shutter

User Manual

Shutter is an instrument that plays a loop: fitted to your song, moved into your key, cut into slices you can play.

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About Shutter

Instrument, not effect

Shutter makes its own sound from the loop you load, so your DAW lists it with instruments and synths.

Shutter is a software instrument that plays a loop. Load an audio file and it fits it to your song's tempo and key, cuts it into slices you can play from a MIDI keyboard, and lets you reshape it: stretch it, stutter it, reverse slices, split it into layers and send it through a chain of effects. When you like the result, you export it as a WAV file and drag it into your song.

How this manual is organised

Sections 1 to 5 cover installation, a first loop and the controls that work the same everywhere. Sections 6 to 9 are about the loop itself: loading, slicing and playing it. Sections 10 to 19 go through the sound, one card of the window at a time. The last pages are for reference.

With **HINTS** switched on (bottom-left corner of the window), every control describes itself in one line when you hover over it, and the bottom bar suggests ways to use whatever you touch. This manual is the longer version of both.

Requirements

Mac	macOS 11 or later, on Apple silicon or Intel. Audio Unit and VST3, in a 64-bit host that runs instruments.
Windows	Windows 10 or later, 64-bit. VST3.
Audio files	WAV, AIFF, FLAC, MP3 and Ogg.

Installation

Run the installer, then open your DAW and let it scan for new plugins. It appears as **Shutter** by **Lumen DSP**. The installer puts it here:

Mac, AU	/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components/Shutter.component
Mac, VST3	/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3/Shutter.vst3
Windows	C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3\Shutter.vst3

2

Quick start

These steps take you from an empty track to a sliced loop playing in your key.

1 **Load Shutter on an instrument track.** It goes where you would put a synth.

2 **Drag a loop onto the window,** or click the empty player to choose a file. Shutter analyses it for a moment and reads its tempo and key.

3 **Click PLAY** at the top left of the player. Your DAW's transport doesn't start Shutter, so you can audition the loop while the song plays. MIDI notes always play it.

4 **Click KEY** and choose your song's root and scale. Auto Shift moves the loop by the smallest step into that key, and TUNE pulls its notes in.

5 **Click SLICES** and choose 8 equal slices. Play C, C♯, D and up on your keyboard: each key plays its own slice. Double-click a slice in the waveform to reverse it.

6 **Shape the sound** with the TIME and STUTTER knobs and the lenses on the light path, or click the die (REFRACT) for a variation. When it's ready, click **EXPORT** and drag the file into your song.

Presets first

Presets play on whatever loop is loaded. The Stagger, Odd Time and FX Stutter banks are a quick way to hear what Shutter can do with yours.

