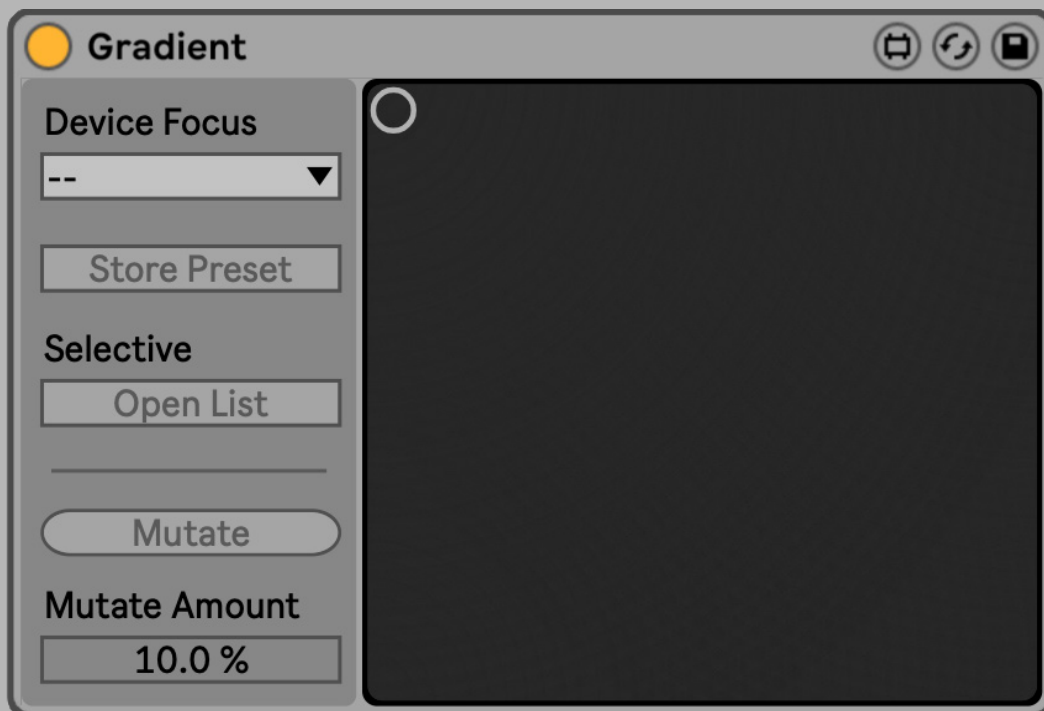


Gradient

User Guide

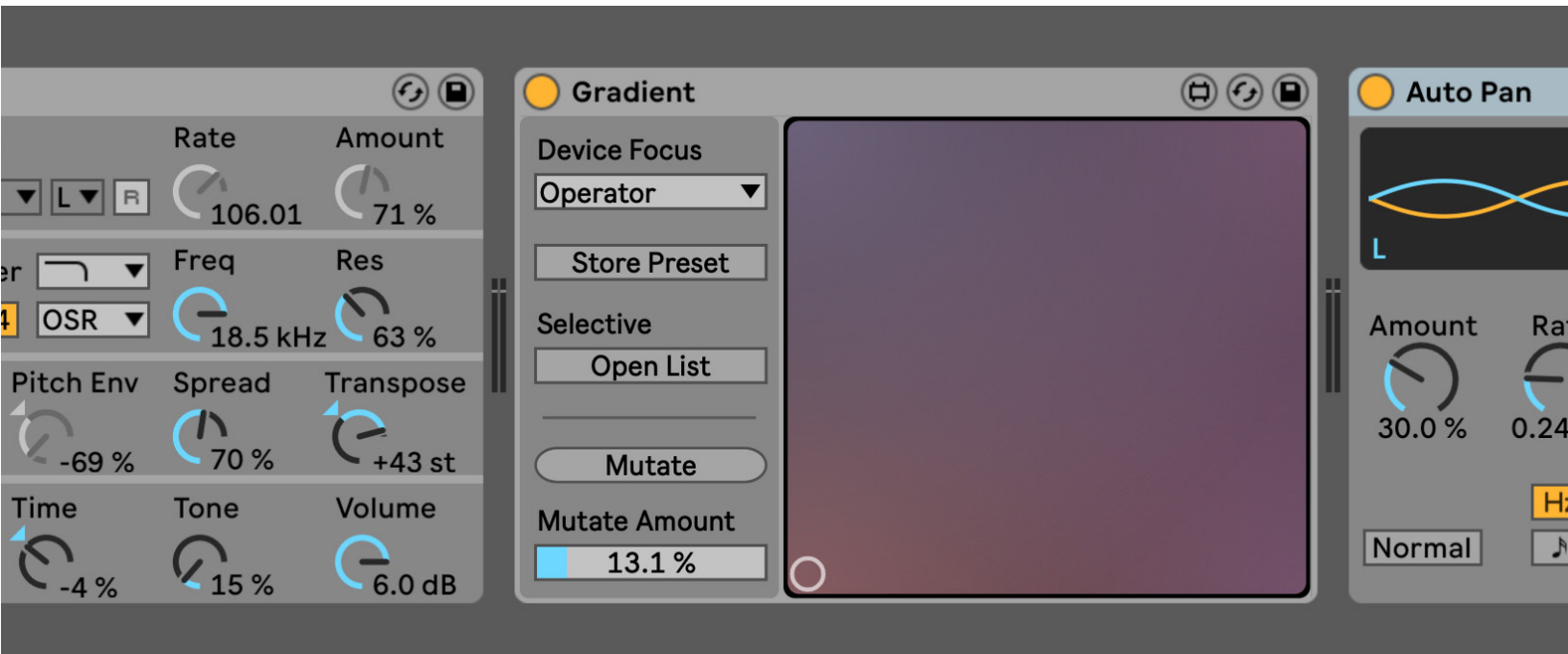


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OVERVIEW

Sometimes your best idea is just between two you've already had. Gradient is like a color picker for device presets in Ableton Live, aiding in your search for magnificent purples between the reds and blues in your existing library. Put in slightly less metaphoric terms, Gradient allows you to discover and design presets for your favorite Live devices, instruments, and VSTs in a new way that's fun and intuitive.



Installation

Install Gradient as you would any other Max for Live device. You can simply drop **Gradient.amxd** on any track in Live from the Browser or directly from your system's file explorer.

