Scenery

User Guide

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OVERVIEW

Adding a bit of ambeince -- forest sounds, street noise, airport chatter, ocean waves -- is a rather underrated and effective method for adding interest to sparse music without having to add additional parts or unnecessary variation. It's just tedious enough to set up an independently pitched and stretched looping long sample in Live to not even bother, but that's not the case anymore: Scenery is purpose-built for playing "background sound" in your Live project as quickly as possible, transporting yourself and your music to new inspirational environments with a mouse click.
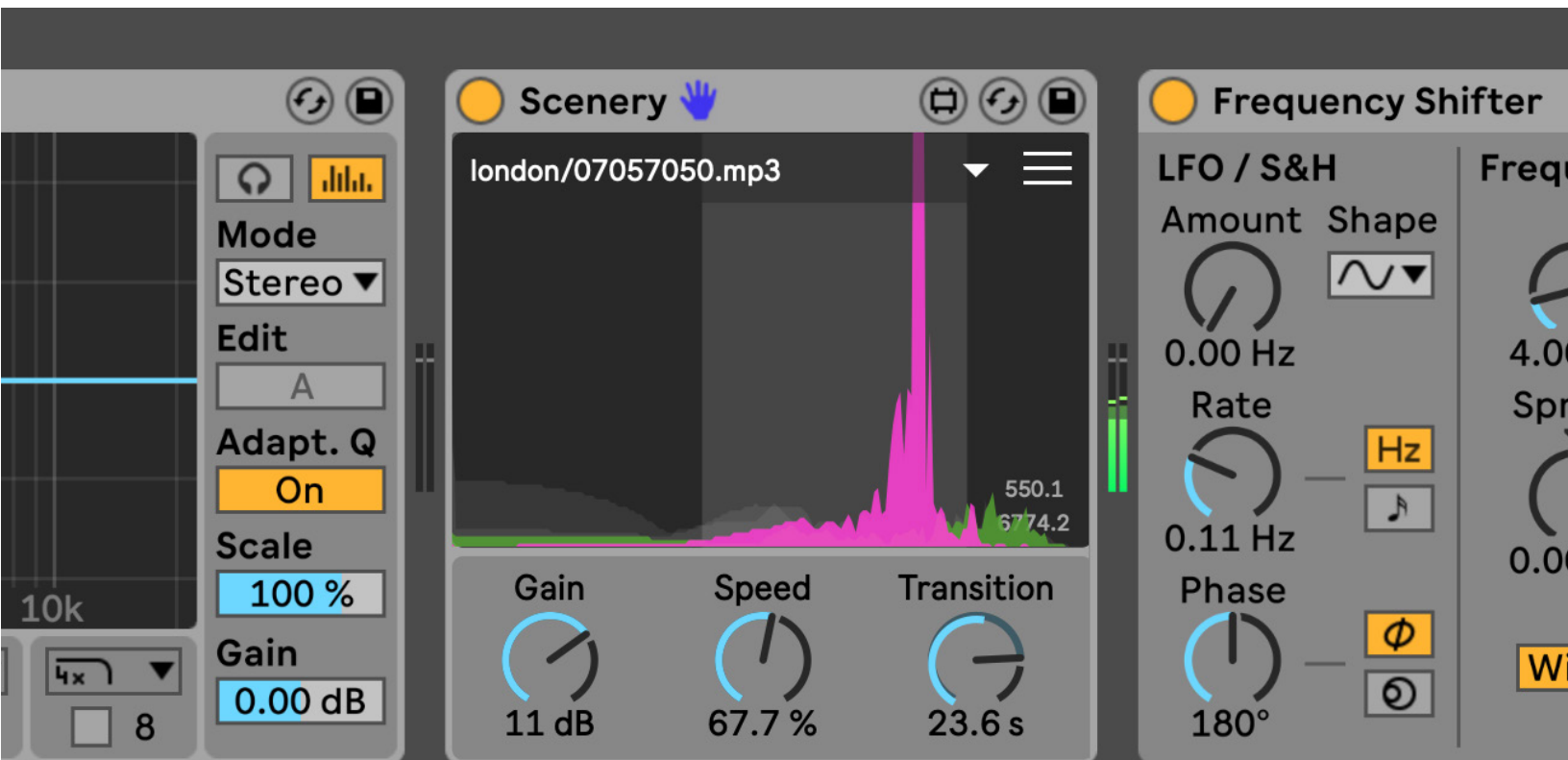
Installation