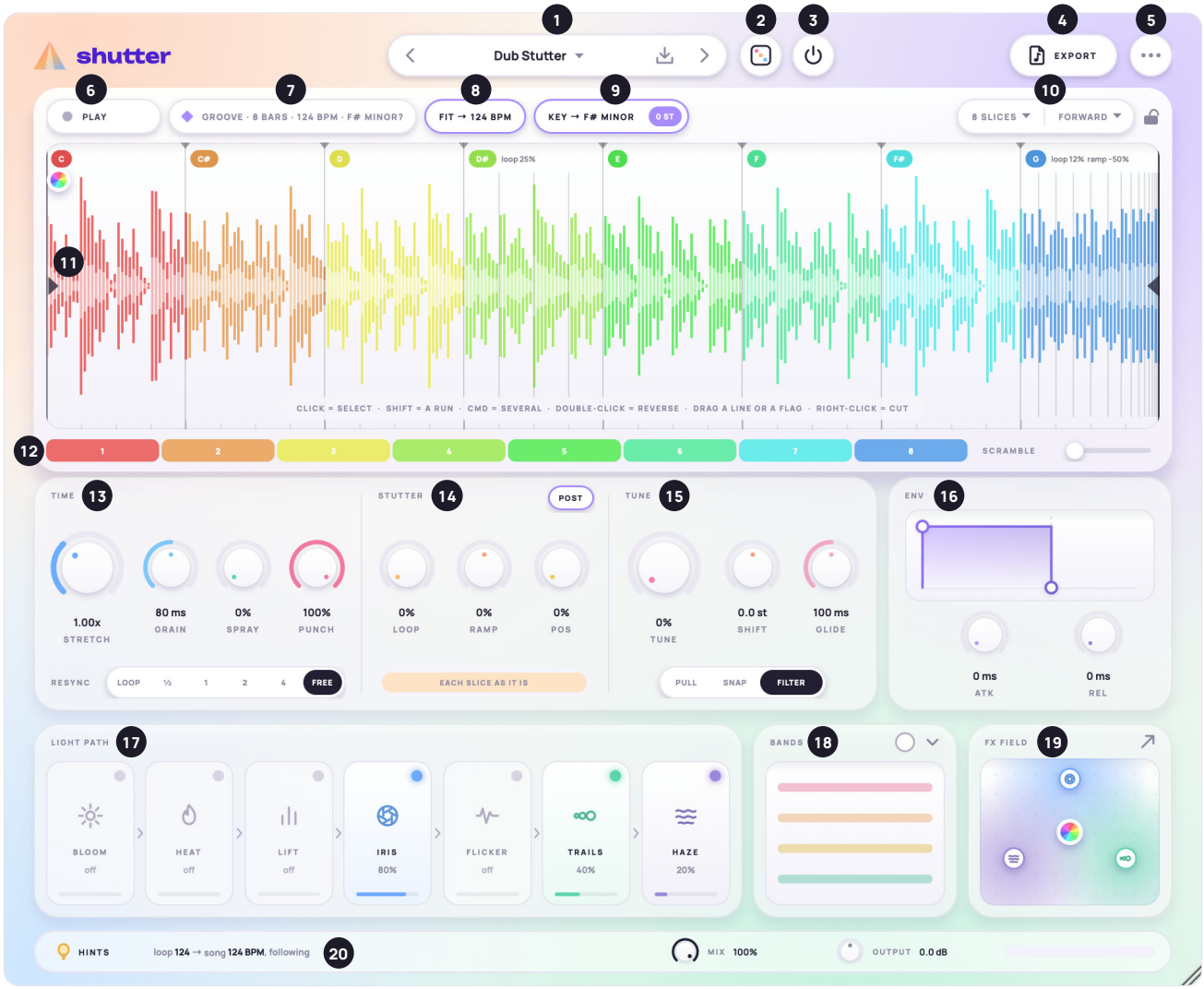
While you learn

Switch on HINTS in the bottom-left corner. Hovering over a control then tells you what it does, and the bottom bar suggests what to try with it.

3

The window

Everything is on one screen. The player at the top holds the loop; the cards below it shape the sound.



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4

Controls, hints and padlocks

Automation

Every knob is a plugin parameter, so it can be automated from your DAW.

Controls behave the same way throughout Shutter.

Knobs

Drag	Up or down to turn the knob. Its value is shown under it, above its name.
Cmd or Ctrl	Hold while dragging for fine adjustment. Move the mouse slowly.
Double-click	Returns the knob to its default.
Scroll wheel	Turns the knob under the pointer.

Pills, chips and cards

Pills that you drag sideways, such as a slice's LEVEL or PITCH, take **Shift** for fine steps and a double-click to reset. A chip with a ▾ opens a menu. Some names open a card, a panel with more settings: a lens's name, KEY, BANDS, FX FIELD and EXPORT. Click outside a card or press **Esc** to close it.

Padlocks

REFRACT changes the sound for you (section 17). A padlock keeps something out of its way. A closed padlock is pink, and padlocks are saved with your project.

Knobs	STRETCH, GRAIN, SPRAY, LOOP, RAMP and POS show a padlock in their corner when you hover over them. Click it to lock the knob.
Direction	The padlock beside the direction chip, above the waveform.
Lenses	Right-click a lens. A locked lens keeps its amount and every setting on its card.

HINTS

The lamp in the bottom-left corner switches hints on and off. While they're on, hovering over a control shows one line describing it. Touching a control (a click, a drag or the scroll wheel) also puts tips for using it in the bottom bar, in place of the tempo: a new tip every 7 seconds, until 30 seconds after you last touched it. The setting is saved with your project.

5

Presets and the top bar

A changed preset

A dot after the preset's name means something has changed since you loaded it.

A preset stores a sound: the TIME, STUTTER and TUNE settings, the lenses and their order, BANDS, the FX FIELD and the slice edits. It plays on whatever loop is loaded, and it doesn't change the loop, your key, MIX or OUTPUT.

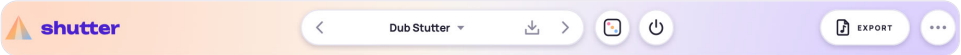

Figure 5.1 The top bar: presets, REFRACT (the die), BYPASS, EXPORT and the More menu.

‹ ›	The previous or next preset.
Name	Opens the preset browser.
Save	The arrow icon saves the current sound as a preset of your own.
BYPASS	The power sign. While it's dark you hear the original loop, untouched but in time with the song, to compare with Shutter's sound; keys play their slices as they are in the file. It isn't saved with the project, and EXPORT always records Shutter's sound.
··· **More**	**Reset to Init** returns the sound, the slices and the padlocks to their starting state, keeping the loop and your key. The menu also shows Shutter's version.

