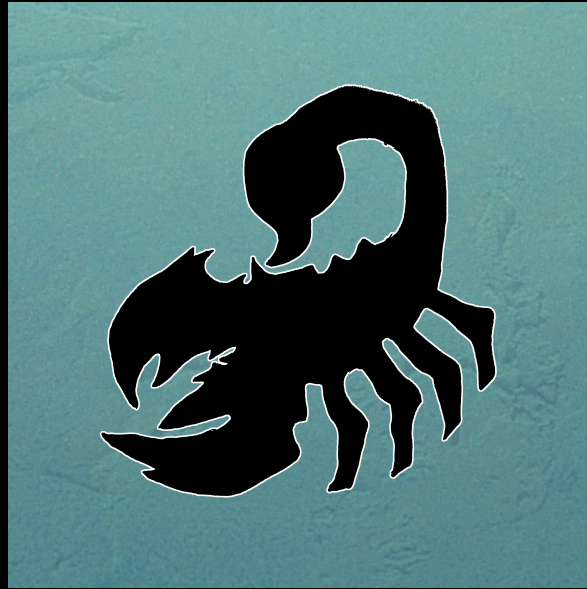
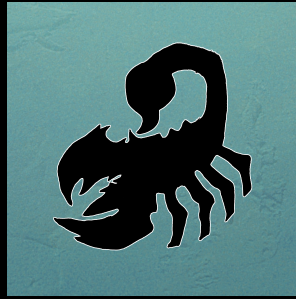


DeathStalker



by PerforModule

'Wicked Guitar Tone'



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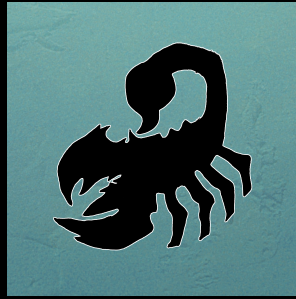
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Preliminaries: The Search for Awesome

In the search for a definitive method to improve electric guitar tones, a concerted analysis of select heavy guitar recordings in isolation was conducted, to determine which characteristics tend to provide the beneficial and elusive qualities audibly perceived as “awesome”.

Aspects striven to be avoided include those viscerally associated with characteristics such as “cheap”, “thin”, “boxy”, “brittle”, etc.

Hallmarks to feature, however, aim for the somewhat more idiosyncratic traits of a “gnarly”, “biting”, “cutting”, “powerful”, and “in-your-face” feel.

It is noted that both the qualities to avoid and those to pursue each include the potentially conflicting desires of handling both low and high-frequency focus areas in twain, spectrum-wise.

To address this thus requires a dual-faceted approach.

But what makes for a satisfying heavy guitar tone?



Tendencies: Bad.

• Bad Tendency: Too Much Mid Scoop!

A hardcore “V” scoop that eliminates the majority of mids can lead to a hollow and faraway sound. Arbitrarily setting amp or pedal EQ slider positions into a visual “V” shape is often a source of this issue, since various gear target totally different tones.

• Bad Tendency: Wrong Spot for Mid Scoop!

Commonly, the V dip is centered around 500Hz, but this can strip much mid range. A more solid choice may be to preserve frequencies from a tad above 400Hz to a bit above 800Hz, and instead let the scoop lie below that, in the “mud zone” closer to 300Hz, and/or above that, reducing nasality from ~ 700 to 1.5k.

• Bad Tendency: High Boosts Too High!

Tackier-sounding guitar-centric effects implement very high frequency boosts. Boosting above ~3k (especially ~10k+) tends to add more of a sense of brittleness than clarity, and can be a factor contributing to "bad" tone. Harmonically-rich high-range boosts can be a prominent source of aliasing, sounding screwy on physical instruments. Except for sparkly acoustic guitars, big >10kHz+ boosts are usually not beneficial on guitar tracks.



Tendencies: Good.

•Good Tendency: Avoiding Mud!

