
CALM BEFORE USER GUIDE



BIG DAW
A U D I O

There are some very simple tricks that all pros use before every single drop or chorus for extra impact. They wind down the energy and cut out certain elements from the mix in the moments leading up to the drop. This creates tension and a period of *calm before* the drop.

Why do this? When everything comes back in at the drop, it will sound louder, wider, and way more impactful!

To achieve this effect, the Calm Before plugin automates cuts to low end, high end, volume, width, and adds washout. These parameters can be fully customized and are mapped directly to a simple control we call **The Handle**.

With just a few clicks, create the perfect moment of *Calm Before* in your productions and DJ sets.

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GET STARTED

The fastest way to get started is with the Calm Before as the first plugin on your master channel. Begin by pulling down **The Handle** (circled in the picture below), and hear how this impacts your mix. Try out a few of the built-in presets to get familiar with the plugin.

Most parameters in the plugin are mapped directly to The Handle. This gives The Handle control over all of the parameters together. As a result, the best way to use this plugin is by automating The Handle over time.

Most commonly, users automate The Handle to go all the way down 8 bars before a chorus or drop to achieve the *Calm Before* effect. Then, right at the chorus or drop, automate The Handle all the way back to the top.



The following automation of The Handle demonstrates such usage:



MAIN PARAMETERS

Each of the following main parameters are directly linked to The Handle. As you pull down on The Handle, these parameters will change over time, based on your settings and target values (which will be explained further below):

1. LOW-CUT
2. HI-CUT
3. VOLUME
4. WIDTH
5. WASHOUT

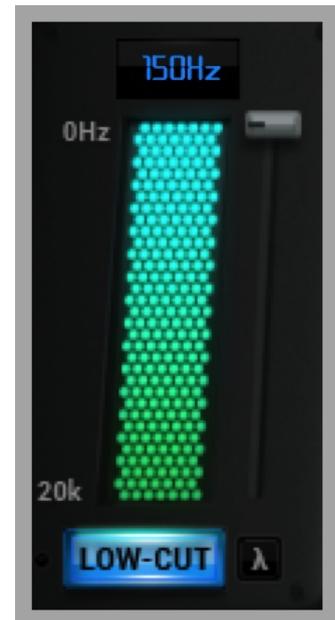
LOW-CUT:

Found at the bottom left of the plugin, LOW-CUT cuts out the low end over time. Cutting the lows is one of the most common production and DJ techniques for controlling the energy level of a song.

Set your target in the text box. Here the target is set to 150Hz. As you pull down The Handle, your low end will begin to cut out, starting at 0Hz until it reaches its target. Automate this parameter to take away the bass during a buildup and give it back when the drop hits.

The target value itself can also be automated, providing more precise control over how the low cut applies over time.

Click on "LOW-CUT" to turn this parameter off and bypass it.



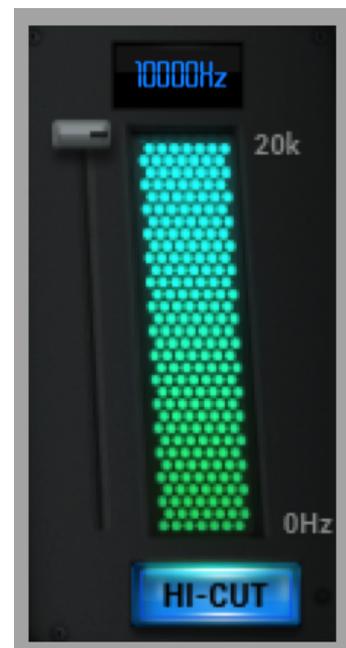
HI-CUT:

Found at the bottom right of the plugin, HI-CUT cuts out the high end over time. Cutting out the high end will affect a song or sound's brightness and excitement level. Lower the highs during a transition or buildup, and when you bring them back in at the chorus or drop, the song will sound extra bright and exciting.

Set your target in the text box. Here the target is set to 10000Hz. As you pull down The Handle, your high end will begin to cut out, until it reaches its target.

The target value itself can also be automated, providing more precise control over how the high cut applies over time.

Click on "HI-CUT" to turn this parameter off and bypass it.