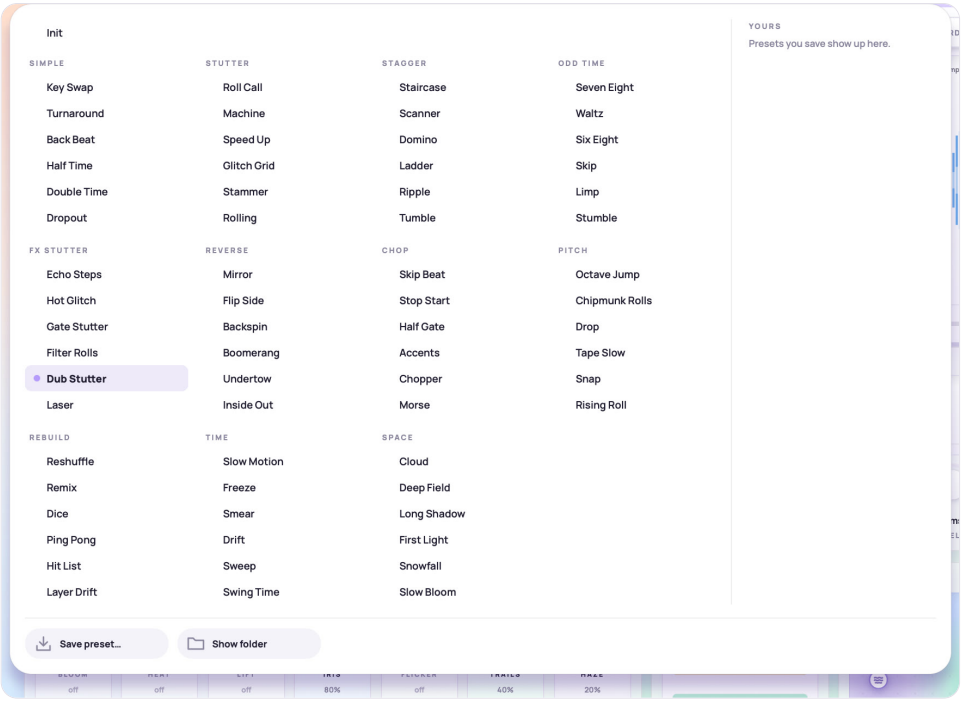

Figure 5.2 The preset browser. Factory banks are on the left, your own presets on the right.

The factory banks are Simple, Stutter, Stagger, Odd Time, FX Stutter, Reverse, Chop, Pitch, Rebuild, Time and Space. **Save preset…** in the browser saves your own; **Show folder** opens the folder they are kept in.

6

Loading a loop: tempo and key

Loops without a key

When Shutter hears no clear key, as with most drum loops, Auto Shift leaves the loop where it is.

Drag a file anywhere onto the player, or click the empty player to choose one. Shutter analyses the loop once, reads its tempo and key, and stores the audio in your project, so the project opens correctly even if the file moves.

The tempo comes from the file when it says it: its tags, or its name, as in “lofi piano 78 bpm”. Otherwise Shutter reads it from the length, as a whole number of bars. A reverb or delay tail after the last bar is cropped off, so the loop stays in time; UNCROP brings it back. When the reading is wrong, click the loop's name and type the tempo, then press Return, or click TAP along with the loop four times or more. A loop in 5/4 or another odd time shows its length in beats.

PLAY	Previews the loop from the orb, on Shutter's own clock. Your DAW's transport doesn't start it, so you can audition while the song plays. MIDI notes always play it.
The loop	Its name, length, tempo and key; a question mark means Shutter isn't sure of the key. Click it to load another loop, to pick another reading of its tempo (half or double), to type its tempo or tap it, or to show the file.
FIT	Keeps the loop at the song's tempo and follows tempo changes. Click it to switch fitting off, or to set a tempo when the host has none.
KEY	Your song's key. Click it to open the KEY card.

The KEY card

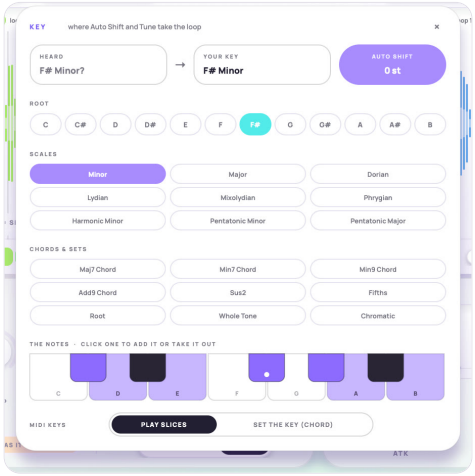

Figure 6 The KEY card.

HEARD is the loop's own key and **YOUR KEY** is the one you choose. When the file's name gives its key, as in “piano loop Am 90 bpm” or “cmaj”, Shutter takes it from there and the box reads **FROM ITS NAME**. Between them, **AUTO SHIFT** shows how far the loop is moved: always the smallest step, so it never moves further than it has to.

Choose a root, then a scale, a chord or a set of notes. The keyboard shows the notes in your key; click one to add or remove it.

MIDI KEYS sets what your keyboard does: **PLAY SLICES**, where each key plays a slice, or **SET THE KEY**, where the chord you hold becomes the key (section 9).

7

The waveform and slices

The waveform is where you edit the loop. Each slice takes the colour of the key that plays it, and a tag above it shows that key and any settings of its own.



Figure 7.1 The player, with the loop in 8 slices.

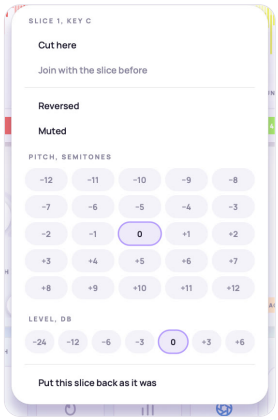

Figure 7.2 A slice's menu, from a right-click.

Slicing

SLICES ▾ cuts the loop into 4, 8, 16 or 32 equal slices, into slices at its hits, or leaves it whole. To cut by hand, right-click the waveform where you want the cut. Cutting by hand works when the slices play Forward in their own order.

Click	Selects a slice and opens its strip (section 8). **Esc** closes the strip.
Shift-click	Selects a run of slices.
Cmd-click	Adds a slice to the selection or removes it.
Double-click	Reverses a slice.
Drag a line	Moves a cut. It snaps to the loop's hits; hold **Shift** to place it freely.
Right-click	Opens the slice's menu: cut, join, reverse, mute, pitch, level, or reset the slice.

Flags and the orb

The flags at each end mark the part of the loop that plays. Drag them inwards (they snap to 16ths; hold **Shift** to place them freely), then click **CROP** to make that part the loop. **UNCROP** brings back the whole file. Double-click a flag to return it to the end. The orb marks where the loop reads from: drag it to start elsewhere, and double-click it to return to the start.