You may prefer to place the .amxd file in the User Library manually. Find the Max Audio Effect folder in the following location:

Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows 8, Windows 10

`\Users\[username]\Documents\Ableton\User Library\ Presets\Audio Effects\Max Audio Effect`

Mac OS X

`Macintosh HD/Users/[username]/Music/Ableton/User Library/Presets/Audio Effects/Max Audio Effect`

The easiest way to access this folder is to just right-click on the User Library Place in the Live Browser and click "Show in Finder/Explorer".

USAGE

The following pages cover how to get started with Gradient and its basic functionality.

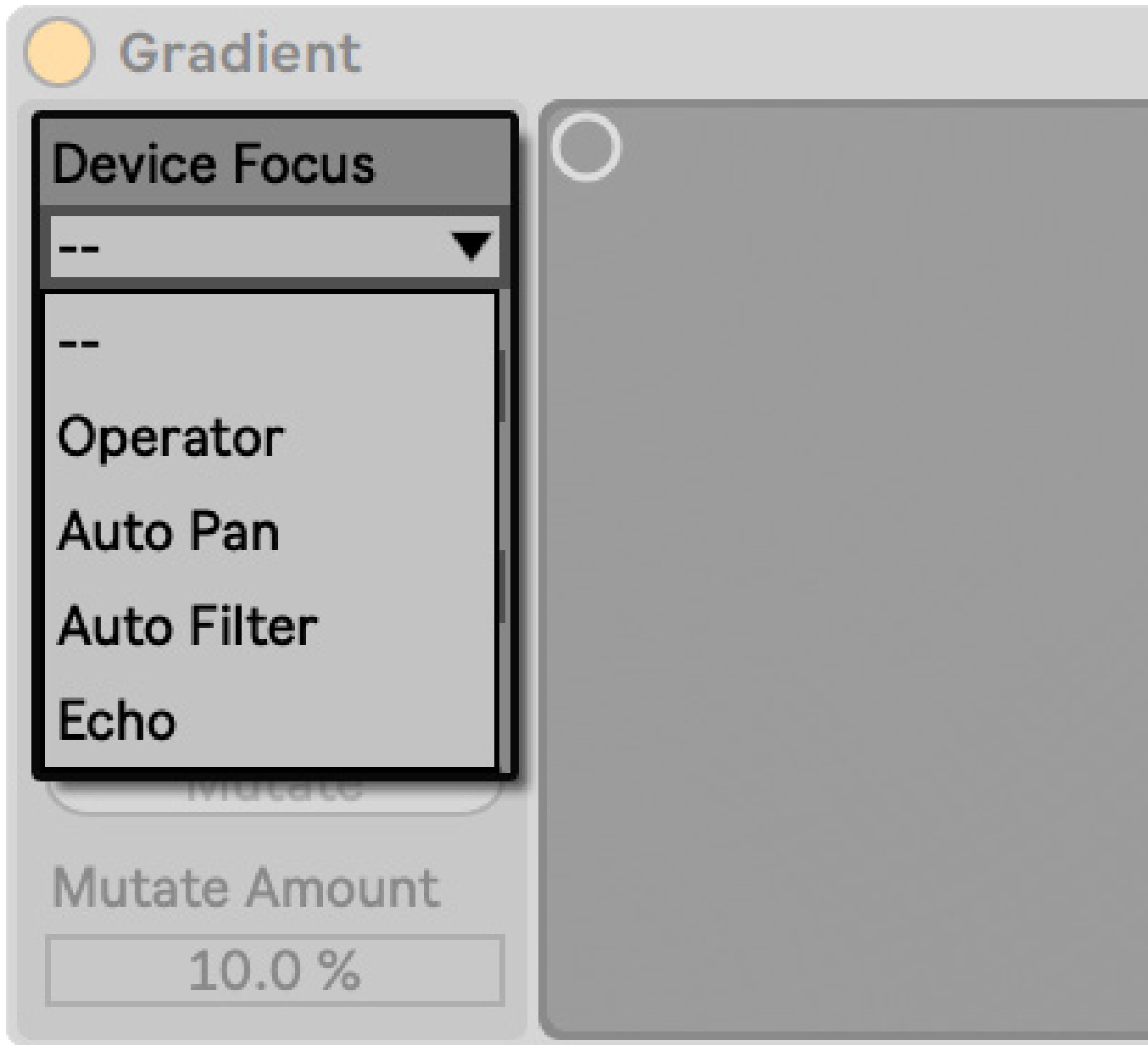


Figure 6.1 The Device Focus menu populates with all the devices in the same track as Gradient. Clicking the selection box opens the menu dropdown, as shown here.