VOLUME:

Found at the top left of the plugin, VOLUME reduces the volume over time. Reducing the volume of your song before a chorus or drop makes your drop sound louder by comparison.



Set your target in the text box. Here the target is set to -1dB. As you pull down The Handle, the gain will decrease until it reaches its target. The lower you set the target dB, the more the sound will fade out. You can use an extreme setting of -64dB, for example, to achieve a fade out effect at the end of your song.

The target value itself can also be automated, providing more precise control over gain reduction over time.

Click on "VOLUME" to turn this parameter off and bypass it.

WIDTH:

Found in the middle of the plugin, WIDTH affects the stereo image by controlling how much side information there is.



To reduce WIDTH over time, choose a value between 0% and 99%. A value of 0% means there is no side information present, and the mix is effectively in MONO. Reducing the width of your entire song (or its widest sounds) before the chorus or drop will make the chorus or drop sound fuller and more impactful by comparison.

To increase WIDTH over time, choose a value between 101% and 200%. A value of 200% means there is 2x the amount of side information present. This technique is useful when there is a minimal chorus or drop (with mostly MONO elements).

LINK vs UNLINK:

To the left of the text box is a "Link" icon. Click this icon to unlink the WIDTH parameter from The Handle. Now, instead of changing over time and reacting to The Handle, the WIDTH remains fixed at the value you set.

Unlinking the WIDTH parameter is useful if you want to make your mix wider or narrower overall. Let's say you listen to a reference song, and it sounds much wider than your song. After unlinking the WIDTH parameter, you can now make your song sound wider by increasing the target until your song sounds more like your reference song.

You have further customizability when you play around with automating the target value itself. For example, after unlinking, you can automate the WIDTH to have a target of 90% during the verses of your song and 110% during the choruses.

Click on “WIDTH” to turn this parameter off and bypass it.

WASHOUT:



Found at the top right of the plugin, WASHOUT applies a classic washout effect. Washing out sounds or the entire mix reduces overall clarity and can help add tension and motion.

Set your target in the text box to control how much washout will apply over time. This functions as a Dry/Wet amount. Here the target is set to 7.1%. As you pull down The Handle, WASHOUT will begin to apply over time until reaching the target.

REVERB and DELAY:

To the right of the WASHOUT button, you can adjust whether the washout will be Reverb-dominant or Delay-dominant using the “R” and “D” icons.

RATE and SIZE:

Below the WASHOUT button, you can adjust the Rate (left) and Size (right) parameters of the washout effect, giving you further control over how the effect sounds.

All of the above parameters can be individually automated, providing you with further control.

Click on “WASHOUT” to turn this parameter off and bypass it.

OTHER PARAMETERS

BASS MONO:

Found in the middle of the plugin, above The Handle, the BASS MONO feature lets you use the slider to indicate how much of the low end you want to be in MONO. This feature is added for your convenience so you don't need to use an additional plugin. For nearly all genres of music, it is recommended that the very low end of the mix (everything below 80-120Hz) is in MONO.



FILTERS - LOW-CUT (HPF) AND HI-CUT (LPF):

Most modern music is mixed with the extreme lows (under 20-30Hz) and extreme highs (above 20000Hz) rolled off using a high pass filter and low pass filter respectively. This helps to clean up the mix and free up headroom, meaning your song can be mastered to a louder volume. Instead of reaching for another plugin, you can apply this type of filtering using Calm Before.

Use the grey slider beside the LOW-CUT and HI-CUT parameters to apply a low or high pass filter to the entire song. These filters apply universally, regardless of The Handle's position.

Use these filters on the entire mix, or on individual channels or busses as needed. For example, to clean up the low end of your mix, make a group of all channels that are not Kick and Bass. Add an instance of Calm Before and use the grey slider to filter out the lows below 100-200Hz. Now the Kick and Bass have more space in the mix to shine through.



FILTERS - SLOPE AND RESONANCE:

The HP/Q and LP/Q settings below the GRAPHIC EQ allow you to control the SLOPE of the low and high cuts and also add RESONANCE over time.