8

The slice strip, order and direction

Select one or more slices and the strip opens under the waveform. Its settings apply to every selected slice.



Figure 8.1 Slice 4 selected, with its strip open.

REV · MUTE	Plays the slices backwards, or silences them. The loop keeps its timing.
CHOP	Whether the slices take part in the stutter. When it's off they always play as they are.
LEVEL · PITCH	Drag sideways. Pitch works as in a sampler: higher also means shorter. Double-click to reset.
LOOP · POS · RAMP	The slices' own stutter settings (section 11). A paler pill follows the STUTTER knob; double-click a pill to make it follow the knob again.

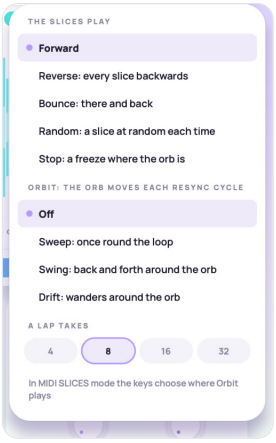

Figure 8.2 The direction menu.

Play order and SCRAMBLE

The numbered bar under the waveform is the play order. Drag a slice along it to move it, click to select it, and double-click to restore the original order. **SCRAMBLE** shuffles the order: the further right, the more shuffled, and the same position always gives the same order.

Direction

Forward, **Reverse** (every slice backwards), **Bounce** (forwards then backwards), **Random** (a random slice each time) or **Stop**, which freezes the sound at the orb. **Orbit** moves the orb a step each time the loop resyncs: **Sweep** goes once round the loop, **Swing** moves back and forth around the orb, and **Drift** wanders around it. One lap takes 4 to 32 steps.

9

Playing from MIDI, and ENV

Your keyboard can either play the slices or set the key. Choose which under MIDI KEYS on the KEY card.

Middle C

DAWs name MIDI note 60 differently: C3, C4 or C5. Shutter's 16- and 32-slice layouts start there whatever your DAW calls it.

PLAY SLICES

- With up to 12 slices, C plays the first slice, C♯ the second and so on, in every octave.
- With 16 or 32 slices, the slices run upwards from middle C (MIDI note 60).
- An unsliced loop plays from its start on any key.
- Up to eight keys can sound at once. Velocity sets the level, and playing a key again restarts its slice.

SET THE KEY

The chord you hold becomes the key for TUNE, and the loop plays while you hold it: from its start when the song is stopped, and from the song's position while it plays. While PLAY is running, chords only set the key.

ENV



Figure 9 The ENV card.

ENV shapes each key when you play slices. Drag the nodes on the curve sideways, or turn the knobs.

ATK	The fade-in, from 0 to 500 ms.
REL	The fade-out after you let go, from 0 to 5 s.

With REL at 0, a key stops when you let go and at the end of its slice. Above 0, a key held past the end of its slice freezes there until you let go.

10

TIME

TIME sets how fast Shutter reads through the loop, independent of pitch, and how often it lines back up with your song.

Pads from a phrase

Freeze a vocal or a chord with STRETCH all the way up, add some SPRAY, and set the direction to Orbit Sweep. The freeze then moves slowly through the loop.

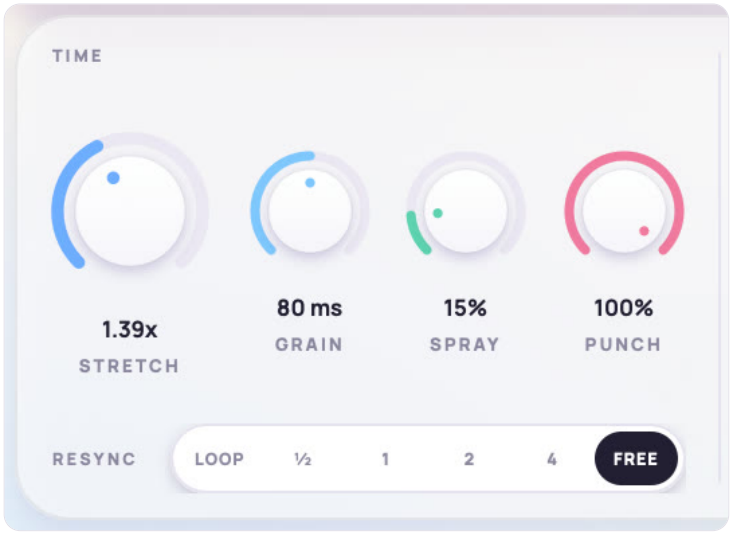

Figure 10 The TIME card.

STRETCH	The loop's speed, from 0.2x (five times faster) to 20x (twenty times slower). The pitch doesn't change. At the top of the knob the sound freezes: whatever is under the orb holds at its own pitch and level.
GRAIN	How much of each hit plays as it was before the stretched sound takes over, from 10 to 400 ms.
SPRAY	Random jumps of the read head, up to 250 ms either way, which give a grainy texture. In a freeze, SPRAY keeps the sound moving.
PUNCH	The level of the loop's own hits on top of the stretched sound, so drums stay sharp at any STRETCH or tempo. Sustained notes and pads aren't affected. At 0 you hear only the stretch.
RESYNC	How often the loop jumps back into time with the song: every time round the loop, every ½, 1, 2 or 4 bars, or never (FREE). With FREE, a stretched loop plays all the way through before it starts again.

11

STUTTER

STUTTER repeats part of every slice, and can roll into or out of it. The strip under the knobs shows one slice as it plays, with a block for each repeat.