Setting Device Focus

Gradient pairs with any device on the same track you've placed it on. Selecting a device from the **Device Focus** menu sets it as the “focused device”, the one you'll be designing presets for. You can freely change focused devices without losing the settings you've stored previously.

Note that Gradient must be placed in the same chain as a device that is nested in a rack for it to be visible in the selector.

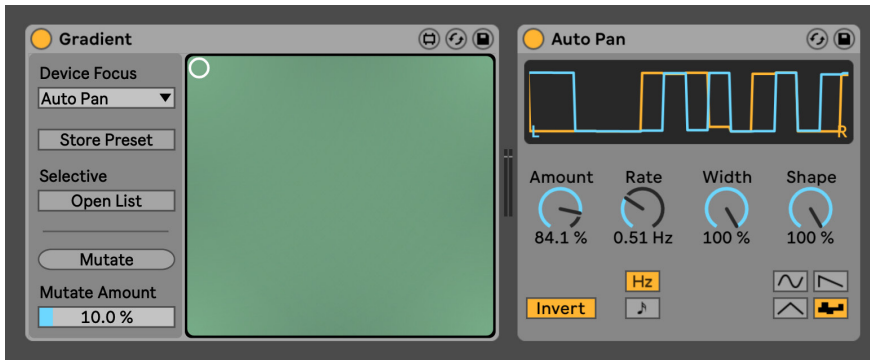


Figure 7.1 When a device is first focused, its current settings (preset) are copied into each of Gradient's four preset banks.

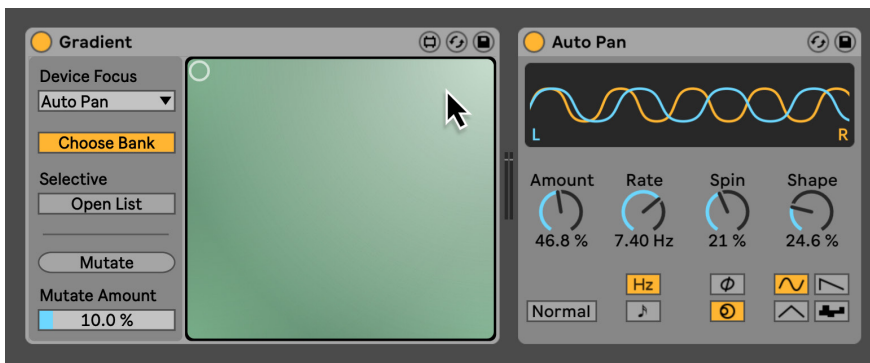


Figure 7.2 After altering settings in the focused device, toggle the **Store Preset** button or hold Shift and hover over the corner of Gradient's interface you'd like to store the new preset in. The corner will be highlighted.

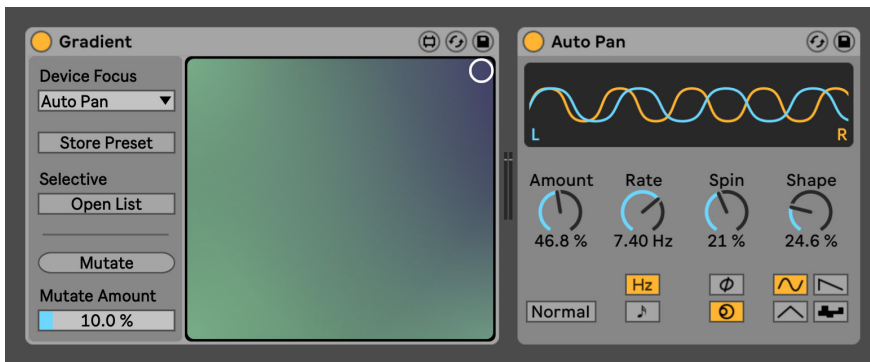


Figure 7.3 Clicking in the interface will store to all the focused device's settings to the highlighted bank.

Storing Presets

Gradient is not a controller, and you're free to use the focused device in any way you normally would. When you're happy with the focused device's settings, store it to one of Gradient's banks, represented by each corner of the main section of the interface.

To store a preset, click the **Store Preset** button (or hold Shift on your computer keyboard) and click the corner you want to store the preset in. This makes a copy of all the values currently set in the focused device.

The colors in the interface are derived from the settings of the stored presets, so a large difference in color should reflect a large difference in parameter values. It's worth noting that if parameters are changed only subtly, or only a few of the values are changed in a device that has lots of parameters (Operator, for instance), the change in color may be quite subtle. Don't rely on the colors for scientific accuracy or details on the contents of a preset bank, they are merely a helpful reference that is useful in most (but not all) cases.

Interpolating Presets

Once at least one distinct preset is stored, Gradient is set up for its main creative use: interpolating parameter values. Each parameter in the focused device will be set to values that blend the stored presets according to the distance the pointer in the interface's XY pad is from each corner.

