

AETHER DRIFT

Cinematic Pad Synth

User Guide - Version 1.0.5



A focused creative instrument for soft cinematic pads, wide ambient layers and evolving atmospheric sound design.

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1. Introduction

Aether Drift is a free cinematic pad synthesizer designed for fast, musical pad creation. It focuses on wide, atmospheric, slowly evolving sounds that can sit behind melodies, support ambient tracks, add cinematic depth, or create soft electronic layers.

The interface is built around two large performance orbs, a compact set of macro controls, a simplified ADSR envelope row, built-in effects, and an Inspire/Evolve workflow for quickly generating new pad colours.

Aether Drift is intentionally streamlined. Instead of exposing a deep technical synth editor, it gives direct access to the controls that matter most during writing, layering and sound exploration.

Main idea

- Use the large AETHER and DRIFT orbs for broad sound shaping.
- Use the macro rows for tone, movement, space, envelope and polish.
- Use Inspire when you want a new starting point.
- Use Evolve when you like the current sound but want a related variation.
- Use the FX switches to add or remove spatial colour quickly.

2. Quick start

1. Load Aether Drift in your DAW as an instrument plugin.
2. Choose a preset category, then select a preset from the preset menu.
3. Play a few sustained chords. Pads often reveal their character over several seconds.
4. Move the AETHER orb for the main tonal colour and openness.
5. Move the DRIFT orb for motion, width and evolving behaviour.
6. Use the first macro row to shape tone, motion, depth, width, space, air and warmth.
7. Use Attack, Decay, Sustain and Release to fit the pad into your arrangement.
8. Add Sparkle or Reverb if the sound needs more shimmer or space.
9. Save your own sound with the SAVE button when you reach a useful result.

Simple starting settings

- For a soft background pad: longer Attack, higher Release, moderate Space and Reverb.
- For a tighter pad: lower Attack and Release, less Reverb, less Space.
- For more movement: raise Motion and Drift, then adjust Depth carefully.
- For a cleaner sound: lower Sparkle, Air and Reverb, and turn off extra FX if needed.

3. Main interface overview



Control	What it does
Aether/Waelar switch	Selects the main sound flavour. Use it as an immediate character switch and choose the mode that fits the track.
Inspire	Creates a new generated sound. This is useful when you need a fresh starting point quickly.
Evolve	Creates a related variation of the current sound instead of starting from scratch.
AETHER orb	Broad tonal and atmospheric macro control for the main pad character.
DRIFT orb	Broad motion and evolving character macro control.
Macro rows	Hands-on sound shaping controls for tone, movement, space, envelope and polish.
Preset browser	Select categories, load factory presets, mark favourites, save and load user presets.
FX switches	Turn Chorus, Ensemble, Dimension and Reverb on or off.
Output	Final output level and meter area.

Mouse control

- Drag knobs up or down to adjust values.
- Use Shift while dragging for finer control where supported.
- The macro knob area responds across the full visible knob component, not only the centre.
- The large orbs are performance-style controls. Move them gradually for the smoothest results.

4. Main sound controls

The main macro controls are designed to be musical rather than technical. They may influence several internal engine parameters at the same time, so their result is best judged by ear.

Control	What it does
AETHER	Shapes the main airy, tonal and atmospheric character of the pad.

DRIFT	Adds evolving motion, animated depth and a more moving pad character.
Tone	Changes the general tonal balance and harmonic focus.
Motion	Controls the amount of internal movement. At zero, the internal movement is intentionally reduced to stillness.
Depth	Increases the perceived modulation depth and intensity of the pad movement.
Width	Expands or narrows the stereo image and wide pad feeling.
Space	Adds spatial depth and a more distant cinematic character.
Air	Adds brightness, breath and high-end openness.
Warmth	Adds softer body, warmth and a rounder tonal character.

Working with motion

- Use Motion as the main movement amount.
- Use Drift to colour and deepen movement after Motion is set.
- For a completely stable pad, start by turning Motion down.
- For a living pad, raise Motion first, then add Drift and Depth slowly.

5. Envelope, sparkle and reverb controls

Version 1.0.5 exposes the first four lower macro knobs as a straightforward ADSR envelope. This makes the free version more playable and easier to fit into real arrangements.