Odd times from 4/4

POS shortens the slices it is set on. With 8 slices, set POS to 100 % on the last slice and mute it: the loop becomes 7/8. The Odd Time presets do this for you.

Drifting

A shortened loop drifts against your DAW's bars. That is intended.

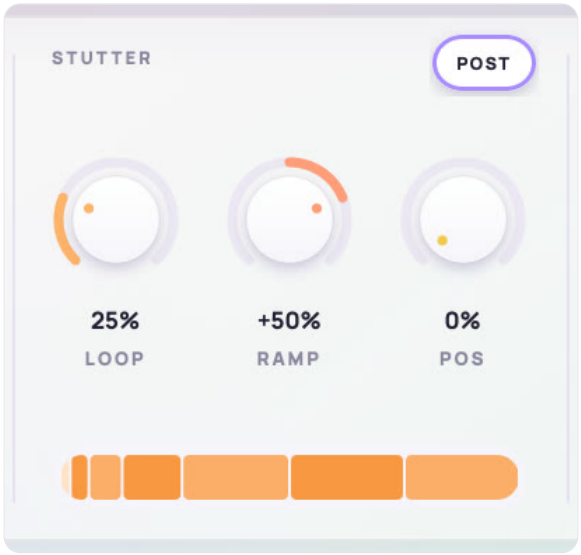

Figure 11 The STUTTER card.

LOOP	How much of each slice repeats to fill it. At 25 % the first quarter plays four times. At 0 nothing repeats.
POS	Where each slice starts playing, like a sampler's start point. What comes before it isn't heard, and the next slice follows straight on, so the loop gets shorter. LOOP repeats from this point.
RAMP	A roll over part of each slice. Turned right, fast repeats slow down into the slice; turned left, the slice speeds up into the next one.
POST · PRE	With POST, the rolls repeat what comes out of the lenses, echoes included. With PRE, they happen first, inside the loop.

Per slice

Each slice can have its own LOOP, POS and RAMP on its strip (section 8). Select slices and turn a STUTTER knob to write the value into them; the other slices keep following the knob. The Stagger presets are built this way.

12

TUNE

Noise into chords

Load a noisy or textured loop, set FILTER with TUNE at 100 %, and choose a chord as your key. Only the chord's notes come through.

TUNE moves the notes inside the loop into your key. It works on individual notes rather than the loop's overall pitch, and leaves drum hits alone.

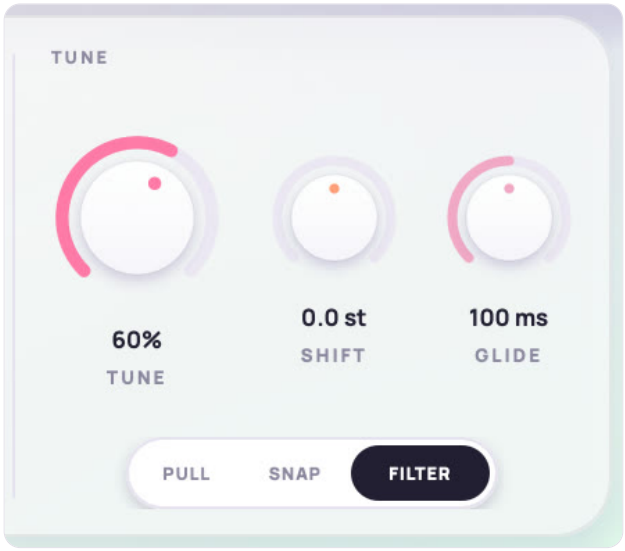

Figure 12 The TUNE card.

TUNE	How far the loop moves into your key. What that means depends on the mode.
FILTER	Notes in your key stay; notes outside it fade, by about 20 dB at 50 % and 40 dB at 100 %. This is the most natural mode and the default.
PULL	Notes outside your key move to the nearest note in it. A slow GLIDE keeps vibrato and slides.
SNAP	Every part of the sound is placed exactly on a note of your key, which sounds glassy. TUNE blends it with the original.
SHIFT	Moves the whole loop by up to 12 semitones either way. Auto Shift sets it for you; turning SHIFT yourself switches Auto off (switch it back on in the KEY card).
GLIDE	How fast the tuning follows the notes in PULL, or how fast notes fade when the key or your chord changes in FILTER. SNAP doesn't glide.

13

The light path

The light path is a chain of seven effects, called lenses. The sound passes through them from left to right.

Order matters

With TRAILS before HAZE, the echoes go into the space. With HAZE before TRAILS, the space itself is echoed.

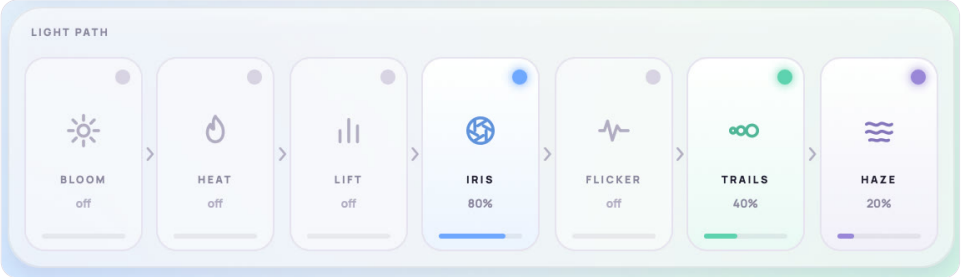

Figure 13 The light path with IRIS, TRAILS and HAZE switched on. A lit lens shows its amount.