Depending on the key, the “mud zone” can be anywhere from a bit below 200Hz to around 350Hz. In lower song keys, it's correspondingly lower, attenuating frequencies which, in other keys, might actually be closer to the ideal Chug boost point instead! Paying close attention to the desired fundamental tonality is kinda important, especially around the 200Hz area.

•Good Tendency: Focused Low and Mid-High Boosts!

The combination of two factors, Chug & Bite, result in the infamous “V Scoop” contour. These boosts on tasteful tones are often much more narrow than an evenly-sloping “V” shape — more like focused points jutting up than gradual overall tilting. This narrowness seems particularly prevalent with the low chug.

•Good Tendency: “W” Shape!?

Heavy guitar tones often look more like (and sound better as) a sort of “W” shape than as a “V”, per se. This would be due to some retainment (or injection) of mid-range frequencies into the signal. The dip points of this “W” shape are mud reduction plus attenuation of upper-mid rinality.

Takeaway: Core Elements of a Good Tone.

Chug is a focused low end, averaging around 150Hz.

Bite is a focused mid-high presence, averaging around 2.5kHz.



DeathStalker: Objective

Primary Purpose.

The main intention of *DeathStalker* is to provide a go-to solution for guitar recordings (and indeed many other instrument types) that don't have "that thing", sounding flat, thin, weak, or boxy.

The focused tonal boosts provided by *DeathStalker* are apt for already-amped signals (physical or emulated), as well as ideal for bolstering two often-deficient aspects of amped tones:

- 1) Low-end chug is solidified, remedying many amplifiers (and EQ settings thereof) that either lack low end or have a dispersed, muddy low end.
- 2) High-mid bite is clarified, alleviating unpleasant-sounding midrange and/or top end for many amplifiers (and EQ settings) which aren't particularly pleasing.

The net result is making things sound tastier.
Mediocre guitar tones end up sounding good.
Great tones end up sounding fantastic!



Claw

Providing Low-End Chug.

Qualities associated with the tonal range:
Chunky. Solid. Thick. Heavy.

The Claw Macro Control accentuates the lowest fundamental root note of the key one is playing in, within the range of guitar tunings (including very low-tuned guitars).

By default the resonance is slightly more girthy on the center channel than on the sides, providing a solidifying touch.



Sting

Providing High-Mid Bite.

Qualities associated with the tonal range:
Biting. Gnarly. Incisive. In-Your-Face.

The Sting Macro Control accentuates the root note of the key you are playing in, in the range of guitar tunings (including very low-tuned guitars).

By default the Q is slightly more ample on the sides channel than on the center, adding a subtle sensation of grandeur.



Shell

Providing Extra Gritty Flavor.

But wait! There's more. Enhance *Claw* and *Sting* further with analog-style contour "roughing up".

What's going on under the hood here are dual parallel chains — one each for the low and high end.

Each is comprised of a meticulously-arranged cascade of cabinet models that perfectly match the given Key setting, gloriously synergizing with the *Claw* and *Sting* controls.

(Under the Shell...)



Extra Icing Under the Cake.

Beyond being just a vanilla box, preceding the cab contour chain are *Reso* and *Drive* modules, each adding in additional focus to our chosen magical frequencies via alternate methods.

ResoClaw & *ResoSting* use clean, minimal-lengthed bandpassed resonators, while *OverClaw* & *OverSting* use frequency-focused overdrive, each to add tasty and interesting additional frequency focus in ways that are different than and complementary to the straightforward EQing provided by the main processing chain.

[See “Dive FURTHER Under the Hood” on page 13 for more on that].

When NOT to Use Shell?

If you want a squeaky-clean signal that doesn't generate any additional harmonic grit (such as for mastering an already-quite-saturated track, perhaps), avoid using *Shell* by keeping it set to zero. Doing so disables the parallel chains entirely.