It must be said that this behavior is far more intuitive than it might sound. If the concept is unfamiliar, start by changing only a few parameters in the focused device and storing the values in Gradient's banks. Sliding the pointer along only one side of the XY pad will effectively crossfade the values you stored in each corner at either end of that side. **Figures 8.1 - 8.3** provides a more coherent visual demonstration of this process.

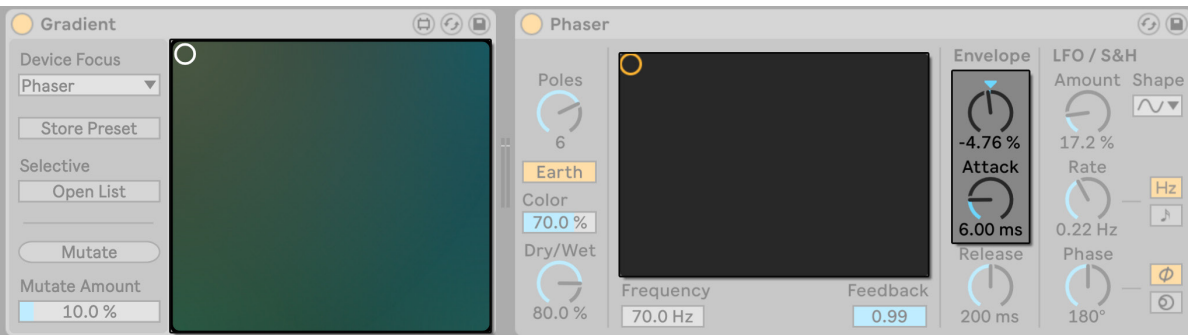


Figure 8.1 In the top left corner, Gradient's pointer recalls the Phaser's settings exactly as they were stored in that bank.

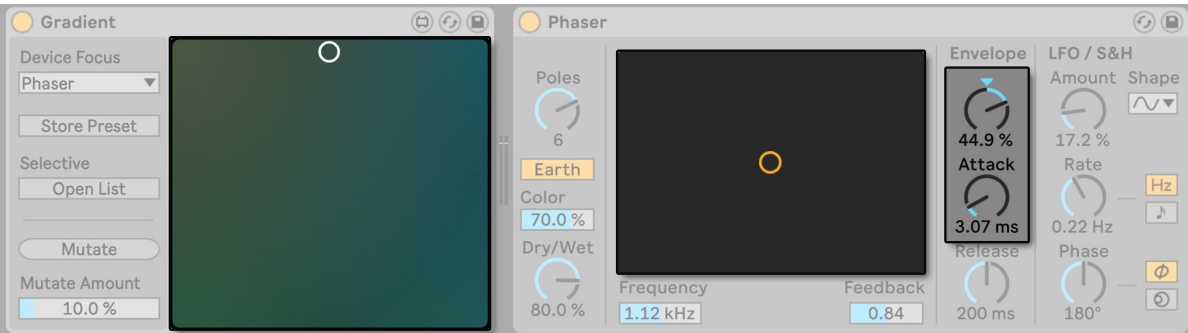


Figure 8.2 Between the top two corners, Gradient's pointer blends the two presets stored in the top left and right corners. Compare the the pointer's position and Phaser's settings in this image vs. those in the images above and below - here they are all exactly between the two.

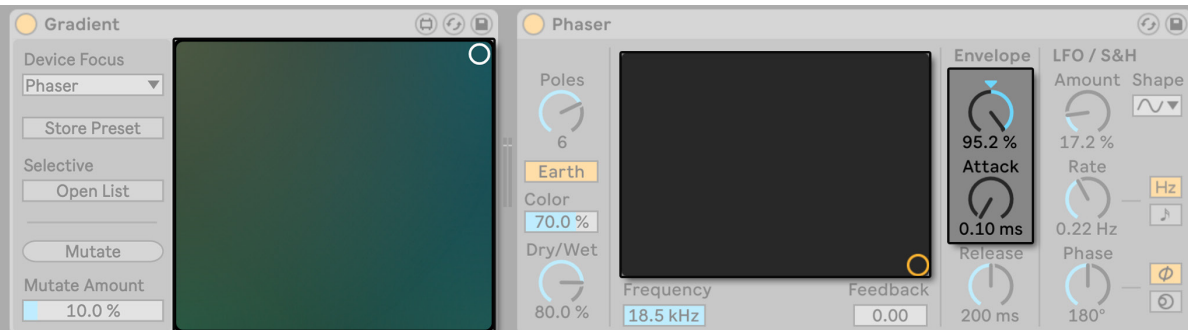


Figure 8.3 In the top right corner, Gradient's pointer recalls the Phaser's settings exactly as they were stored in that bank.