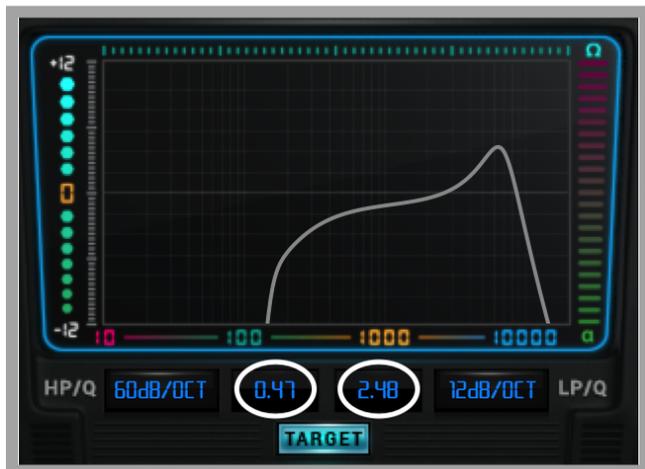
SLOPE is measured in dB/OCT. A higher value, such as 60, results in a steeper, more aggressive slope, whereas a moderate value of 6 or 12 is less steep, allowing more sound to pass through.

Experiment with different settings, as every transition or build is different and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Each song will have different needs in terms of how much lows or highs need to be cut out.



RESONANCE or “Q” boosts or reduces the frequencies at the filter’s cutoff point. This gives you even greater control over how your filters sound. With more extreme Q settings, resonance can be a creative tool to add motion and extra spice during a build or transition.

Set your targets in the text box. The default value (i.e. no resonance) is 0.71. Here the targets are set to 0.47 and 2.48. As you pull down The Handle, RESONANCE is modified over time. Here, you can see the low end has a reduction in frequencies at the cutoff point, whereas the high end frequencies are being boosted at the cutoff point. Note that RESONANCE can only be applied when the SLOPE is set to 12dB/OCT or higher.



The SLOPE and RESONANCE values themselves can also be automated, providing even further customizability to your filters.

Choose the default value of 0.71 if you do not wish to add any resonance.

BYPASS:

Bypass the entire plugin using the Power icon at the top left.

CURRENT VS TARGET MODE:

Below the Graphic EQ and above WIDTH, there is a button with the word "TARGET".

The plugin starts off in TARGET Mode. This mode allows you to view the target values that are set for each parameter, in a blue font.

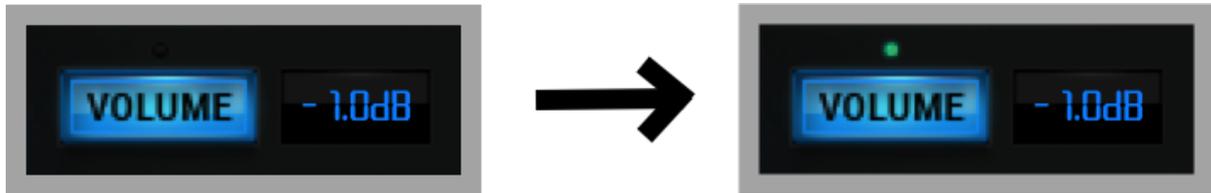
Click on TARGET to switch to CURRENT Mode.

CURRENT Mode, as pictured below, shows the precise value of each parameter in real time, in an orange font. Now you can see the value you are currently at, rather than the target value to which you are headed.



SLOW MODE:

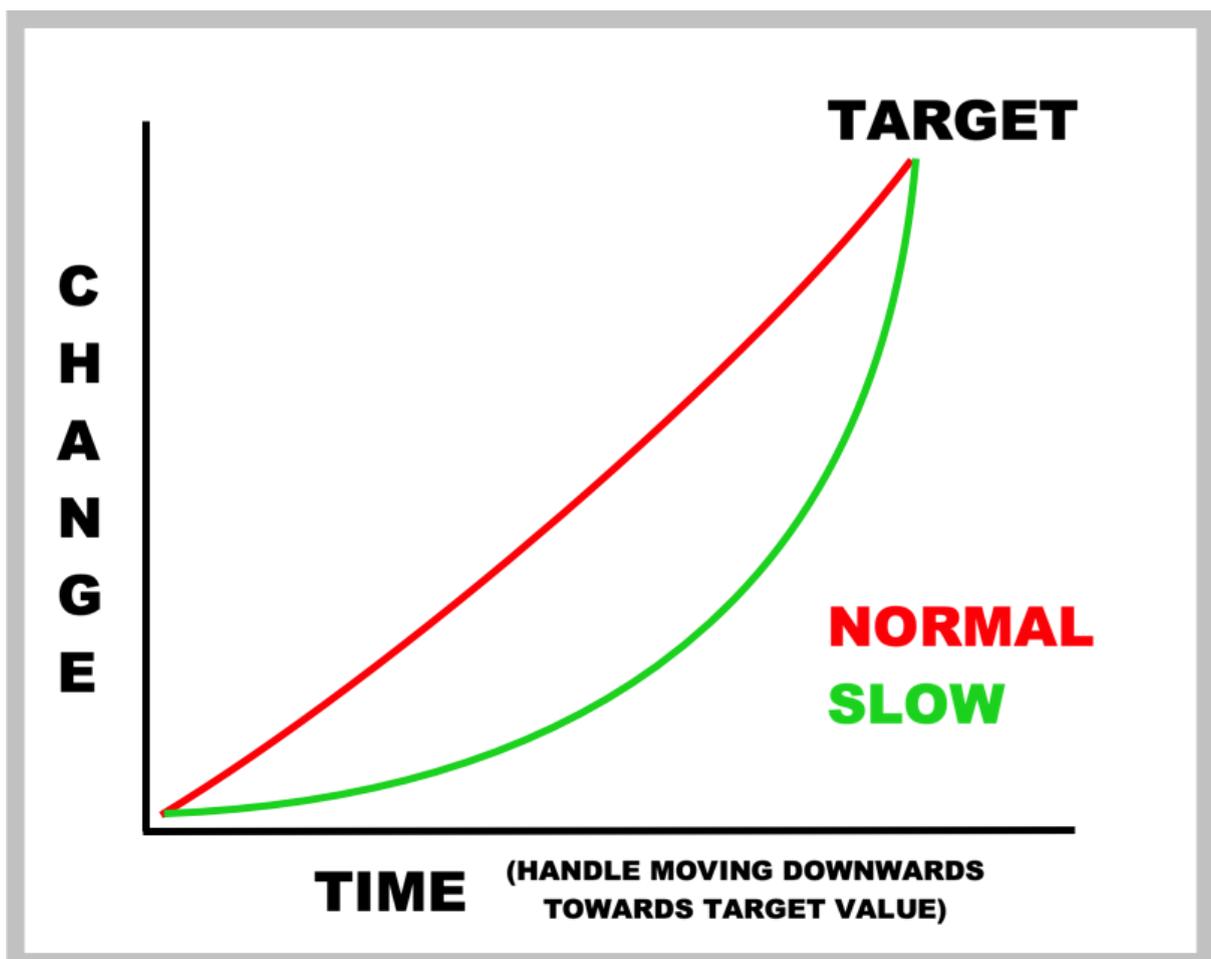
Double click on any parameter button to engage “Slow Mode”. A green light will appear.



Each main parameter has a Slow Mode, which slows down the rate at which automation is applied. This means that the parameter will move towards the target value (in this case -1dB) at a slower rate at first, and then pick up more speed the closer it gets.

This exponential curve allows for the plugin’s effects to be more subtle at first.

When Slow Mode is not engaged, the parameter will move towards the target at an even linear rate. Note that LOW-CUT and HI-CUT are not 100% linear and have a curve built in.



LINEAR PHASE MODE:

Most EQs and filters will alter the phase of a signal as you roll off frequencies or apply any sort of boost or cut. Linear Phase Mode ensures that this phasing issue does not occur.

Enter Linear Phase Mode by clicking on the icon to the right of LOW-CUT. The icon should light up.



The only drawback is that this mode is CPU-intensive, so it is usually best to leave it turned off until exporting in order to save processing power.

EFFECT CHAIN

The effects are in series in this order:

1. HI-CUT (low pass filter)
2. LOW-CUT (high pass filter)
3. VOLUME
4. WASHOUT
 - a. Delay
 - b. High pass filter (built in)
 - c. Reverb
5. BASS MONO
6. WIDTH

QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK ABOUT THE PLUGIN? **We are here to help!**

Email us: support@bigdaw.audio

