

VST3 · AU · Version 1.0 · Mzane Electric

MZ-Color

Studio Black saturator for harmonic color

A focused insert for adding tape, tube, transformer, or punch color without EQ bands, compression, or limiting. Watch the harmonic well and LED meters, then blend Drive, Tone, and Mix until the part sits with more weight and harmonic life.

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MZ-Color interface

1. Welcome

MZ-Color by Mzane Electric is a Studio Black saturator. It is color only: no EQ bands, no compressor, and no limiter. Insert it on a vocal, drum bus, bass, guitar, or mix bus when you want harmonics and density rather than a volume-only boost. Choose a Style, raise Drive, tilt Tone, and use Mix so you can hear the color against the dry signal. Factory presets give you starting points; always finish by matching loudness with Output or Auto Gain and checking against the dry path.

This guide covers installation, the interface, control reference, and practical mixing guidance for mix engineers and musicians.

Key features

- Five Styles: Clean, Tape, Tube, Transformer, and Punch
- Drive into the selected shaper, with optional 2x or 4x oversampling around the nonlinear stage only
- Tone tilt (darker or brighter) after the shaper
- Output gain and Mix with delay-aligned dry so wet and dry stay in time
- Auto Gain matches wet RMS to dry for fairer A/B listening
- Harmonic well under glass: live Out, Fund, and H3 traces
- Dual IN / OUT LED meters with peak hold (green / yellow / red)
- Factory presets: Default, Vocal Glue, Drum Bus, Bass Growl, Mix Bus Soft, Guitar Edge
- Activation and trial through your Mzane Electric account

What you will need

- A DAW that loads VST3 (and AU on macOS).
- MZ-Color installed from your official Mzane Electric download.
- Audio on the track or bus where you insert the plugin.

2. Installation

After purchase (or a trial download), get the package from your Mzane Electric account or product page on mzaneelectric.com. Always install from the official download.

macOS

- Unzip the download. You will typically find both a **.vst3** and a **.component** (AU).
- VST3: copy into /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3/ (or your user Library VST3 folder) as **MZ-Color.vst3**.
- AU: copy into /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components/ (or your user Library Components folder) as **MZ-Color.component**.
- Logic Pro and GarageBand use AU; many other DAWs use VST3.

Windows

- Unzip the Windows package.
- Copy **MZ-Color.vst3** into C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3\.

Restart your DAW or rescan plugins. If macOS asks for permission the first time, allow it and try again.

Tip: If the UI does not update after an install, remove the plugin from the track and insert it again.

3. Activation & Trial

MZ-Color is activated through your Mzane Electric account. Without an active trial or full license, audio processing is disabled.

- Open the plugin in your DAW.
- If it is not yet activated, the activation window will appear. You can also click **License** at any time.
- Sign in or create your Mzane Electric account.
- Start a free trial, or unlock the full version after you have purchased.
- If you already bought MZ-Color with the same account, full access should unlock automatically.

Purchase on **mzaneelectric.com**. After buying, download from your customer library, install, then activate in the plugin with the same account. For help, email **info@mzaneelectric.com**.

4. Interface overview

The panel is a compact hardware-style chassis. Across the top: Mzane Electric logo, MZ-Color name, License, Preset, oversample (OS), and Auto Gain. Five Style tiles sit below the header. The large window is the harmonic well (Out, Fund, and H3 traces under glass); the small window to its right is the IN / OUT LED meter. Four knobs along the bottom are Drive, Tone, Output, and Mix. Knobs travel from 8 o'clock (low) to 4 o'clock (high). Drag left to right to raise a value.



Figure — MZ-Color interface.

Regions at a glance

Area	What you see
Logo / name	Mzane Electric mark and MZ-Color product name.
License	Opens activation and trial for your Mzane Electric account.
Preset	Shows the current factory starting point. Click to fade in a list; pick a name, then adjust to the song.
OS	Click to cycle oversampling around the saturator: Off, 2x, or 4x. Off has no extra latency.
Auto Gain	When on, matches wet RMS level to dry so Mix and Drive changes stay easier to judge.
Style tiles	Clean, Tape, Tube, Transformer, Punch. Only one Style is active.