Advanced Capabilities

In the process of research and development, additional capabilities beyond the basic tonal boosts grew to flesh out the feature-set of *DeathStalker*, transmogrifying it into something far more insidious and enthralling than a couple of well-placed EQ points.

ROOT KEY FOCUS:

Precisely dial in the root key of *DeathStalker's* tonal foci — according to song key, by ear, or even automate it section-by-section. Use Macro Variations for instant note selection.

PARALLEL ENHANCEMENT:

Using nuanced parallel bandpass filter and chain-fading techniques, built-in dual auxilliary audio layers (one for the chug zone; one for bite) comprised of select frequency-focused effects synergize tonally with the signal, adding unique non-linear character.

These include the following:

- ***Under-the-Hood Tonal Refinements***, to gently sculpt the mid-range in-between the chug and bite zones, with *Anti-Mud*, *Mid Preserve*, & *Anti-Nasal*.
- ***Frequency-Focused Overdrive***, for adding in anything from a touch to a hefty amount of harmonic richness, thereby increasing perceptibility and apparent loudness.
- ***Frequency-Focused Tight Resonance***, to further enhance a sense of musical harmony, smoothly highlighting the select tonality.

The balance between these three synergistic supplementary effects are pre-calibrated. However, hidden macro controls may be unfolded to go “under the hood” and adjust them with more refinement.

Workflow

Intentional Method:

1) Select Key Note.

First, punch in the specific note of your song key (or whatever note you want to add focus to) using the Macro Variations.

The default starting value is that of a standard-tuned guitar in E.

2) Dial in *Claw*.

You might not have realized until you start turning *Claw* that your material lacks fundamental solidity. This is a great way to add low end without having to worry much about increasing “mud”, since the *Claw* frequency focus is below and narrow enough to generally avoid it. If you do need to trim some additional excessive mud, see “advanced capabilities” above.

3) Dial in *Sting*.

This is some secret sauce right here. You will find that boosting this adds clarity and presence without adding harshness, making material passing through it sound more present and “in your face” while also less distant or occluded.

4) Fine-tune *Claw* compared to *Sting*.

The combination of *Claw* and *Sting*, dialed in carefully, is what really gives guitars and other instruments that heavy, crushing, brutal, edgy, biting sound that you crave.

5) Optional: Add in some *Shell*.

Sometimes it's beneficial to use a bit of *Shell*, sometimes not. It will enhance similar frequencies as the settings placed for *Claw* and *Sting*, but with a more physical-amp-like contour.



6) Optional: Dive under the Hood.

Press the + sign button near the top left of the rack twice to unfold further parameters to fine-tune the sound:

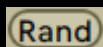
- **Anti-Mud** reduces lower-mid “boxy” sort of tonal quality without stepping on the chuggy fundamental provided by *Claw*.
- **Mid Preserve** brings back a touch of healthy mids, to move a bit more towards the aforementioned “W” shape.
- **Anti-Nose** reduces upper-mid “nasally” sort of tone without intruding on the presence provided by *Sting*.



7) Optional: Dive FURTHER under the Hood.

Press the + sign button three more times to unfurl even more controls to tweak:

- **OverClaw & OverSting** adjust the amount of key-tuned low and high overdrive feeding into *Shell*. Use these to fine-tune the amount of perceptible saturation.
- **ResoClaw & ResoSting** adjust the amount of key-tuned low and high resonances injected into *Shell*. Use these to enhance tonality of the chosen focus note.
- **Claw Solidity & Sting Width** adjust the M-S width values of *Claw* and *Sting*. *Claw* ranges from neutrally balanced to more centered, while *Sting* ranges from slightly centered to more widened.



OR...evoke destiny with the **Hand of Fate Method!**
Simply hit the *Random* button over and over again until you prefer the sound. Sometimes unexpected results can end up sounding cooler than being overly logical!

Additional Use-Cases

To Amp or Not To Amp?