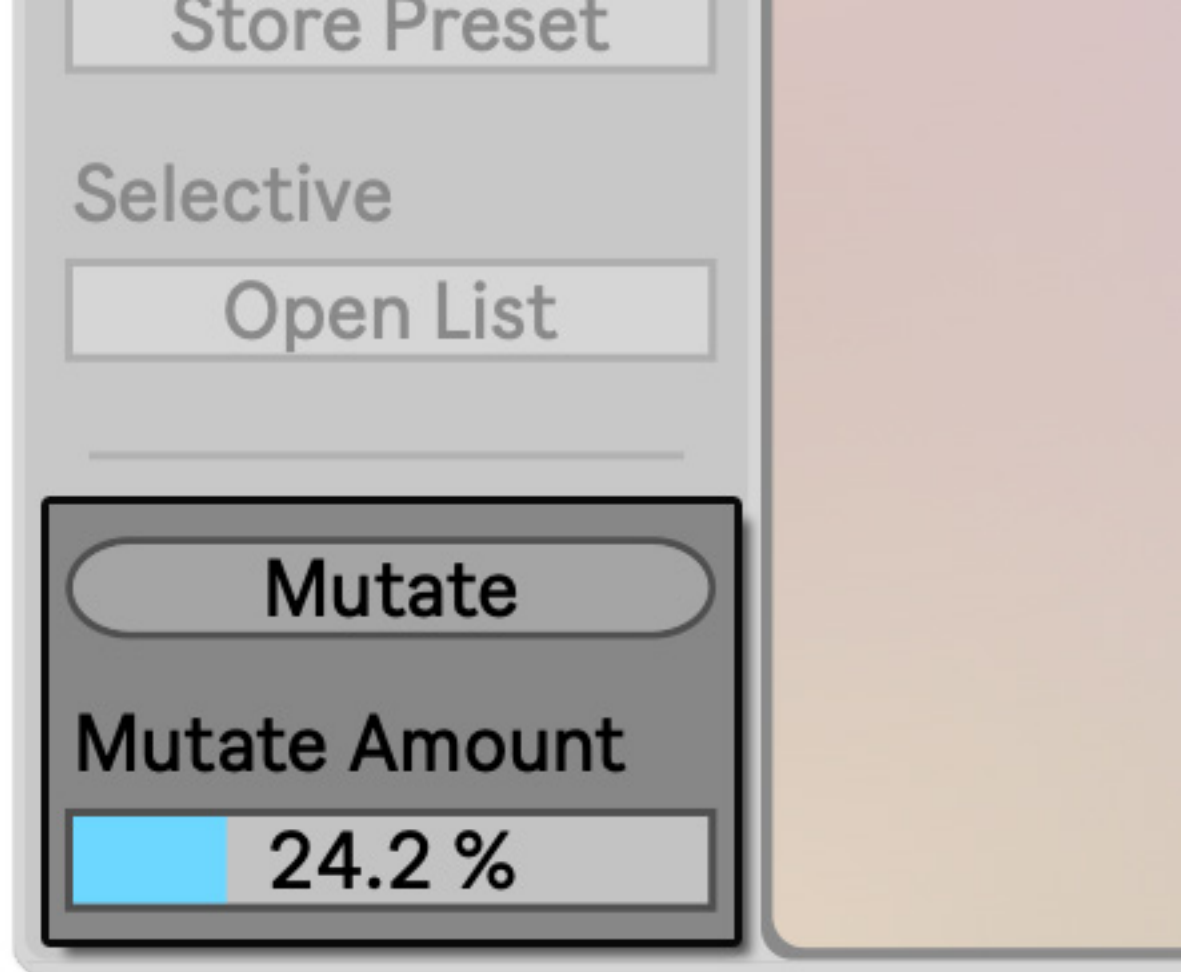


Figure 9.1 The **Mutate** button applies to all the settings in the focused device, even if they weren't originally set by Gradient. **Mutate Amount** controls how much randomization takes place.

Hotswap and Mutation

One of the most effective and speedy ways to work with Gradient is by hotswapping the focused device with your favorite preset, store the values in a corner, and repeat until you've established a pallet of great tones. As you explore the blend of those presets, liberally “re-bank” the values to the nearest corner, overriding the preset stored there and further refining the area of interest -- the best combination of settings that exists somewhere in the middle of the XY pad.

This process works best if you don't ignore the focused device -- continue to tweak and alter values as you see fit before re-banking the preset. In many cases, you just want *some* variation. For quick variety, the **Mutate** button will randomize all parameters in the focused device up to the amount specified in the **Mutate Amount** setting. High Mutate amounts (20% and above) are quite fun to play with, but the most consistent utility is found in the 5-10% range. After mutating, try banking the results to an underutilized corner of your pallet and “Dry/Wetting” the randomized result with the preset it was derived from to pull back settings that went too far.

Exclusions and Solo

Interpolating all preset parameters may not always be desirable. For instance, you may have a specific delay time picked out or a particular Dry/Wet amount in mind. In these cases, you have a choice - recall the presets that don't have the parameter set to the desired value, adjust the value, and rebank the preset to the same corner. Alternatively, add these parameters to the **Selective Group**.

Open the selective panel. While the **Add** button below the list is toggled, clicking any parameter in the focused device will add it to the **Selective Group**. If the **Selective Type** is set to "Exclusion", parameters in this list will be unaffected by Gradient's interpolation and mutation processes.

Setting the **Selective Type** to "Solo" flips this functionality -- only parameters in the **Selective Group** will be affected when interpolating or mutating.

Toggling the **Remove** button and clicking a parameter in the list will remove it from the Selective Group.