Working with the lenses

Click	Switches a lens on or off.
Drag up or down	Sets its amount.
Drag sideways	Moves it along the path. BLOOM always stays first.
Click its name	Opens its card, with all of its settings (section 14).
Right-click	Locks it with a padlock, so REFRACT leaves it alone.

The lenses

BLOOM	A glow made from the loop's own sound, under the clean loop.
HEAT	Saturation, from warm to edgy.
LIFT	Brings up quiet detail (a soft top end, tails, room, breaths) or tames the peaks, at the same overall loudness.
IRIS	A filter on one knob, from dark to thin, with a tilt.
FLICKER	A gate in time with the song.
TRAILS	Echoes in time with the song.
HAZE	A soft space around the sound.

14

Lens cards and MOTION

MOTION on the tiles

While the song plays, a lens's amount bar on the light path moves with its MOTION.

Click a lens's name to open its card. The card holds the lens's settings and MOTION, which moves the lens in time with your song.

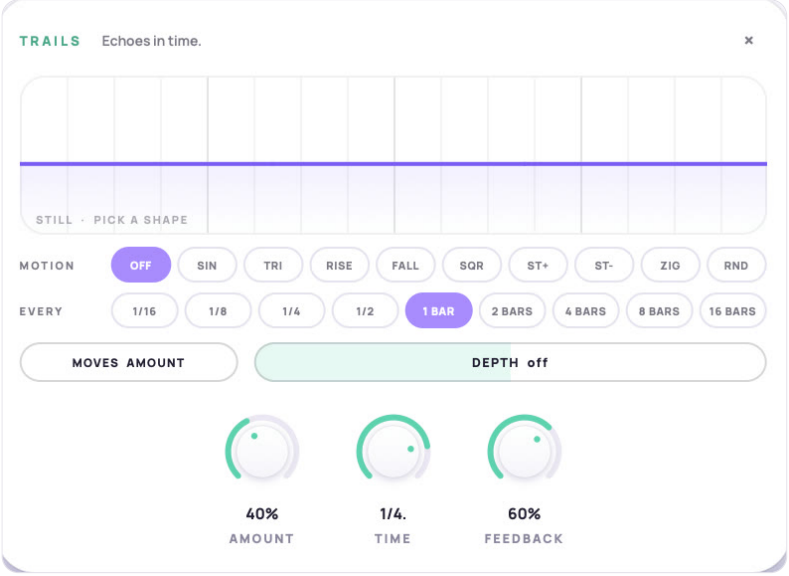

Figure 14 The TRAILS card.

BLOOM	Amount; Blur, how long the glow lingers; Swell, how it fades in; Shimmer, octaves and fifths above; Focus, from airy to glassy; Diffuse, its width; Drift, slow movement. **Glows in** sets the band of the loop that feeds the glow.
HEAT	Amount and Color, warm to the left and edgy to the right.
LIFT	Amount; Bias, which tames the peaks to the left and lifts buried detail to the right; Speed, from smooth to catching every hit.
IRIS	Amount; Cut, which darkens down to 200 Hz to the left and thins up to 3 kHz to the right; Tilt, brighter or darker around 1 kHz.
FLICKER	Amount; Rate, from 1 bar to 1/32; Shape, from soft to hard; Invert, which closes the gate at the start of each step.
TRAILS	Amount; Time, from 1/16 to 1/2, dotted values included; Feedback.
HAZE	Amount, Size and Decay.

MOTION

Choose a shape (sine, triangle, rise, fall, square, steps up or down, zigzag or random) and how long it lasts, from 1/16 to 16 bars. MOTION moves the lens's amount, or IRIS's Cut, in time with your song. Drag the graph up or down, or the DEPTH bar, to set how far it moves.

15

BANDS



Figure 15.1 BANDS on the main window.

A new groove

Split by FREQ into 4, move the top layer a 16th later and the bottom layer a 16th earlier. The loop swings without a single cut.

BANDS splits the loop into layers and gives each layer its own level and timing. You can pull a kick back, push the hi-hats a 16th later, or drop the top end out of a vocal.

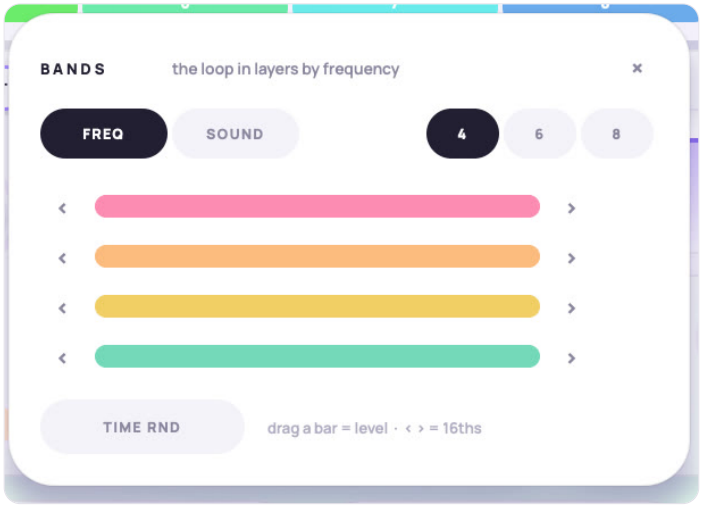

Figure 15.2 The BANDS card, with four layers split by frequency.