Install Scenery as you would any other Max for Live device. You can simply drop **Scenery.amxd** on any MIDI 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 Scenery and its basic functionality.
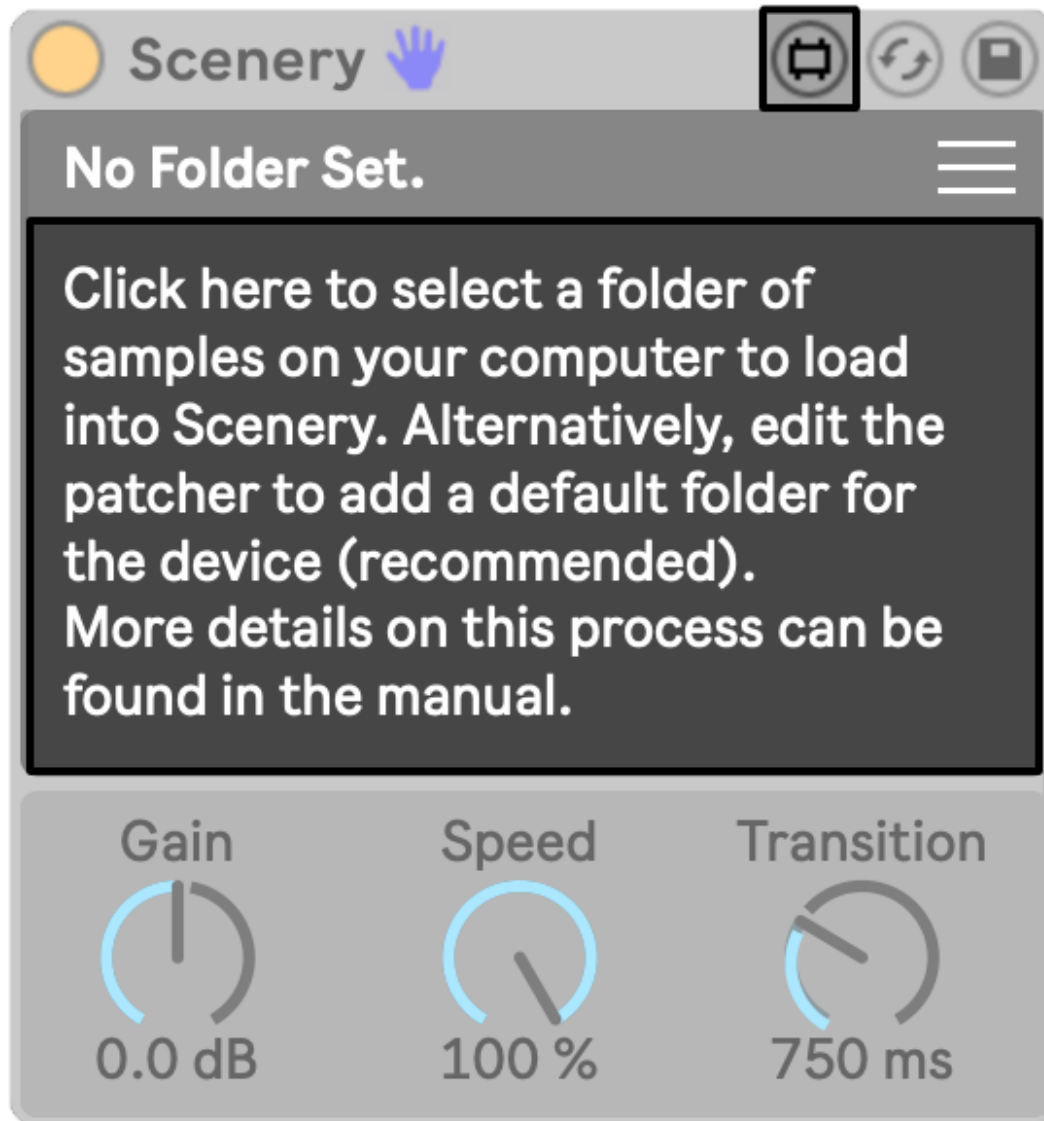
Figure 6.1 Scenery won't do much without samples. The first step to getting started is to select a folder of samples to load into the device.

Setting the Source Folder(s)

When you first load Scenery, it won't know where you store samples on your computer. Click the main section of the interface or the **Set Folder** button in the **Additional Settings** panel to provide a folder of files for playback. Keep in mind this will scan files as deep as the **Sub-Folders** setting (default 2).

It is recommended to set a "Default Folder" that Scenery will open on load to make it even quicker to use. Just open the patch in Max by clicking the Edit button in the top right corner of the device. Drag the Max window to reveal the area to the right of the interface and click **Set Default Folder** to set the path on your drive, and save the device.

Sample selection

Scenery might feel a little unusual in comparison to other sample players because it's more tailored to convenience, randomization, and acheiving those by taking you out of the process to some degree. To load a new file, click the name of the playing sample at the top of the device -- a new sample will be selected at random from the selected folder(s).

If you have a specific sample you'd like to load in mind, click the triangle at the top of the device instead. This button opens a menu of all the playable samples in your selected folder(s), and selecting one of these will load it into Scenery for playback.