Amped or non-amped (DI or acoustic) guitar tracks can equally benefit from *DeathStalker*. Beyond that, the tones it imparts can improve the presence and thickness of just about any melodic instrument, and can even be used on drums / percussion.

Strategic Tonal Enhancement.

Various important harmonic intervals in a given song key can be highlighted for certain instruments in a mix (e.g. enhancing the 5th for a mid tom drum), using carefully-tuned instances of *DeathStalker* on different tracks.

A Tasty Replacement Cab.

The *Shell* cabinet can be used by itself as a very nicely-tuned custom cabinet that is a bit unique compared to Ableton's stock *Cabinet* device presets, for usage placed after Ableton's *Amp* models — or with third-party amplifier VSTs.

Instruments Buss Processing.

DeathStalker can sound awesome on instrument or vocal groups in projects that may not even use guitars, especially for adding some crispness and clarity with a bit of *Sting*.

Drums & Percussion Processing.

Drum busses often benefit from a “scooped” midrange, with more emphasis on bass and treble than other instruments. Sometimes *DeathStalker* can sound awesome on beats, so try it out from time to time.

Closing

Takeaway: Any and every time you use guitars in a song, slap some *DeathStalker* on, and you will be happy you did.

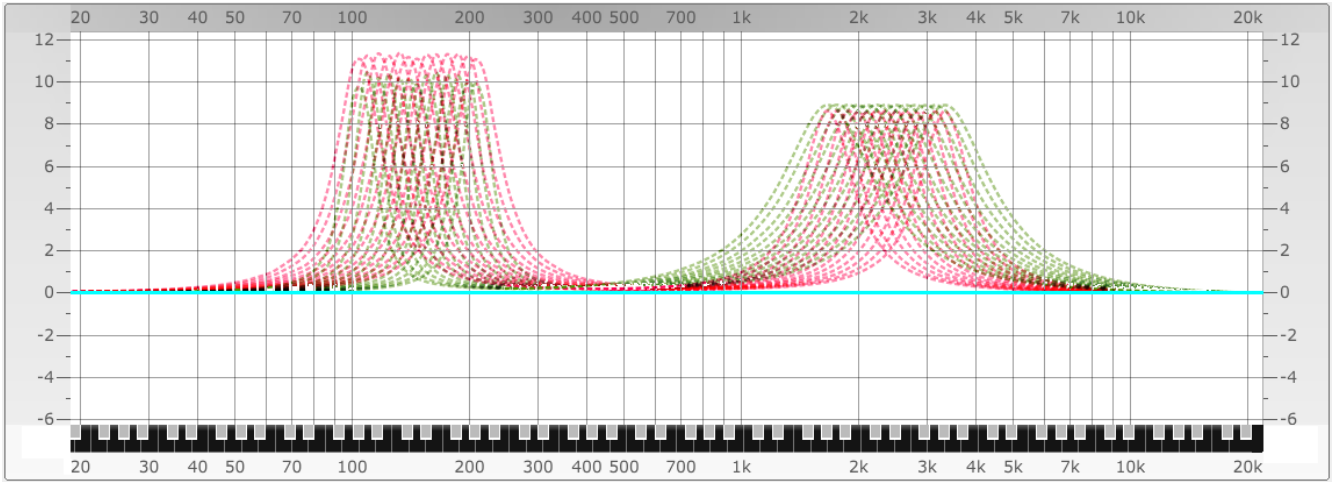
It's really that simple.