On · open	The circle beside the BANDS title switches it on or off; the arrow opens the card. With every layer at full level and in place, the loop plays exactly as it is.
FREQ · SOUND	FREQ splits the loop by frequency, from low to high. SOUND splits it by the kind of sound instead, still ordered from low to high.
4 · 6 · 8	The number of layers.
Levels	Drag a layer's bar to set its level. Double-click to return it to full level and its original timing.
‹ ›	Moves a layer earlier or later, in 16ths of the song.
TIME RND	Moves every layer to a new random timing.
REROLL	With SOUND, splits the loop again in a different way.

16

FX FIELD



Figure 16.1 FX FIELD on the main window. The arrow opens the full card.

FX FIELD blends the lenses that are switched on with a single point. Each lens sits around the field in its own colour and gets stronger as the point comes closer. In the middle, every lens plays as its own settings say.

Drag the point to move it, and double-click it to return it to the middle. When a lap length is set, the point travels its shape by itself, in time with the song, whenever Shutter is playing.

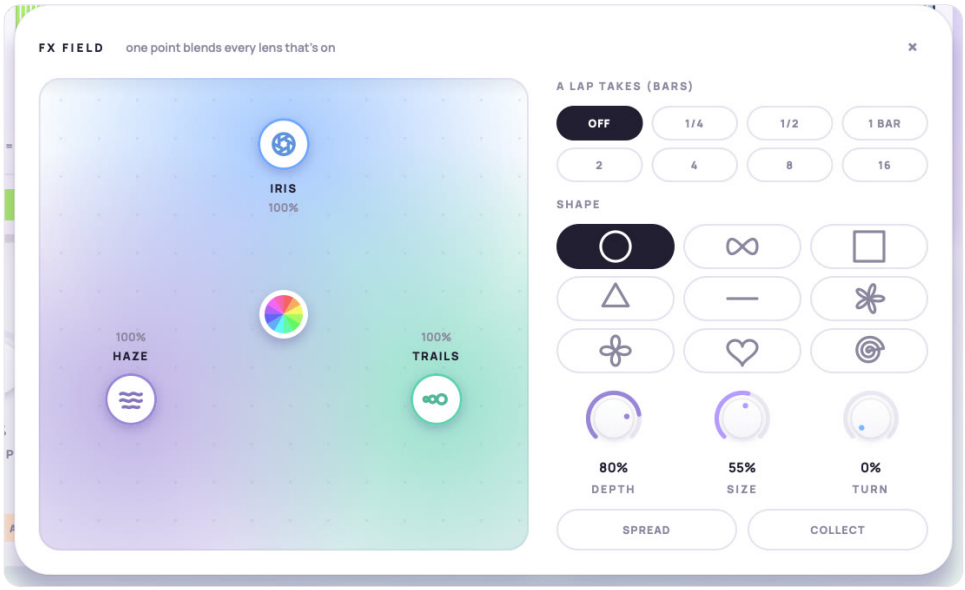

Figure 16.2 The full FX FIELD card.

A lap takes	How many bars one trip round the shape takes, from 1/4 bar to 16 bars. OFF keeps the point still.
Shape	The path the point travels: circle, figure 8, square, triangle, line, star, rose, heart or spiral.
DEPTH	How far the point moves the lenses away from their own settings. At 0 the field has no effect.
SIZE · TURN	The size of the shape, and its rotation.
SPREAD	Gives each slice its own place in the field, so each hit gets its own blend. Drag a slice's dot to move it.
COLLECT	Brings every slice back to the point.

17

REFRACT

REFRACT, the die beside the preset name, makes a variation of the current sound.

Keeping what you like

Lock it with a padlock first (section 4). A locked knob, the direction or a whole lens stays as it is however often you click.

Before you click again

If you like the result, save it as a preset.

Click

- Everything that is switched on changes slightly: STRETCH, GRAIN and SPRAY, the stutter if it's on, and every lit lens along with its settings.
- One new element is added: a lens is switched on, or the stutter starts.
- When three lenses are already lit, the new lens replaces one of them instead of adding a fourth.

Shift-click

A wider variation. TIME and the stutter can change freely (the stutter may start or stop), one to three lenses are lit with new settings, and the direction may change, though never to Stop.

What REFRACT leaves alone

The loop, its slices and their edits, the play order, your key and SHIFT, FIT, BLOOM's band, MIX and OUTPUT.

18

EXPORT

EXPORT records what you hear, including TUNE, the lenses, MIX and OUTPUT, as a WAV file you can drag into your song.

Where exports go

Music/Lumen DSP/Shutter/Exports. Shutter never deletes them, because some DAWs play a dropped file from where it is.

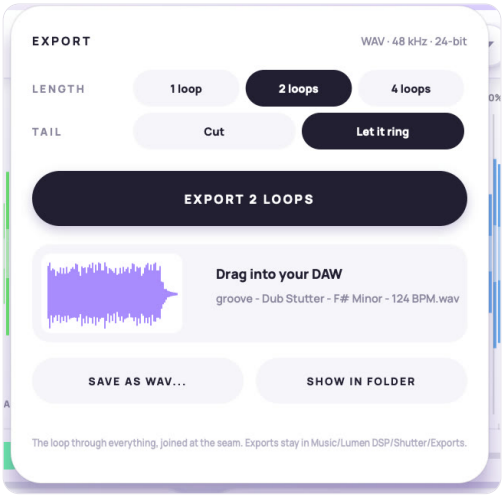

Figure 18 The EXPORT card.