Figure 7.1 Survey gives two simple ways of loading a new sample by either clicking the name of the currently playing sample or clicking the triangle to open a menu of selectable files from the set folders.
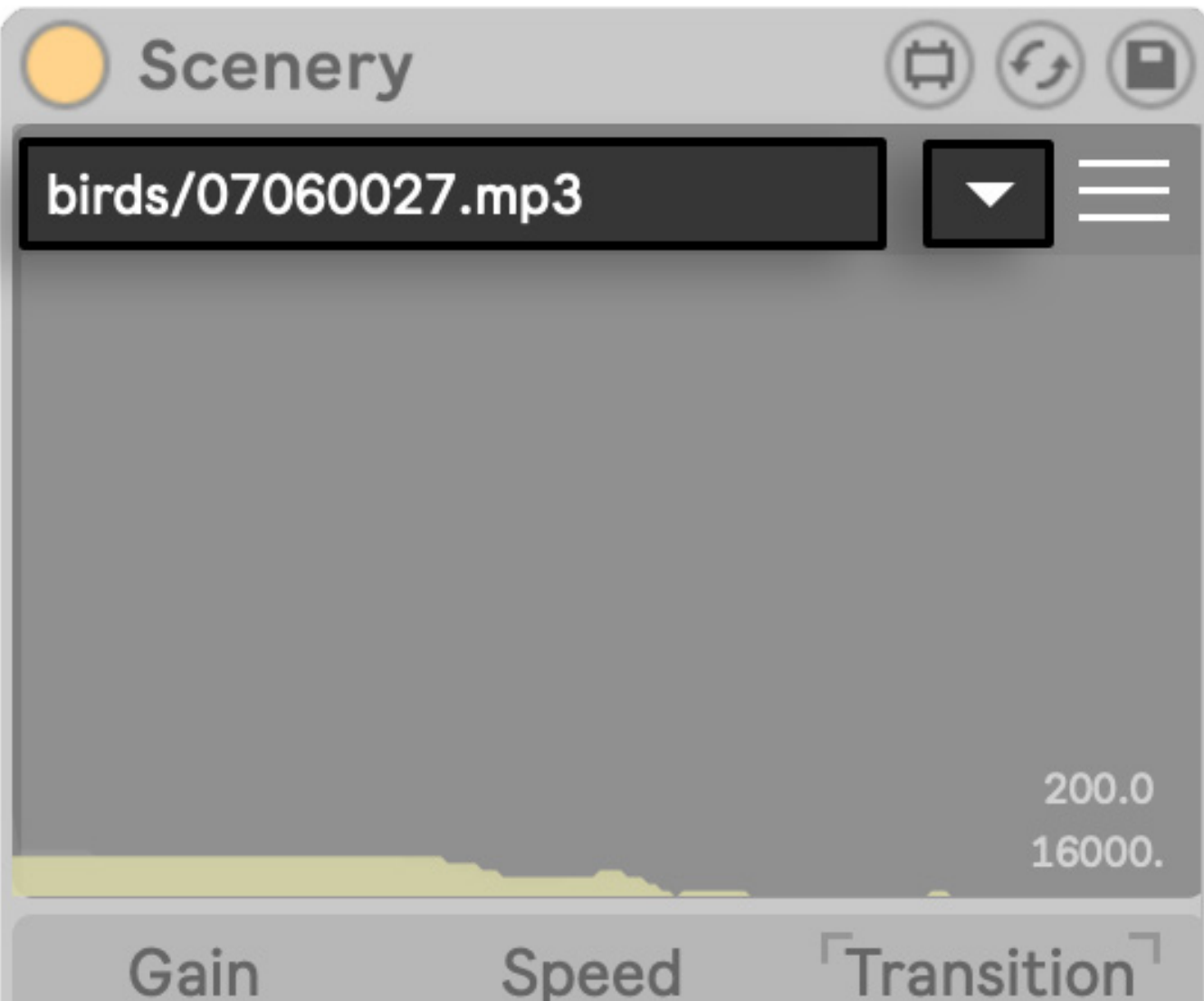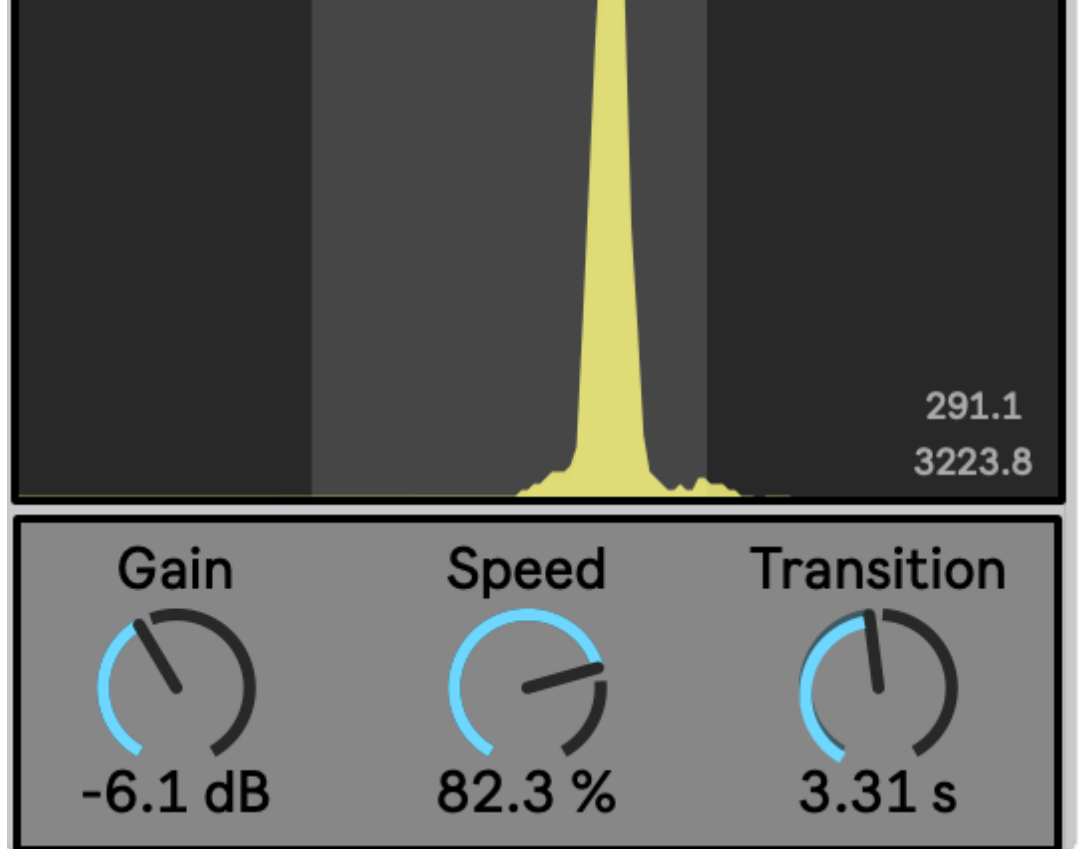
Figure 8.1 Scenery emphasizes simple controls to fine tune sample playback. Of particular importance are the filters (drag across the spectrograph to set the cutoff frequencies) and Speed.