☺ Peace! ☐ ☐

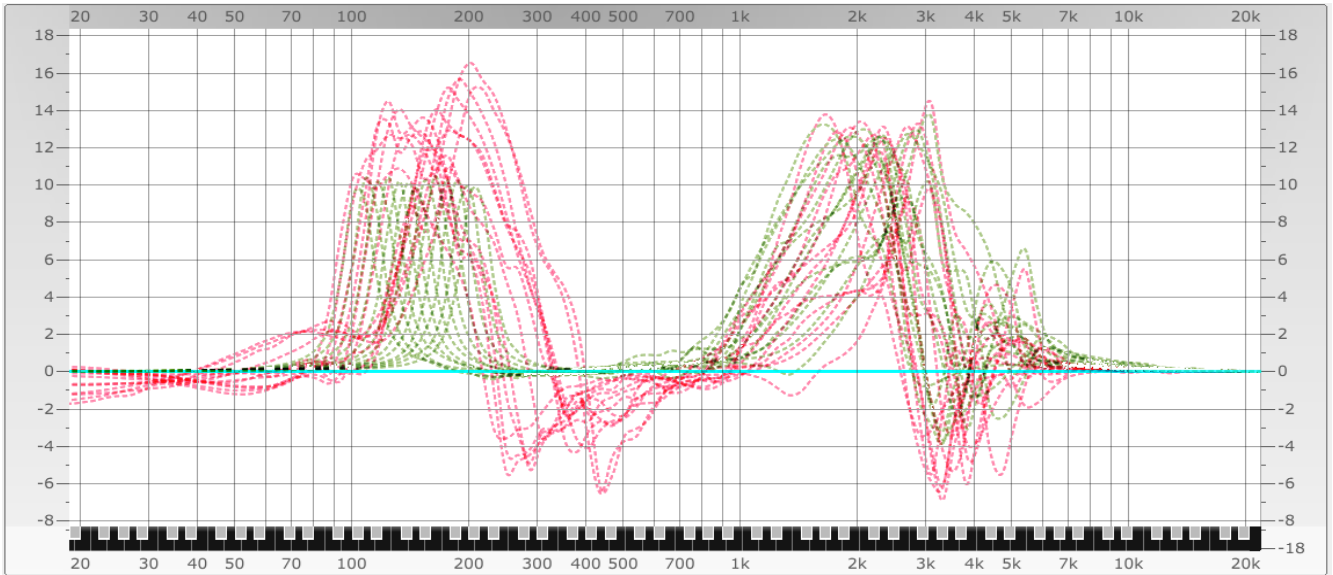


Requires Ableton Live Suite, version 11 or later.

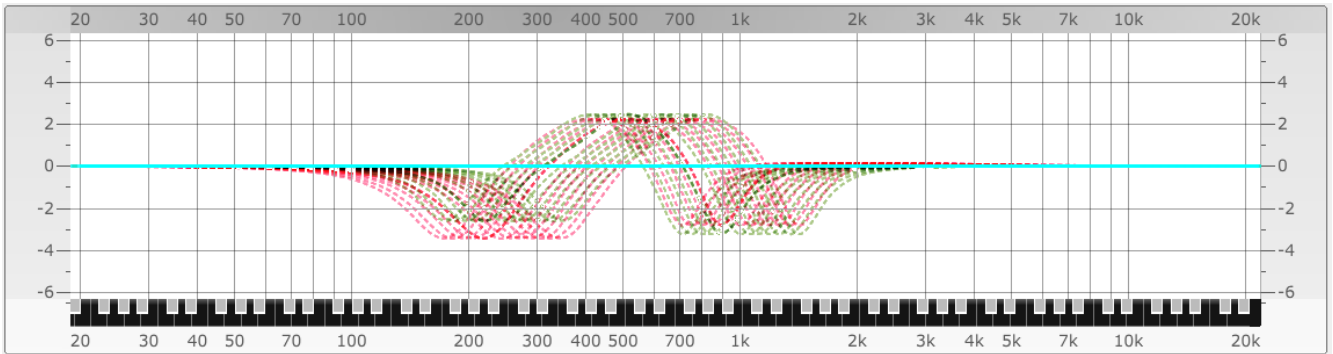
DeathStalker was developed by Animus Invidious.
Released in association with Brian Funk and Isotonik Studios.



Claw and Sting.



Shell.



Anti-Mud, Mid Preserve, & Anti-Nose.