Length	1, 2 or 4 loops.
Tail	Cut at the end, or let it ring until everything has faded, up to 12 seconds.
Export	Records the file. A bar shows the progress; click it to stop. An export longer than two minutes asks first.
The tile	Drag it into your DAW.
Save as WAV…	Saves a copy where you choose.
Show in folder	Opens the exports folder.

Seamless loops

Shutter plays the loop once before recording starts, so the file begins with the echoes and tails already in place and loops without a gap. Its first and last 3 ms fade, so it doesn't click where a clip starts or stops. A sound louder than full scale is turned down as a whole, never clipped. A loop here means the loop's length in your song. With RESYNC set to FREE it is the whole stretched loop; with Orbit on, an export counts whole laps.

The files

Exports are 48 kHz, 24-bit WAV files, named after the loop, the preset, the key and the tempo.

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The bottom bar

The bottom bar holds HINTS, the tempo, and Shutter's output.

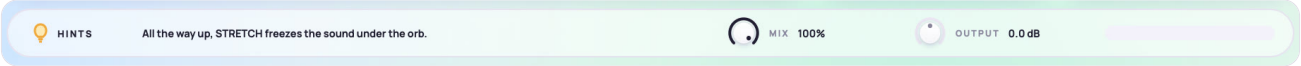

Figure 19 The bottom bar, showing a tip after STRETCH was touched.

HINTS	Switches hints on or off (section 4). While they're on, tips for the control you last touched appear here, in place of the tempo.
Tempo	The loop's tempo and the song's, and whether Shutter is following the song.
MIX	The plain loop against everything after it. At 100 % you hear all of Shutter.
OUTPUT	The output level, from −24 to +12 dB. Double-click for 0 dB.
Meter	The output level.

Window size

Drag the bottom-right corner of the window to make Shutter larger or smaller. Everything scales together.

Starting over

Reset to Init in the More menu (···) returns the sound, the slices and the padlocks to their starting state. The loop and your key stay.

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Troubleshooting

Shutter isn't in my DAW	Rescan your plugins and look among instruments or synths, not effects. The plugin folders are listed in section 1.
The DAW plays but Shutter doesn't	This is intended. Click PLAY in Shutter, or play MIDI notes. It still follows the song's tempo.
MIDI notes make no sound	Load a loop first, and check that MIDI KEYS on the KEY card is set to PLAY SLICES. With 16 or 32 slices, start at middle C. A muted slice is silent.
The loop is in another key	Auto Shift has moved it into your key. Set YOUR KEY to the loop's key, or turn SHIFT back to 0, which switches Auto off.
The loop's key is wrong	Put the key in the file's name, as in “Am” or “cmaj”, and load it again.
The tempo is half or double	Click the loop's name and choose another reading of its tempo.
The tempo is wrong	Click the loop's name and type its tempo, or TAP it while the loop plays.
The loop drifts against the bars	POS shortens slices, and RESYNC FREE lets a stretched loop run its full length. Set RESYNC to LOOP or 1 bar to keep it locked to the song.
Cutting by hand doesn't work	It needs the direction set to Forward and the play order in its original order. Double-click the play order to restore it.
Shutter sounds untouched	BYPASS is on: the power sign in the top bar is dark. Click it to hear Shutter's sound again.
REFRACT changed something I liked	Lock it with a padlock before you click, or save a preset first.
An export doesn't line up	Place it at the start of a bar. Each file is a whole number of loops long, with the tail already in place at its start.
CPU use is high	Switch off lenses you aren't using. BANDS and a moving FX FIELD add work, and each key held past the end of its slice holds a freeze.

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Mouse and keys

Knobs and pills

Drag	Turns a knob; moves a pill
Cmd/Ctrl drag	Fine steps on a knob
Shift drag	Fine steps on a pill
Double-click	Default value
Scroll	Turns the knob under the pointer

Waveform

Click	Select a slice, open its strip
Shift-click	Select a run of slices
Cmd-click	Add or remove a slice
Double-click	Reverse a slice
Right-click	Cut here; the slice's menu
Drag a line	Move a cut (Shift: freely)
Drag a flag	Set the part that plays
Drag the orb	Set where the loop reads from
Esc	Close the strip or a card

Light path

Click	Lens on or off
Drag vertically	Amount
Drag sideways	Position on the path
Click the name	The lens's card
Right-click	Padlock

Top bar

‹ ›	Previous or next preset
Die	REFRACT: a variation
Shift-click die	A wider variation
Power sign	BYPASS: the original loop
EXPORT	Record a WAV
···	Reset to Init, version

MIDI

Up to 12 slices	C, C♯, D… in every octave
16 or 32 slices	Upwards from note 60
Unsliced	Any key plays from the start

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Credits and support

Shutter is made by Lumen DSP. Updates, support and our other plugins are at lumendsp.com.

Third-party software and fonts

Signalsmith Stretch	Time-stretching and pitch-shifting. Copyright © 2022 Geraint Luff / Signalsmith Audio Ltd. MIT License.
Signalsmith Linear	Copyright © 2025 Signalsmith Audio. MIT License.
JUCE	The framework Shutter is built with.
Manrope	Copyright 2018 The Manrope Project Authors. SIL Open Font License 1.1.
Unbounded	Copyright 2022 The Unbounded Project Authors. SIL Open Font License 1.1.

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