Playback Controls

Scenery shouldn't be overthought — it's good to turn to when you want to be inspired or delighted by subtle, unexpected sounds of a place. If you require more precise control over a sample or have a very specific vision for its playback, you may be using the wrong device. In these cases, consider the other tools at your disposal.

Maybe the most important features that, in all honesty, could be easily missed on first glance are the **high and low pass filters**. These are designed to be set intuitively -- just click and drag in the spectrograph across the frequencies you want to preserve. The frequencies these are set at are displayed in the bottom right corner of the interface. Hold control/cmd and drag to shift both cutoff frequencies, or hold shift and drag to adjust the filter cutoff closer to your click.

As a device for "background sound", Scenery plays samples with a good deal of attenuation by default. Add or reduce volume depending on your needs with the **Gain** control.

Live makes us used to manipulating speed and pitch independently. Here, **Speed** is tape-like: slowing the sample also lowers the pitch. Scenery isn't really built to play harmonious or quantized content, so just enjoy setting this arbitrarily and discover new textures. Bird samples are almost always other-worldly when slowed and pitched down.

The crossfade time for loading in a new sample is determined by the **Transition** parameter.
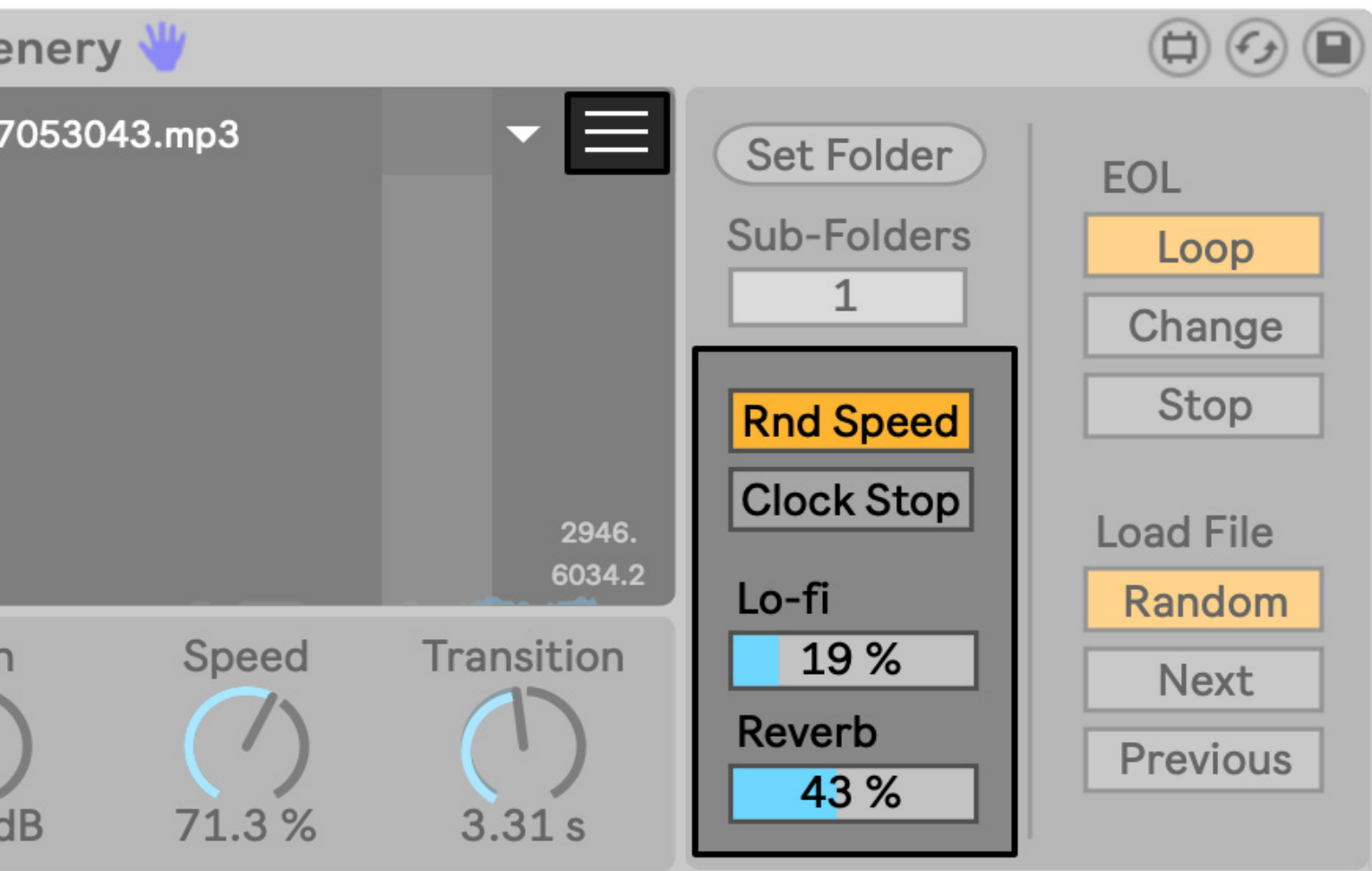
Additional Settings

Scenery was designed to automate a particular workflow, and some of its quirks may not suit everyone, but you can customize its behavior with more settings by clicking the toggle in the top right of the interface.
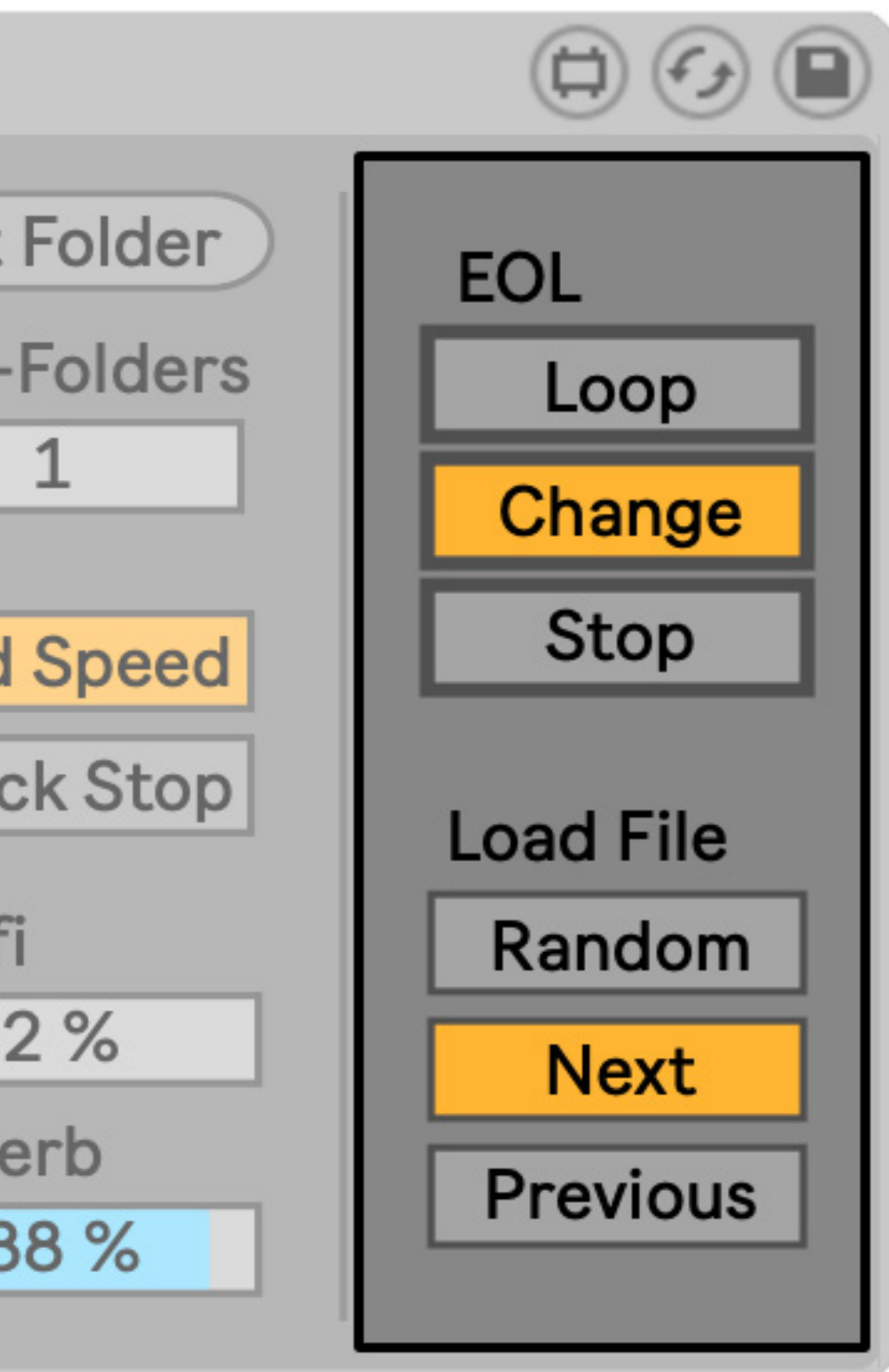
By default, loading a new sample will also randomize the playback speed to further encourage unexpected and inspiring results. If undesirable, this feature can be turned off with the **Rnd Speed** toggle.