Area	What you see
Harmonic well	Live Out (cyan), Fund (orange), and H3 (yellow) traces under the well glass.
IN / OUT meters	Input is the dry signal into MZ-Color. Output is after Output, Mix, and Auto Gain.
Drive	How hard the selected Style is pushed.
Tone	Tilt after the shaper. Left is darker; right is brighter.
Output	Makeup / output gain in dB after the color stage.
Mix	Dry/wet blend. Fully left is dry; fully right is full wet.

Drag knobs **vertically** to adjust values. Your DAW saves and recalls settings with the project.

5. Quick start

1. Insert MZ-Color on the track or bus you want to color. Play the part in the mix, not only soloed.
2. Turn Mix fully left (dry). Choose a Style (start with Clean or Tape).
3. Set a moderate Drive, then raise Mix slowly until you hear the harmonics without losing the dry body.
4. Trim Tone if the color is too dark or too bright. Use Output (or leave Auto Gain on) so Mix comparisons stay fair.
5. Watch the OUT meter. If it is much hotter than IN, you may be hearing loudness rather than better color — ease Drive or Output.
6. Click License if you are asked to activate or start a trial.

6. Controls reference

Drag knobs left to right. Low is 8 o'clock; high is 4 o'clock. The table describes each control in everyday use.

Control	Range	What it does
Drive	0 ... 100%	How hard the Style is driven (up to about +24 dB into the shaper). Higher = more harmonics and density.
Tone	Dark ... Bright	One-pole tilt after the shaper. Left darkens; right brightens. Center is neutral.
Output	–24 ... +12 dB	Gain after color. Use with Mix and Auto Gain so loudness stays fair.
Mix	0 ... 100%	Dry/wet blend with latency-aligned dry. 0% is dry; 100% is full wet.
Style: Clean	On / Off	Symmetric soft clip. Mostly odd harmonics. Transparent density and glue.
Style: Tape	On / Off	Softer sat with high-frequency rolloff. Darker and rounder than Clean at matched loudness.
Style: Tube	On / Off	Asymmetric tube curve. Even-harmonic bloom and a warmer midrange.
Style: Transformer	On / Off	Mid bump into a soft knee. Forward mids / iron, not just darker.
Style: Punch	On / Off	Harder clip with a high-frequency lift. Edge and snap for drums and guitars.
Auto Gain	Off / On	Smoothed RMS match of wet to dry (not LUFS). Helps Mix and Drive A/B without a loudness jump.
OS	Off / 2x / 4x	Oversampling around the nonlinear stage only. Off = 0 extra latency; 2x/4x add the oversampler delay and keep Mix aligned.

Control	Range	What it does
Preset	Factory list	Click the field for a fade-in list. Loads Style, Drive, Tone, Mix, Output, OS, and Auto Gain as a starting point.
License	Button	Activate, trial, or manage your Mzane Electric license.

7. Mix, Drive, and Auto Gain

MZ-Color is a color insert, not a loudness plugin. If the OUT meter is much hotter than IN, turn Output down (or leave Auto Gain on) before you decide you like the Style.

Mix is delay-aligned with the dry path, including oversampling latency. You can safely blend; the wet path should not smear in time against the dry path.

Auto Gain matches wet RMS to dry. It is a listening aid, not a loudness-standard meter. Turn it off when you want to set Output by ear against Mix at 0% (dry).

How to audition a Style (Mix from zero)

- Turn Mix fully left so you hear the dry signal.
- Pick a Style. Set Drive in a moderate range (often well below noon to start).
- Raise Mix slowly until the harmonics show up without washing out the dry attack.
- If Mix at 100% is the goal (insert, not parallel), still start Mix low so you hear the color arrive.
- Match loudness with Auto Gain on, or with Output, then A/B Mix or compare to a bypassed copy in the DAW.

Example: vocal glue with Clean

The vocal is clear but a little thin in the mix. You want density and a touch of even harmonic weight, not distortion.

- Insert MZ-Color on the vocal. Load the Vocal Glue preset, or start from Default with Style = Clean.
- Turn Mix down, then bring it up to around 60–80% so some dry remains if you want it.
- Keep Drive modest. If you hear fizz or spit, lower Drive before you lower Mix.
- Nudge Tone slightly brighter only if the vocal got dull. Leave Auto Gain on while you compare.
- Watch IN vs OUT. They should stay in a similar range if Auto Gain is doing its job.

Result: the vocal feels a little thicker and more “present” without sounding overdriven.

