



DB RECORDS · STUDIO TOOLS

dB Meters

Reference Guide

A dedicated meter bridge for big sessions — up to **128 channels** of **True Peak**, VU, PPM and RMS+Peak metering in its own process, plus a **Master Meter** with LUFS loudness, spectrum and correlation. Feed it from a DAW tap plug-in, the bundled 128-channel driver, or any Core Audio device. It never steals focus and never touches your DAW's CPU budget.

MACOS APP

VST3 · AU TAP PLUG-INS

BLACKHOLE 128CH DRIVER



01 The meter bridge at a glance

One column per channel: a numbered badge, the track name, an elastic meter well with a gradient fill and a red True Peak marker, and a live dB readout. A dB scale sits on the left; grouped channels cluster together with the group name underneath.

STANDARD VIEW · GROUP "STRINGS" + SINGLES



Badge & name

The circle carries the channel number — color it from a **9-color palette** per channel (Settings ▶ Label Channels...). Names longer than 5 characters are auto-abbreviated **Pro Tools-style** ("Vocals" → "VOCLS"); the full name lives in the hover tooltip. **Double-click any name to rename it** in place — Enter saves, Esc cancels.

Meter well

Gradient fill (green → **amber** → **red**) with the mode's ballistics. In True Peak mode the thin **red marker** is the held maximum; the bar itself always decays live.

Groups

Grouped channels **cluster and touch**, with the group name underneath. Works in Standard and Compact; drag columns to reorder inside a group. Deleting a group restores the previous order exactly.

Dashed frame = bridge channel

A number in a **dashed frame** marks a channel fed through the routing table (mono/stereo mapping from the Routing window).

Hover tooltip

Hovering a meter shows the full name plus the current raw values for that channel — in every view.

Three layouts for any channel count

Standard ¶1

Full columns with scale, badges, names and readouts. A permanent scroll bar sits at the bottom. Best up to ~32 channels on screen.

Compact ¶2

A grid of 32 per row with vertical letter names and a per-view dB scale — twice the density, still fully labeled.

Dense 128 ¶3

4 rows × 32 channels with full-width number pills and a mini scale per row — the whole 128-channel session on one screen.

02 Getting audio in

dB Meters is a separate app, so the first decision is how audio reaches it. Three roads — pick per session, switch any time from the source picker in the header.

● Tap plug-ins (VST3 / AU)

Drop **dB Meters Tap** on any track or bus. The plug-in streams levels to the app over shared memory — sample-accurate, no routing changes, works in any VST3/AU host. Each instance has an editable label that shows up as the channel name.

● BlackHole 128ch driver

The bundled 128-channel virtual Core Audio device (open-source BlackHole, GPL-3.0, built and signed by us). Point your DAW's outputs at it — classic console-style metering of the full mix stem layout.

● Any Core Audio device

Meter any input device directly — an interface, an aggregate, Pro Tools Audio Bridge. Use **Refresh Device List** after plugging hardware in.

Install — one installer, three checkboxes

- 1 Run **dB-Meters-Installer.pkg** from dbapps.co — Developer ID signed and Apple-notarized.
- 2 Tick what you need: the **app**, the **VST3 + AU plug-ins**, the **BlackHole 128ch driver** — each optional, one admin password for all.
- 3 If you installed the driver, **restart or log out** once so macOS registers the device.
- 4 Open dB Meters, pick a source in the header, press play in your DAW — meters move.

Pro Tools session workflow

- Route mix outputs (or an aggregate) to the **BlackHole 128ch** device, or put **Tap** plug-ins on the stems you care about.
- Use the **Routing Table**  to map device channels to meter columns, mono or stereo pairs — mapped channels show the dashed frame.
- Label channels once (**Settings ▶ Label Channels...**) — names, colors and groups are remembered **per device**.

AAX for Pro Tools inserts is built but awaits PACE signing — until then, use the BlackHole route or the Audio Bridge with Pro Tools. The app itself meters Pro Tools sessions today.

Metering modes

True Peak

Inter-sample peaks via oversampling (ITU-R BS.1770-5). Live bar decays per your **True Peak Decay**; the red marker holds the maximum for the **Peak Hold** time.

VU · PPM

Classic needle-speed ballistics for level balancing (VU) and broadcast-style quasi-peak (PPM).

RMS + Peak

Combined bar: RMS body with a peak tick — the everyday tracking view.

LUFS & correlation

Measured continuously and shown in the **Master Meter** window (next page) rather than per channel.

03 Master Meter, Peak Alert & ballistics

Master Meter

A separate, freely-sized window (à la Insight) tapping the same audio — no second stream, no extra load:

- **Integrated / Short-term LUFS** with target markers for delivery specs
- **Loudness statistics** — range and session stats at a glance
- **Spectrum RTA** — real-time analyzer of the summed program
- **Per-channel strip** in dBFS
- **Phase correlation** of the program

Modules are rearrangeable; the window position and layout are remembered. Closing the main bridge doesn't close the Master Meter — and the app always relaunches with the main bridge window.

Peak Alert

A global overload watchdog across **all** channels — you don't have to be looking at the right column:

- When any channel crosses the threshold, a banner names **which channels** clipped and how hard
- Alert history until you dismiss it — nothing is missed while you're in another window
- The banner never covers clickable controls

Reset Peak Holds

Clears every held marker and alert state in one go — start of a new pass.

Ballistics & Speed — honest True Peak

Open **Settings**  — three tabs: **Licence**, **Ballistics & Speed**, and **Compliance** (the standards the measurement follows, including the BS.1770-5 notes below). Ballistics presets: Standard/Broadcast, Fast/Tracking, Slow, or Custom; PPM offers Type I (DIN/Nordic) and Type IIa (BBC) ballistics.