Samples always play when loaded into Scenery. The **Clock Stop** toggle will mute playback when Live's transport is stopped.

Two effects are included to ease common processing. **Lo-fi** sets the amount of bitcrushing while **Reverb** adds a little dimension and wash. Between these and **Speed**, any sample can be turned into an otherworldly texture to set your headspace and track in.

Figure 9.1 Click the hamburger toggle to unfold the Additional Settings panel.

Figure 10.1 Scenery's **EOL** and **Load File** settings can be thought of as simplified versions of Live's Follow Actions for Clips.

Sample Load Behavior

EOL (or End Of Loop) indicates what will happen when a sample finishes playback. **Loop** will simply start the sample over from the beginning, while **Change** swaps out the sample as though you loaded a new file manually. Stop ends playback.

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Load File determines how a new sample is selected when not manually chosen from the folder menu. The default, **Random**, chooses any file from the set folder(s). **Next** loads the next file alphabetically, while **Previous** loads the previous file alphabetically.
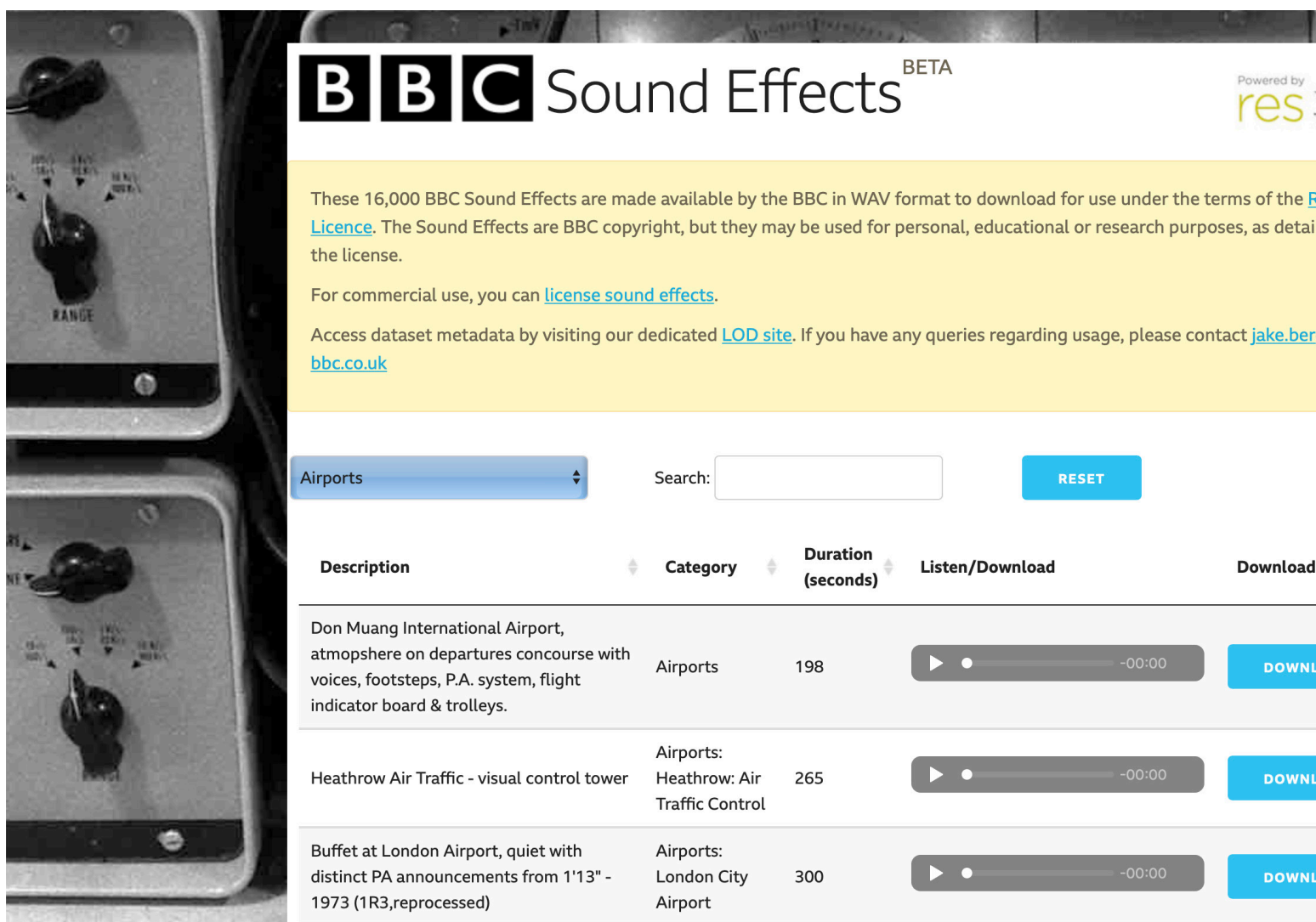
Finding Samples

