



# Softube PC MAC Transient Shaper \$99

There are plenty of excellent transient-shaping plugins available, so what, if anything, makes this one noteworthy?

> Transient Shaper (VST/AU/AAX) expands upon the transient shaping algorithm from Softube's Console 1, the main addition being dual-band operation with adjustable crossover (100Hz-4kHz). It retains the two controls of the Console 1 version - Sustain and Punch, providing +/-20dB of adjustment to the sustain and attack stages respectively - with switches for setting which frequencies are processed by each: Hi, Lo or Wide (both). This provides some flexibility, though not quite as much as you'd get with completely independent controls for each band.

The Punch control is augmented by a Fast/Slow transients slider, which not only adjusts the detection circuit accordingly, but also influences the duration of the applied transient shaping. And while we're talking detector circuits, the block diagram reveals that the Punch detector circuit analyses the stereo signal, while the Sustain detector analyses the L+R combined mono signal.

Following the main controls are global output Level and OdB soft Clip on/off. Levels can soon get hot when applying transient shaping, so the clipper is useful, but it's good that you can switch it off and overload the channel, instead, should you wish. Finally, Transient Shaper includes both output level and separate Hi and Lo gain change meters (+/-20dB).

Unsurprisingly, Transient Shaper is great on drums, high Punch settings combining with

either very short or long Sustain to greatly enhance hits, and transient settings towards the Fast end of the range being particularly good for bringing out kick drum click and snare drum snap.

Nevertheless, Transient Shaper is also excellent at softening off sounds. Softube suggest using lower Punch settings to give overly harsh modern recordings a vintage feel, but if you're used to calling on regular compression to smooth out the sharp edges of sounds, you'll find this to be a quicker way of doing it, mainly thanks to the Crossover control. Having dialled in your desired transient colour, you simply shift the Crossover until only the frequencies you want to enhance (or soften) are processed.

## The shape of things

Overall, Transient Shaper feels like much less of a blunt instrument than its single-band counterparts, making processing of more complex sounds such as vocals, guitars and keyboards a more viable proposition. Although one wouldn't normally reach for a transient shaper when working on a lead vocal, this particular plugin is ideal for adding bite.

As mentioned, we did find ourselves lamenting the lack of separate Punch and Sustain controls for each band at points in the testing period, as well as an adjustable

crossover slope. Even so, Transient Shaper is a well-conceived plugin that offers plenty of control without being complicated and CPU hungry. The dual-band architecture makes it more than just a drum processing tool, enabling a wide range of dynamic processing colours - both subtle and overt - with the convenience of a non level-dependent design. Once you've tried it, you may well find it difficult to go back to the single-band alternatives. **cm**

**Web** [www.softube.com](http://www.softube.com)

## Alternatively

**SPL Transient Designer**  
**cm135 » 8/10 » \$199**  
Easy to use but lacking in features by modern standards

**MeldaProduction**  
**MMultibandTransient**  
**cm154 » 8/10 » \$100**  
Offers up to six bands of transient tweakery, and has been upgraded considerably since our review

## Verdict

**For** Simple interface, good metering  
Two bands offer just enough flexibility  
Great on drums  
Useful on many other instruments  
CPU efficient

**Against** We'd prefer totally independent controls for each band

With two bands of processing elevating it above most of the competition, Transient Shaper comes highly recommended

9/10

## Are two bands better than one?

**Softube's decision to make Transient Shaper a dual-band design is presumably inspired by the trend for multiband processing, but what difference does it actually make in practice?**

**In comparison to a single-band shaper, it offers a number of advantages. First, for regular targets such as kicks and snares, you can focus processing towards the precise element of the sound you want to change. When adding attack to the lower frequencies of a kick, say, you needn't exaggerate the**

**higher slap of the beater. This is particularly useful with live kick drums, where high-frequency bleed from other instruments and general ambience is commonplace.**

**With more complex full-frequency sounds such as guitar or piano, having two bands makes it possible to enhance them in a more natural way than just one. Indeed, we found returning to a regular broadband transient-shaping plugin for such material after using Transient Shaper to be a real step backwards.**