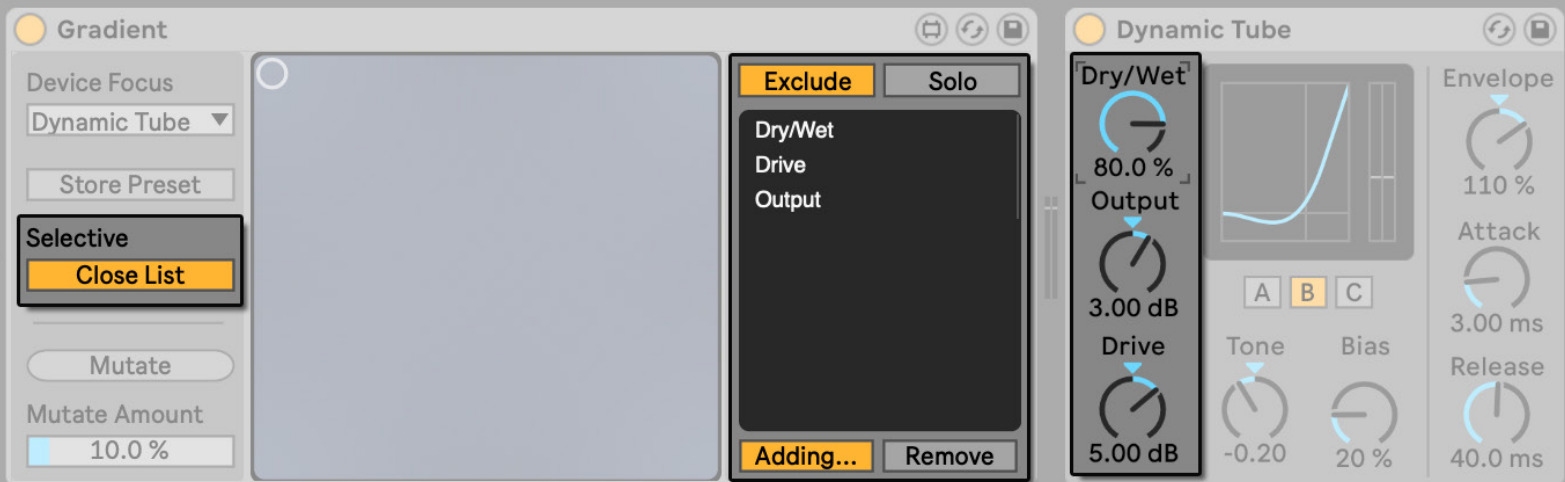


Figure 10.1 The Dry/Wet, Drive, and Output parameters were added to the Selective Group by clicking their respective controls in the Dynamic Tube interface while the "Add" button was toggled.

In most cases, the **Selective Group** is best suited for temporary use as a shortcut to more effectively scan for blended presets through interpolation or mutation. Once you've stored settings in all banks, excluded parameters become redundant.

Working with VSTs

The interpolation and mutation functionality plays nice with the external plugins in your Live set, but note that parameters must be available in the plugin's device view in order to be “visible” to Gradient. In many cases, the parameters will be configured automatically when loaded into Live. For plugins with many parameters, you'll have to manually configure which controls are available in this panel yourself.



Figure 11.1 Plugin parameters must be added to the device view configuration in order to work with Gradient. The simple rule of thumb to remember is if it's visible to you, it's visible to Gradient.

Adding only some parameters to the configuration is a lot like using the **Selective Group**, as only those will be affected by Gradient's processes. Alternatively, you can add the “ [PluginAutoPopulateThreshold](#)” flag to [your options.txt file](#) to ensure up to 128 controls automatically populate the window. If you prefer to decide this on a case-by-case basis, you can populate the parameter configuration of a VST by toggling the **Configure** button and then changing presets in the Plugin window. This trick will add all parameters to the device view and, thus, make them available for use with Gradient.

Concepts

I hold that Gradient is not hard to understand, but can be easy to misunderstand. Much of the potential confusion can be cleared up with just a bit of hands-on usage, but it's worth flagging some of the core concepts that will help you get the most use out of the device.

The most important idea to keep in mind is that the Max device is only half the user interface -- the other half is the device you set focus to. What do I mean by that? Simply that a lot of the action still takes place in the other device, unlike a lot of modulation tools that override function of a control. Gradient is somewhat uniquely passive, and only operates when you explicitly ask it to do something. We're used to music tools working in real-time and functioning in conjunction and sometimes in conflict with one another, but Gradient is designed to simply append to whatever your existing workflow is.

This device isn't a randomizer, but it borrows a lot from the mentality a randomizer is approached with. It's tempting to smash the Mutate button, but that leads to very inconsistent results. I spent a lot of time thinking of ways to develop a randomizer that produced reliable results, but to do so required meaningful constraints. Setting these constraints required as much or more attention and knowledge of the device as simply setting the device. The beauty of Gradient is that good constraints can be defined organically just by adding presets to the banks. Given the nature of interpolation, the values of a device's parameters can never exceed the values in these presets and are bound to each other by the logic and purpose of each preset. In this way, traversing the Color Pallet (XY pad) produces shifts in logic proportionally across the entire patch so that no parameter ever sticks out as an outlier. Thus, the "real" randomizer is the position of the pointer in the Color Pallet. Like traditional randomizers, you don't need to set this tediously or have a very clear idea of what you're going for when you start out. Just feed it patches you like and discover new ideas of your own and tweak as much or as little as you like as you go.