Scenery works best with ambient/atmospheric samples and spoken word. If you have a field recorder, this is an excellent excuse to record the sounds around you -- a park, a mall, a forest walk, airports, the street. Building out that library and loading it into Scenery can help create an evocative and transportive signature to your sound.

If you don't have recordings of your own, there are many great starting points online to give you material to work with. The BBC's sound effect archive is an excellent resource for this -- I personally love the Africa, Airports, Atmospheres, Backgrounds, Beach, Birds, Clocks, London, New Zealand, and Radio categories. Just be sure to review their terms carefully before downloading, particularly if you plan on releasing music commercially.

I've also included a small "Starter Pack" folder of .mp3's I recorded in New Zealand and Seattle to get you started.

Figure 11.1 The BBC Sound Effects library is full of ambient field recordings you may find useful to use with Scenery.

GLOSSARY OF CONTROLS

The following pages detail each control in the device with more technical descriptions.
View any time in Live's Info View.

313.8
7305.2

Gain

-6.1 dB

Speed

96.9 %

Transition

3.31 s
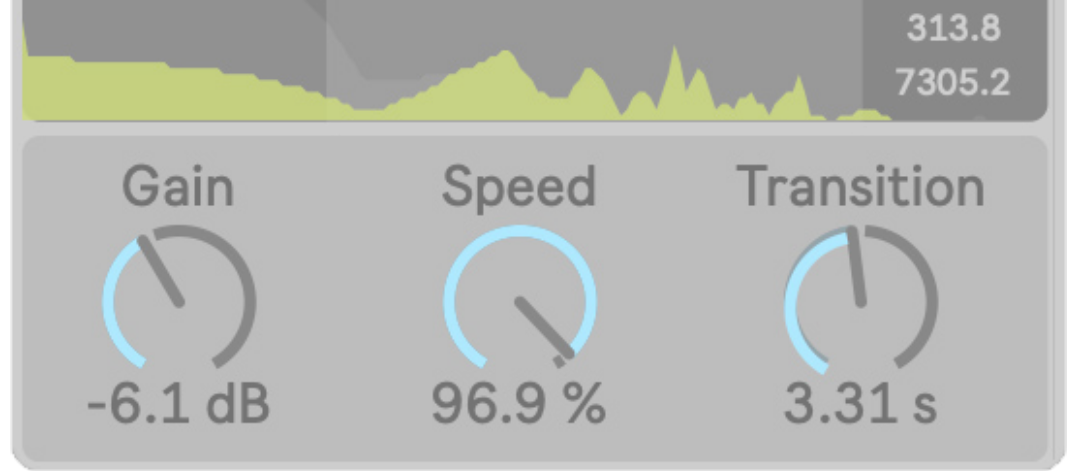
Sample

Displays the name of the currently playing sample.