Tip: Oversampling 2x is a good default. Use 4x if you hear aliasing grit on bright sources; use Off if latency must stay at zero.

Tip: Punch and high Drive can clip hard. Ease Drive first if the OUT meter hits red often.

8. Mixing guidance

- Judge color at matched loudness. Auto Gain or Output first, then decide if the Style is helping.
- Mix from zero is the fastest way to hear what a Style is doing. Do not start at 100% Mix and guess.
- Tape is often the safest mix-bus and vocal starting point; Punch is for edge, not glue.
- Tube adds even-harmonic warmth. A little goes a long way on vocals and bass.
- Transformer is a mid-forward color. Useful on guitars and when a source needs to occupy the middle of the mix.
- If Out in the well is much larger than Fund, Drive times Mix is high — that is a visual warning, not a target.
- Oversampling only surrounds the shaper. Tone, Output, and Mix stay at the host sample rate.
- Auto Gain is RMS, not LUFS. Trust your ears and the LED meters more than the switch alone.

- On groups, prefer Mix Bus Soft or low Drive. If you need heavy Drive, the tracks may need work first.
- Always listen in the mix. Solo hides whether the color is helping the arrangement.

9. Starting points for common sources

These ranges follow the factory presets. Load the named preset, play the part in context, then refine Drive, Tone, and Mix. Finish with a loudness-matched A/B.

Lead vocal

Factory preset: **Vocal Glue**

Gentle density and even-harmonic weight without obvious distortion.

- Style: Clean. Drive modest. Mix often around 60–80%.
- Tone slightly bright only if the vocal got dull.
- Auto Gain on while comparing. Ease Drive if sibilance or spit jumps out.

Watch for: Too much Tube or Punch on a vocal can sound fizzy. Prefer Clean or Tape first.

Drum bus

Factory preset: **Drum Bus**

Punch and glue on the kit without flattening transients.

- Style: Punch. Mix around 50% so dry transients remain.
- Drive enough to hear snap, not enough to square off the kick.
- Tone slightly darker if cymbals get harsh.

Watch for: If the kit feels small, raise Mix (more dry) or lower Drive before you reach for Output.

Bass

Factory preset: **Bass Growl**

Even-harmonic growl that still reads on small speakers.

- Style: Tube. Mix fairly wet (often 70–90%).
- Tone darker to keep fizz out of the top.
- Watch OUT vs IN. Auto Gain helps; still check in the full mix.

Watch for: Hard Punch on bass can add ugly odd harmonics. Tube or Tape is usually safer.

Mix bus (soft)

Factory preset: **Mix Bus Soft**

A little tape-like cohesion on the stereo bus — not a mastering chain.

- Style: Tape. Low Drive. Mix around 40–50%.
- Tone at center unless the mix is dull or harsh.
- Keep OUT in the same zone as IN. This is color, not loudness.

Watch for: If you need a lot of Drive on the bus, fix the tracks first.

Electric guitar

Factory preset: **Guitar Edge**

Mid-forward edge so the guitar occupies the mix.

- Style: Transformer. Mix at 100% if you want a full insert, or lower Mix to keep dry pick attack.
- Drive until the mids come forward. Tone slightly bright if the cab is dark.

Watch for: High Drive plus Punch can get fizzy on distorted guitars. Transformer or Tape first.

Default / unknown source

*Factory preset: **Default***

A clean, moderate starting point you can steer from.

- Style: Clean. Drive around one-third. Mix 100% with Auto Gain on.
- Audition Mix from zero if you are not sure the Style is helping.
- Switch Style only after you can hear Clean clearly.

Watch for: Do not stack several saturators without checking the OUT meter.

Troubleshooting

Issue	What to try
No sound	Confirm activation (License). Check Bypass, mute, Level/Mix, and that audio is playing.
Plugin not found	Rescan plugins. Use AU in Logic/GarageBand; VST3 elsewhere. Verify install folders.
Activation problems	Sign in with the purchase account. Re-open License. Email info@mzaneelectric.com .
macOS blocks plugin	Re-download the official release and install again. Allow permission if prompted.

Support & product info

Product	MZ-Color
Format	VST3 + AU (macOS universal) · VST3 (Windows)
Manufacturer	Mzane Electric
Version	1.0
Website	mzaneelectric.com
Support	info@mzaneelectric.com

Thank you for using MZ-Color. For product support, contact Mzane Electric.