It's also key to set and use Gradient *progressively*. Once you've stored values in each bank, don't consider them "used up". Like the music you're making, the color pallet is a living and ephemeral organism that should update alongside your ideas. Continue to tweak and revisit parameters in the focused device just as you would normally -- with Gradient loaded, however, just add Interpolation and Mutation ingredients to that salad as well.

GLOSSARY OF CONTROLS

The following pages detail each control in the device with more technical descriptions.

View any time in Live's Info View.

Device Focus

Chooses the device that Gradient will be used with.

To choose a device inside of an Instrument or Effect Rack, make sure Gradient is placed in the same chain as that device.

Store Preset

Activates the storage mode. In this mode, clicking a corner of the Color Pallet will override its stored preset and replace it with the settings in the currently focused device. Holding shift activates this button.

Selective

Gradient will interpolate all parameter values unless a parameter is specified here as an exception.

Mutate

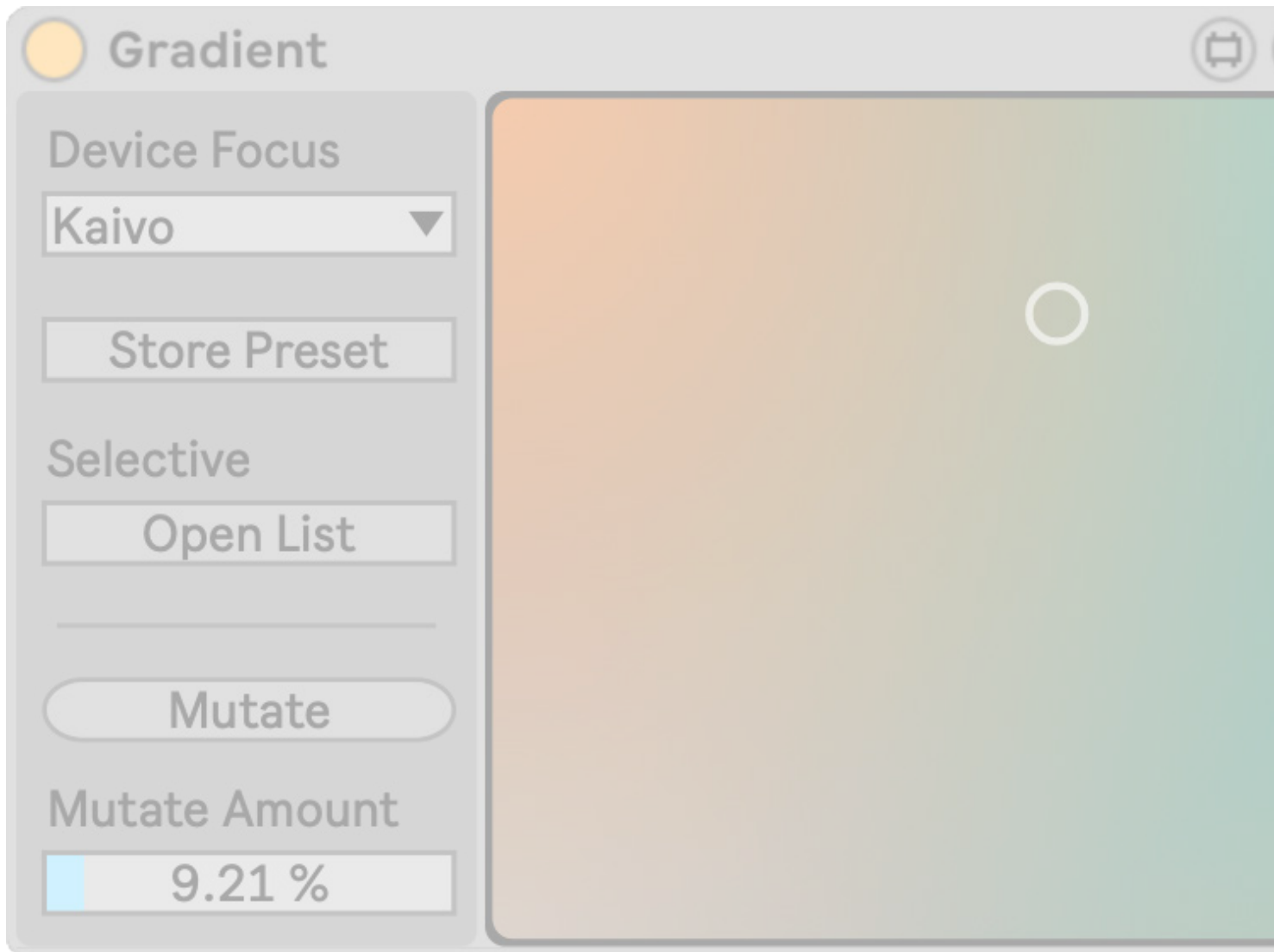
Randomizes all parameters in the currently focused device by a little or a lot according to the "Mutate Amount". In most cases, this works best in small doses.