Clicking the text will trigger a new sample to be loaded. To select a specific sample, open the folder menu by clicking the triangle to the right.

Additional Settings

Toggle the display of the Additional Settings panel.

Spectrograph

Displays the frequency content of the currently playing sample(s).

Click and drag to set the cutoff of the high pass and low pass filters at once. Hold shift and drag to adjust only the filter cutoff nearest to your click. Hold cmd/Control and drag to shift the cutoff of both filters.

Gain

Adjust gain of sample playback. Samples play with considerable attenuation by default to ensure subtlety.

Speed

Sets the playback speed for the currently loaded sample. Note this takes after traditional tape players, where speed and pitch are linked.

Transition

Sets the crossfade time when loading a new sample, up to 1 minute.

Scenery 🖐

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313.8
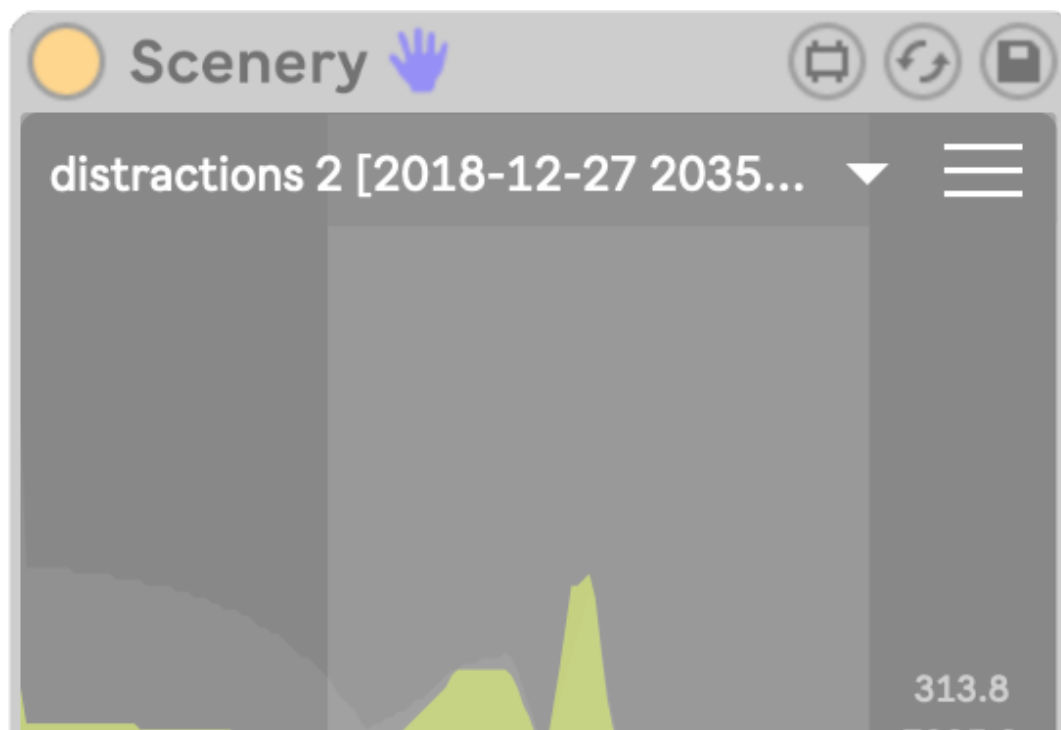
Set Folder

Choose the folder to select samples from. For samples organized in sub-folders, be sure to adjust the Sub-Folders depth to accommodate deeply nested files. If you have one folder of ambient samples you typically draw from, it is recommended to edit the device and set this as your default folder.

Sub-Folders

Sets the depth of folder hierachy Scenery should scan for samples.

For example, if a sample is stored at Top/First/Second/file.mp3 and the folder is set to Top/, a Sub-Folder depth of 2 or more will ensure file.mp3 is added to the sample pool.

Rnd Speed

When toggled, loading a new sample will also randomize speed.

Clock Stop

When toggled, the current sample will only play while Live's transport is running.

Lo-fi

The amount of bitcrushing applied to sample output.

Reverb

The amount of reverb applied to sample output.

EOL

End Of Loop. Sets the behavior of sample playback when the sample finishes playback.

Loop: Start the sample over from the beginning.

Change: Load a new sample according to the "Load File" setting.

Stop: Do nothing (end playback).

Load File

Sets the behavior of sample playback when the sample finishes playback.

Random: Load a random sample from the set folder(s).

Next: Load the next sample in the index.

Previous: Load the previous sample in the index.

INFORMATION

Version 1.0.0

Download

The download link for this device is https://www.patches.zone/scenery

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 wan to help make those reality (and get discounts, news, and other perks…), consider supporting me on Patreon!

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Contact

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

Send an email to contact@patches.zone