



by Shommi

USER GUIDE

Hear your mix on a phone, straight from your DAW.

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PhoneRefX streams the audio — and the picture — from your DAW straight to your phone over a cable, live. Tweak in your DAW, hear it on the very device your listeners hold, and check how each streaming service will actually play it — all before you bounce a thing.

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01 What PhoneRefX is

PhoneRefX streams the audio from your DAW straight to your phone over a data cable, with low latency. Tweak the sound in your DAW and hear it on your phone in real time — so you can avoid bouncing.

02 Installing PhoneRefX

Install on your phone

Open the App Store or Play Store on your phone, download PhoneRefX, and follow the on-screen steps.

Install on your computer

Download the PhoneRefX driver from phoneref.com, run the installer, and follow the on-screen steps. It then runs quietly in the background — nothing to open, nothing to manage, no restart.

03 Getting connected

With the driver installed, plug your phone into your computer with a data cable — the one that came with your phone works (a cheap charge-only cable won't). Device Status turns green on its own. If it still says “Waiting...”, check the cable and try a different USB port.

04 The menu button

The ≡ button, top-left, opens the menu — that's where Help lives. It stays reachable any time, even when nothing is connected.

05 Listening — the on/off button

Slide the button at the bottom to ON to hear the monitor, OFF to mute it. The app keeps measuring either way — ON simply opens your ears.

06 Using one phone or two

You can connect one iPhone and one Android at the same time — each streams on its own. On the plugin, every connected phone shows in a list with a small green dot beside its name: tap the dot to turn that phone on or off (green = on, grey = plugged in but muted), so you can mute one and leave the other playing. On this phone, the ON/OFF button is this phone's own power — muting here never touches the other phone.

07 Where you hear it — phone, speakers, or both

The small row marked “SOURCE”, with three icons — phone, speakers, and both — sends the monitor to your phone, to your studio speakers, or to both at once. Tap one to switch; whatever you pick mirrors on the plugin, and the other way round.

08 Buffer & latency

A lower buffer gives tighter timing but can glitch on a busy machine; a higher one is rock-solid with a touch more delay. Watch the light: when it reads “clean” you're good. If it turns red, nudge the buffer up until it's clean again.

09 The streaming-platform check

Tick a platform to hear your master the way that service actually plays it — its real codec and its loudness. The number beside it is how many dB it turns you down, and it goes green once it has settled at the platform's level. Leave it unticked to hear your untouched master.

10 Reading the meters

The two outer bars are your peak levels, left and right. The number underneath is the integrated loudness in LUFS — the long-term average the platforms judge you by. -14 is the level most streaming services aim for.

A thin line rides on top of each bar — that's the recent peak, held for a moment so you can catch it. If a channel goes over, a red cap lights at the end of that bar.

Tap the LUFS number to reset it — the integrated reading starts again from that moment, handy at the top of a new pass.

11 Video on your phone

PhoneRefX can mirror your DAW's video to your phone, in step with the audio. For this, keep the video window open and playing on your computer — that's where the picture is taken from. If you close or hide the video window, the phone holds the last frame until you open it again.

Turning it on and off

Tap the camera icon to turn the phone's video on or off — a white camera is on, a greyed one is off, and a dark, dim camera means the picture isn't available yet. When video is playing the phone fills the screen with it; tap the picture once to turn video off, and the sound keeps playing.

Turn it sideways

Rotate the phone and the layout switches to a wide view that mirrors the plugin — the same controls, laid out to match your screen.

12 Under the hood

This part is for when you want to know exactly what PhoneRefX does to your sound. The short version: in reference it's a wire with a screen, and every platform mode is the real thing that platform does, measured to real numbers. It never invents a difference to impress you.

The signal it sends

Your master leaves the plugin as 48 kHz, 16-bit stereo and travels to your phone over the cable — wired, never Bluetooth or Wi-Fi. A wireless hop would add its own codec and its own timing drift, and you'd be judging that instead of your mix. The wire is what keeps it honest.

Reference — the 1:1 path

Set to 1:1, the samples that leave your master are the samples your phone plays — nothing is resampled, re-levelled or coloured in software. The only thing shaping the sound is the phone's own converter and speaker, and that's the point: that's the device your listener is holding.

13 The codecs, platform by platform

Pick a platform and your master runs through that platform's actual codec — a real encode-and-decode round trip at its real delivery bitrate, before you hear it. It's genuine compression happening to this master, so the artefacts are the ones your listener gets. It is not an EQ curve pretending to be a codec.

AAC — the phone's own encoder/decoder

Opus — real Opus

Vorbis & MP3 — the real thing

HiFi & CD tiers — a real sample-rate trip

Tidal HiFi, Spotify Lossless, Amazon Music HD and Deezer HiFi still deliver at 44.1 kHz, so your 48 kHz master makes a real round trip down to CD rate and back. That resample is the platform's processing — so you hear it, instead of pretending 48 kHz and CD rate are the same thing.

Lossless — nothing added

Qobuz, Apple Music Lossless and 1:1 pass through untouched. Lossless is lossless, so there's no artefact to add — and we don't invent one.

14 Loudness — the exact targets

After the codec, PhoneRefX measures your master's loudness the same way the platforms do — the LUFS standard, ITU BS.1770 — then turns it to each service's real playback level, so you hear your record where it'll actually sit next to everything else in the queue.

Two things worth knowing

Only Spotify turns a quiet master *up* to reach the target — every other platform only ever turns a loud master down, never up. And the “Normalize” switch, turned off, keeps the codec colour but skips the loudness turn-down, so you can hear the raw codec damage at your own level.

15 The meters, in numbers

The meter reads your true master, measured before the platform's loudness turn-down — so the number is your record's real loudness, not a platform-adjusted one.

What each part shows

Loudness is integrated and momentary LUFS to BS.1770 — the same measure the platforms report. True peak is shown in dBTP with 4× oversampling, which catches the between-sample peaks an ordinary peak meter walks straight past. Trim is a separate readout and is never folded into the master reading, so the master number stays honest.

The meter law is identical on the plugin and on the phone — a number is the same number wherever you read it.

16 Video, in step with the picture

The picture is sent as H.264 alongside the audio on the same cable, locked to your project's actual frame rate — not forced to a fixed rate — so a frame on the phone lands on the same frame as your timeline. The quality is set to sit close to your screen while always giving way to the audio: sound wins every time, and a video frame is dropped before it can ever step on the stream. A settable offset lets you line up lip-sync against a beep or 2-pop.

17 The honesty rule

Everything above follows one rule: *never fake a difference*. A lossless tier passes through untouched because there's genuinely nothing to add. A platform mode is the real codec on your real master, not an emulation. A quiet master is only lifted where the platform actually lifts it. If PhoneRefX changes the way your record sounds, it's because the platform or the device makes that exact change too — and now you got to hear it first.

18 Need a hand?

No sound? Check the button is ON and the cable is firmly connected. Hearing glitches? Raise the buffer. If a red message appears across the top, it's flagging a connection or audio hiccup — tap it to dismiss once you've sorted it. Anything else — email us at support@phonerefx.com and we'll sort it out.