single control.

Visual Feedback & Metering

THE_BALANCE 2 is built to *show* you the mix, not just process it:

- **Balance display:** soft glowing bands show the loaded reference's five-band values, with vertical band dividers and a frequency bar labelling the four crossover frequencies for the current profile type.
- **Live balance line:** a glowing line traces your track's five-band balance in real time, after your band moves, on the same scale as the reference glow (± 36 dB display range). Where the line sits above the glow, that band is hotter than the target; below it, weaker — your roadmap for what to fix.
- **BALANCE SCORE:** a percentage and a bar under the controls that show how close your live balance sits to the reference. 100% means right on target; every dB of average deviation across the five bands costs about 6 points. The bar runs from red through yellow to green. It shows "--" until it has heard audio and holds its last value while playback is stopped.
- **Spectrum analyzer:** a real-time, filled spectrum (20 Hz–20 kHz) of your output and the sidechain input in distinct colours, so you can see the tonal differences you're correcting at a glance.
- **Input/output difference meter:** at the right edge, two dot columns show your input level, two show your output level (–60 to 0 dB), and the centre column shows the difference between them — lighting up from the middle (up = output louder, down = quieter) and turning red when the gap gets extreme. The number below is the difference in dB, so output trim and GAIN MATCH are precise.
- **Capture waveforms:** the UNMASK panel shows your track and the sidechain as two waveforms ("CLICK START UNMASKING - TO BEGIN"); the FROM SIDECHAIN page shows the sidechain waveform ("CLICK START TO BEGIN RECORDING"); the AUTO MATCH panel pulses while it listens.

Remember: live meters and waveforms only animate while audio is playing.

How to Use It — Real-World Workflows

Match your mix to a reference (mix/master)

1. Load a MIX/MASTER profile from the browser (or CREATE PROFILE from a reference file).
2. Start playback on your busiest section.
3. Click AUTO MATCH → START MATCHING and let it listen.
4. Hit DONE, then set MATCH AMOUNT to ~60%.
5. GAIN MATCH, then bypass with the power button to confirm it's better and not just louder.

Make room for a vocal (unmasking)

1. Route the vocal to THE_BALANCE 2's sidechain input on your instrumental bus.
2. Click UNMASK → START UNMASKING and play the chorus.
3. Hit DONE, turn on SHOW SIDECHAIN to see the overlap.
4. Raise UNMASK AMOUNT until the vocal sits clearly on top — usually 30–50%.

Fast bus shaping (drums / bass / synth)

1. Load the matching profile (e.g., DRUMS, BASS, or SYNTH/KEYS).
2. Watch the live balance line against the reference glow: where the line sits above the glow, pull that band down; where it sits below, push it up. The BALANCE SCORE climbs as you get closer.
3. Solo any suspect band to confirm, then commit the move.
4. Set OUT to match bypassed level (or hold GAIN MATCH).

Build your signature target

1. Open CREATE PROFILE → FROM AUDIO FILE.
2. Drop three or four favorite reference tracks (they're averaged).
3. Choose the profile type, select SAVE AS PROFILE, name it, then click CREATE PROFILE.
4. Recall it any time from YOUR PROFILES and AUTO MATCH future tracks to your sound.

Pro Tips & Creative Techniques

- **Match fully, then trim by ear.** Run AUTO MATCH, push MATCH AMOUNT to 100%, listen, then back it down to where it feels like *your* track wearing the reference's clothes.
- **Use SOLO as a diagnostic, not a destination.** Find the problem band soloed, fix it un-soloed.
- **Average is everything.** For genre matching, drop several references in CREATE PROFILE — one song can be an outlier.
- **Let the reference set your low cut.** Auto-detected low cut from a pro reference is often a smarter starting point than your habit.
- **Stack subtly across a chain.** A small AUTO MATCH on individual buses *plus* a gentle one on the master often beats one heavy correction.
- **Let the live line lead.** The gap between the live balance line and the reference glow tells you exactly what to do — follow it band by band, then confirm with your ears.

Quick Start

1. Drop THE_BALANCE 2 on your track or bus.
2. Load a profile that matches your source (MIX/MASTER, VOCAL, DRUMS, BASS, GUITAR, SYNTH/KEYS).
3. Start playback on a representative section.
4. Click AUTO MATCH → START MATCHING → DONE.
5. Set MATCH AMOUNT to taste (~60%), hit GAIN MATCH, and A/B with the power button. Done.

Specs

- **Formats:** VST3 and AAX on macOS and Windows, plus AU on macOS. No standalone version. The UNMASK and FROM SIDECHAIN features use the plugin's sidechain input, so a host that can route sidechain audio is needed for those workflows.
- **Activation:** if the plugin shows LOGIN REQUIRED, enter your philspeiser.com email and password.
- **Plugin type:** Five-band tonal-balance / reference-matching processor (multiband tone-shaping EQ with intelligent matching and unmasking). Not a stereo panner, auto-panner, or width tool.
- **Signal path:** the audible chain is the FILTER, the five-band EQ and the OUT stage (plus solo when you use it); everything else is analysis and metering.

Stuck, or found something this manual doesn't cover? Write to me at phil@philspeiser.com/support. I answer support myself.