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Freshly Squeezed Reviews: Where’d That Sound Come From?

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Rogue Amoeba has seemingly been around since Edison was first occupying himself with wax cylinders. It has been the benchmark for audio software since the fledgling days of podcasting.

Now they have unleashed a new version of one of their earliest releases (if not their initial offering) of software: [SoundSource 4]. It has recently been injected with a mammoth amount of steroids and it shows.

SoundSource 4 takes audio control to a whole new level. The fast access to audio device settings you expect from SoundSource is now joined by powerful per-application features, including volume change, output routing, and audio effects.

Change the volume and output device for individual apps. Adjust your Mac’s audio device settings and levels instantly, from anywhere. Even apply built-in and third-party audio effects to any audio on your Mac. It’s all possible right from your menu bar, with SoundSource. This is powerful audio control.



Let’s begin with the basics. The first block of controls is dedicated to your System. It encompasses the controls that customize your computer system’s audio behavior. From here you adjust your Output, Input, and Sound Effects. Upon first glance, you have control over the Volume and Device. You’ll also notice a button called Boost which we’ll get into later.

Within the System section, you choose your Input Source, Output Source, and Sound Effects. Your volume settings and device selection are adjustable from here. For example, you could choose between the built-in mic or an external mic you have connected via USB for Input. And, as in my case, Internal Speakers or AudioEngine 2+ for Output. By using the accompanying slide bars, you monitor their respective volumes.

At the far right of the Output, Input, and Sound Effect bars you will find a chevron.

In Output, you have the options to adjust the balance between your left and right speakers, EQ the sound, and set your Sample Rate from 32,000 Hz to 48, 000 Hz. You can also add effects such as distortion, reverb, et al. if desired.

In Input, the sole option you have is Sample Rate, ranging from 44,100 Hz to 96,000 Hz. This you would set to the specific situation. You would probably keep a Skype call to the lower end of the dynamic range. Whereas, if you’re using a condenser mic to record instruments on GarageBand or producing vocals for a podcast, you will want to most likely choose from the higher settings.

The third option is Sound Effects. These are application specific sounds played on your Mac, things such as the ding of a new email arriving or the paper crinkle of the Trash emptying. I opt to play Sound Effects through my internal speakers, as I tend to crank my music through my external speakers. Nothing can kill the enjoyment of listening to one of your favorite tracks than the blasting ring of an incoming text message!

But the killer feature of SoundSource 4 is the ability to shape the sound of specific apps to your liking. The controls are the same as in the System section: volume, volume meter, device, plus the chevron to allow you to set your EQ and/or add an effect. Again, you can choose from several presets or customize the settings to your preference.

Now onto the simple feature that makes this app a treasure.

When you activate Magic Boost, you’ll get richer, fuller sound from any source. Magic Boost listens for quiet passages of audio, and gives them a healthy boost, while leaving louder audio untouched. Whatever your audio source, Magic Boost will give you tremendous volume, all with a single click. It’s perfect for maxing out small speakers like those found on Mac laptops.

For example, I love music. I added iTunes and an audiophile app to my collection. I sent their sound to my external speakers. I then molded the sound of each app separately. I use iTunes for my streaming and ripped audio files while I use my audiophile software for my uncompressed files. I found Safari was great to run through my external speakers, especially for when I visit YouTube’s site or watch podcasts on my iMac.

I routed Mail, Voice Memos, and other like apps through my internal speakers and at a lower volume, so as to alert me but not startle me. My suggestion is you add the apps you use regularly and then decide what customization each is best suited for.

I don’t find Magic Boost a necessity for use with my external speakers. But my speakers have a very strong bottom end reproduction to begin with. If you have a pair of entry-level external speakers or are using a laptop, Magic Boost will be your BFF.

Adding and removing apps is simple. Click on the Add Apps pull-down menu and pick from any installed. You can also select an app whether it is turned off or running. To remove an application from the list, hover over the application’s icon to bring up the Remove button (a cross to the left of the app’s icon). Click it and the application will be removed.

Support is impressive. The app comes with a manual you can access from the Menu Bar icon. I visited their site in search of an answer to a question I had. I couldn’t find what I was looking for, so I fired off a missive Friday afternoon. I received my response on Sunday!

Sound Source 4 fits the mold of my favorite kind of app. It’s a one-trick pony, lives in the Menu Bar, and performs its function brilliantly.

I find one of the most impressive aspects of Rogue Amoeba is its attitude towards its customers. They wholeheartedly encourage you to submit ideas for any features you would like added to any of their apps and will give it serious consideration. And they’re serious about that, which I find most admirable.

SoundSource 4 can be purchased from [Rogue Amoeba’s store] for US $29.99. Owners of SoundSource 3 can upgrade for US $19.99 and there’s a free trial.

I encourage you to check out all of their wares. In fact, if you’re a burgeoning podcaster, you’ll want to check out their [Podcast Bundle] which can also take for a test drive.

Jump on in and enjoy.

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