True Peak Decay

How fast the live bar falls after a peak. The bar **always** decays — holding is the marker's job, never the bar's.

Peak Hold — 0.5 / 1.5 / 3 s / ∞

How long the red marker dwells at the maximum, measured in **audio time**, before collapsing to the live level. ∞ holds until you reset. The norm is 3 s.

True Peak Oversampling

4x or 8x. At sample rates below 48 kHz, 4x is automatically raised to 8x so the effective rate meets the **≥192 kHz** minimum of ITU-R BS.1770-5.

Readouts use raw measurement

Numeric readouts and Peak Alert always use the raw measured True Peak — never the display envelope. What you log is what was measured.

Reading the colors

Green → amber → red fill

Level zones of the gradient well.

Red marker line

Held True Peak maximum (Peak Hold).

Colored badge

Your own channel color from the palette.

04 Labels, colors & groups

Everything about channel identity lives in one sheet — **Settings ▶ Label Channels...** (the gear menu in the header). All of it is saved per audio device, so each rig keeps its own layout.

Naming

- Type names in the sheet, or **double-click a channel name in any view** to rename in place.
- Names over 5 characters are abbreviated Pro Tools-style: vowels drop from the right, then a hard cut — **"Electric Guitar" → "ELCTR"**.
- The full name always shows in the hover tooltip and in the sheet.

Colors

- A 9-color palette per channel — the badge (Standard, Compact) and the number pill (Dense 128) take the color.
- **Select many rows** with the checkboxes and apply a color to the whole selection at once.
- Number ink stays near-black on colored fills, so light mode stays readable.

Groups

- 1 Select channels in the sheet (e.g. all string mics).
 - 2 Type a group name — **"Strings"** — and add the selection.
 - 3 The group's meters **pull together and touch**, with the name under the cluster — in Standard and Compact.
- A channel belongs to at most **one** group.
 - Drag columns to reorder **inside** a group.
 - Removing a group restores the exact previous order.

The Settings menu (gear)

Label Channels...

Names, colors, multi-select bulk actions and groups — the sheet described above.

Routing...

Map device channels to meter columns, mono or stereo pairs. Routed channels wear the dashed frame.

Fullscreen

The bridge fills the display for a machine-room or client view.

View menu

- **Appearance** — System / Light / Dark
- **Metering Mode** — True Peak · VU · PPM · RMS+Peak
- **Layout** — Standard  · Compact  · Dense 128 
- **Reset Peak Holds** 

05 Keyboard shortcuts & what's new

⌘ 1 / 2 / 3

Layout — Standard / Compact / Dense 128

⌘ ⇧ M

Open the Master Meter window

⌘ ⇧ R

Open the Routing Table

⌘ ⇧ H

Reset all Peak Holds

2×click

On a channel name — rename in place
(Enter saves, Esc cancels)

Drag

A column — reorder channels (also inside a group)

v1.1.0

CURRENT RELEASE

The biggest update since launch — channel identity, honest True Peak semantics, and a major performance rebuild.

● GROUPS

Cluster related channels so their meters touch, with the group name underneath — Standard and Compact.

● Track-number colors

9-color palette per channel, bulk-apply to a multi-selection; saved per device.

● Pro Tools-style names

Auto-abbreviation over 5 characters + double-click rename in every view.

● Honest Peak Hold

The bar always decays; the red marker holds — the semantics an external audit demanded, plus BS.1770-5 oversampling auto-bump.

● Dense 128 legibility

Full-width number pills in a fixed bold size; tooltip always on top.

● Performance

Drawing path rebuilt: 128 channels at 30 Hz now take ~7% of one core (was a full core); near zero when occluded.

Compatibility

macOS

macOS 15 Sequoia or newer, Apple Silicon. Developer ID signed & notarized.

Plug-ins

VST3 (confirmed live in REAPER) and AU builds included. AAX built, awaiting PACE signing.

Driver

BlackHole 128ch (GPL-3.0, © Existential Audio) — optional, requires one restart after install.

Updates

The app updates itself (Sparkle) — plug-ins and the driver are updated by re-running the installer.

06 Troubleshooting

Meters don't move

- Check the **source picker** in the header — is the right device or Plugin Transport selected?
- BlackHole route: confirm the DAW's outputs actually target the **BlackHole 128ch** device.
- Tap plug-ins: the instance must be on a playing track; dead instances are pruned automatically.
- New hardware? **Refresh Device List** in the source menu.

BlackHole 128ch doesn't appear after install

- macOS registers Core Audio drivers at login — **restart or log out/in** once.
- Then check **Audio MIDI Setup**: the device should list 128 ins and outs.

True Peak reads above 0 dBFS — is that a bug?

- No — that's the point. **Inter-sample peaks** legitimately exceed 0 dBFS on hot material; True Peak exists to catch them before a converter or codec does.
- Readouts always report the **raw measurement**, never a smoothed display value.

Trial ended / activating a licence

- The trial runs **14 days** with all channels. After it, the app keeps metering honestly — on **8 channels** — until you activate.
- Open **Settings**  **Licence**, paste the key from your purchase e-mail (or **Load File...**), click **Activate**. Fully **offline** — no internet, no account.
- Moving to a new Mac? **Remove from this Mac** on the old one, then activate with the same key.

Latest installer, licenses and support at dbapps.co. The app auto-updates via Sparkle (**Check for Updates...** forces a check); re-run the installer to refresh the plug-ins or the driver.