Control	What it does
Attack	Controls how slowly the sound fades in after a note is played. Higher values create softer, slower pads.
Decay	Controls the transition from the initial level toward the sustain level.
Sustain	Controls the held level while notes remain pressed.
Release	Controls how long the sound fades out after notes are released.
Sparkle	Adds bright, shimmering detail on top of the pad.
Reverb	Controls the reverb amount. The Reverb FX switch must be on for the reverb section to be active.

Envelope tips

- Long Attack works well for ambient fades and slow chord beds.
- Shorter Attack makes the pad more playable and more rhythmically defined.
- Long Release creates a larger tail, but too much can blur chord changes.
- Lower Sustain can make pads feel softer and less constant.

6. Effects section

The right-side FX switches provide quick access to additional colour and space. The internal effect amounts are designed to be audible when active, but controlled enough to avoid overwhelming the core pad sound.

Control	What it does
Chorus	Adds gentle modulation and a thicker, slightly moving tone.
Ensemble	Adds a wider layered character, useful for soft synth-string-like pad colour.
Dimension	Adds stereo size and spatial width.
Reverb	Enables the reverb section. Use the Reverb macro knob to

	adjust the amount.
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Balancing effects

- Turn on one effect at a time when designing a sound from scratch.
- If a preset feels too wide, reduce Width or disable Dimension.
- If a sound becomes too blurred, reduce Release, Reverb and Space.
- If the sound is too bright, reduce Air and Sparkle before changing the whole preset.

7. Preset browser, favourites and user presets

Aether Drift includes a factory preset system and a simple user preset workflow. The factory browser is category based, so you can quickly narrow the sound type before choosing a preset.

Control	What it does
Category	Selects a preset group such as All Pads, Warm Pads, Deep Pads, Cinematic, Air Pads, Wide Pads or Motion Pads.
Preset	Loads a sound from the selected category.
Previous / Next	Steps through presets in the current category.
Favourite	Marks or unmarks the current preset as a favourite.
Favourites category	Shows presets you have marked for quick recall.
User category	Shows presets saved by the user.
Save	Saves the current sound as a user preset file.
Load	Loads a user preset file from disk.

Preset workflow

10. Start from a preset category that matches the track.
11. Use Inspire if you want a new sound with the same fast workflow.
12. Use Evolve if the current preset is close but not quite right.
13. Adjust ADSR and Reverb to fit the track tempo and density.
14. Save useful results as user presets.

8. Practical sound design tips

Ambient pad

- Raise Attack and Release.
- Use moderate Space and Reverb.
- Keep Motion low to medium for slow movement.
- Add Air carefully so the pad does not become harsh.

Cinematic background layer

- Use a wide preset as a starting point.
- Use Width and Dimension for size, but leave space for the main instruments.
- Lower Tone or Air if the pad competes with vocals, leads or strings.
- Use a slower Attack to make the layer less intrusive.

Rhythmic or playable pad

- Use a shorter Attack.
- Use a shorter Release so chord changes stay clean.
- Keep Reverb moderate.
- Use Motion and Drift only as much as the rhythm can tolerate.

Deep atmospheric drone

- Use long Release and higher Space.
- Add Drift and Depth for evolving movement.
- Use Warmth for body and reduce Sparkle if the top end becomes too busy.
- Try the Waelar mode if the sound needs a different character.

9. Version 1.0.5 changes

Version 1.0.5 is a major usability and sound-shaping update for the original Aether Drift free plugin. The changes focus on making the main controls more audible, more playable and easier to understand.

- Macro knob ranges were widened so changes are more clearly audible.
- The AETHER and DRIFT orbs now have a stronger musical influence on the sound.
- The first four lower macro knobs are now Attack, Decay, Sustain and Release.
- The previous Glow macro has been replaced by a Reverb macro control.
- The internal movement behaviour was refined so Motion at zero can produce a more stable, still sound.
- FX behaviour was balanced so active effects remain audible without becoming too strong by default.
- Mouse handling was improved for the macro knobs and the large orb zero area.

10. Support notes

For best results, treat Aether Drift as a musical instrument rather than a technical editor. Small movements can be enough in a dense mix, while larger movements are useful for sound design, ambient work and cinematic textures.

If a sound feels too active, first reduce Motion, Drift and Depth. If it feels too washed out, reduce Reverb, Space and Release. If it feels too bright, reduce Air and Sparkle. If it feels too narrow, increase Width or enable Dimension.

Save your favourite settings as user presets so they can be recalled in future projects.

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