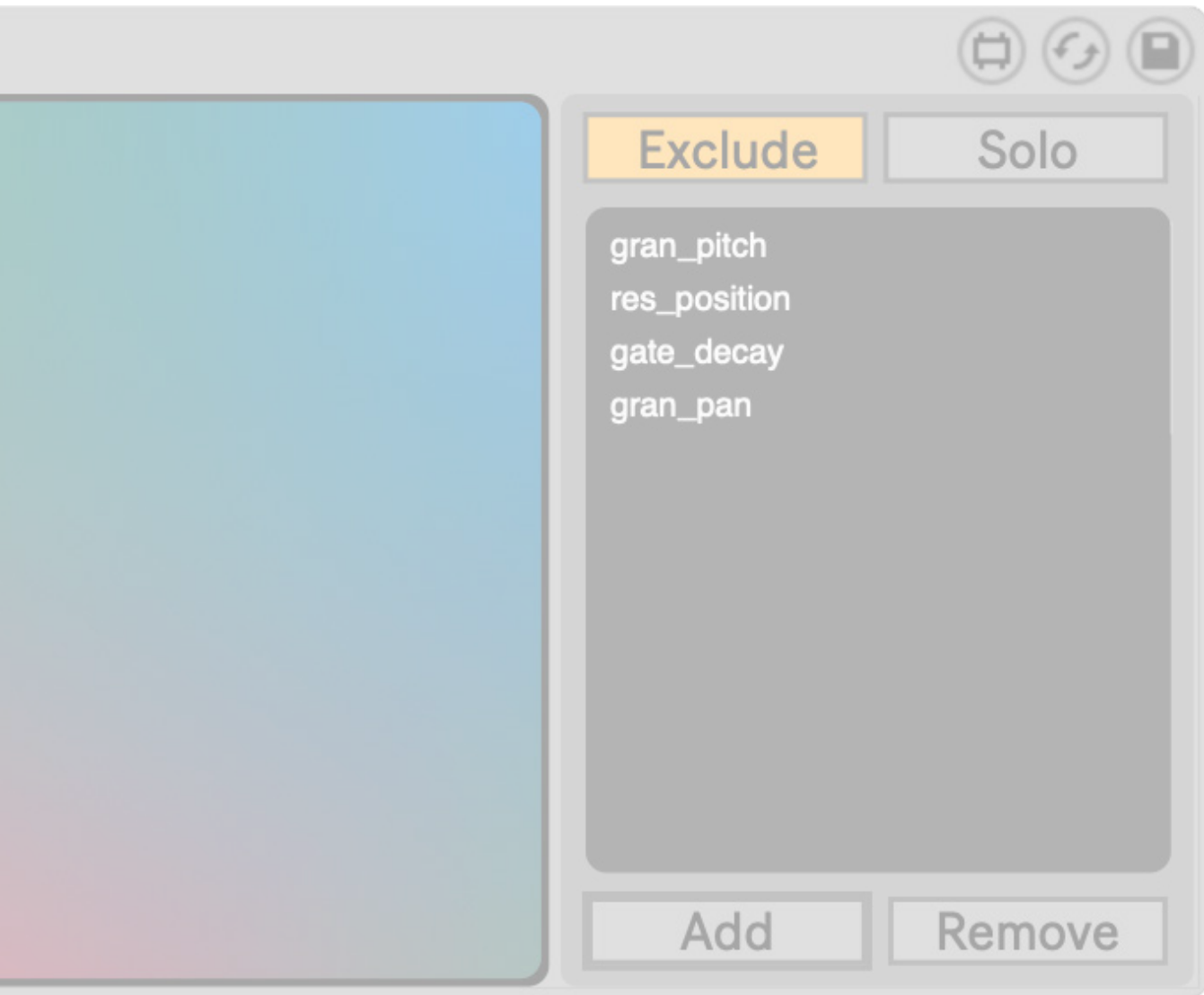
Mutate Amount

Sets the amount of randomization applied to the focused device's parameters that occurs when the "Mutate" button is pressed. Typical usage sets between 5%-15% to avoid drifting too far from the original preset.

Color Pallet

The main interface for interpolating between your stored presets. Each corner stores and recalls a preset for the focused device, and selector positions between them result in a blend of the stored presets. Hold shift to activate storage mode.





Selective Group

The list of parameters that Gradient will ignore if “Exclude” is set or the only parameters that Gradient will affect if “Solo” is set.

Add to Selective

When toggled, the next selected parameter in the focused device will be added to the Selective List.

Remove from Selective

When toggled, clicking a parameter in the Selective List will remove it.

Additional Properties

A small number of Live’s devices have controls that cannot be affected by normal means of modulation. In these cases, this list appears and populates with those properties so they can be added to the Selective Group if desired.



Shortcuts

Shift

Toggle Storage Mode

Shift + Click

Store the focused device preset to the highlighted bank

Shift + Double Click

Mutate by the amount specified by Mutate Amount, then store to the highlighted bank

Shift + Cmd + Click

Replace all banks in storage with the current values in the focused device

INFORMATION

Version 1.0.0

Download

The download link for this device is <https://www.patches.zone/gradient>

More Max devices from pATCHES can be found at <https://www.patches.zone/max-for-live>

Support

Working on these devices is a labor of love, and there's a huge list of WIPs and ideas I have that I want put out there. If you want to help make those reality (and get discounts, news, and other perks...), consider supporting me on Patreon!

Sign up at <https://www.patreon.com/patcheszone>

Contact

Comment or query? Suggestions? Just want to say hi?
I'd love to hear from you!

Send an email to contact@patches.zone



Manual written and designed by Dan Hilse.

Gradient is a product of patches.zone, a website dedicated to creating resources for music producers.

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