



ARADAR

USER DOCUMENTATION

# Frequently Asked Questions

Organise every reference – and the labels you match. ARADAR is a macOS reference library for music producers, with audio analysis that tells you which labels your finished tracks belong on. The answers below cover everything from your first import to managing submissions.

61 questions · 10 sections

macOS 14 Sonoma+ · Apple Silicon & Intel

hello@aradar.app



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## 01 Getting Started

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### How do I add music to ARADAR?

Drag a folder from Finder onto the Library tab, or use File → Import Folder. ARADAR scans the folder recursively and adds every supported audio file it finds. Supported formats: AIFF, WAV, FLAC, MP3, M4A.

After import, each track is queued for audio analysis. Tracks appear in your library as their analysis completes – not all at once. A progress panel shows what's running.

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### What file format should I use?

**AIFF.** It's lossless, widely supported, and has consistent ID3 tag support across every major DAW. When you drag an AIFF from ARADAR into Ableton or Logic it imports instantly – no decode step, no background conversion.

WAV is hit-or-miss on metadata; many tools don't write tags to WAV files reliably, so tracks land in ARADAR with empty artist, label, and BPM fields. FLAC requires your DAW to transcode it to a working format on drag-in, which slows down your session. MP3 is lossy – avoid it for references if you can.

If your library is already in WAV or FLAC, ARADAR will still import and analyse it correctly – the format recommendation is about workflow friction, not a hard requirement.

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## **Why is my library empty after importing?**

Analysis is still running. Tracks appear one by one as each file is processed, not all at once when the import finishes. Check the progress panel in the corner of the app – it shows how many tracks remain and an estimated time.

For a large library (5,000+ tracks) this can take several hours. You can quit ARADAR at any time; analysis picks up from where it left off on the next launch.

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## **What audio formats does ARADAR support?**

AIFF, WAV, FLAC, MP3, and M4A.

AIFF is recommended for your reference library. It's lossless, has consistent ID3 tag support across DAWs, and drags into Ableton or Logic without a decode step. WAV is hit-or-miss on metadata – many tools don't write tags to WAV reliably. FLAC requires your DAW to transcode on drag-in, which adds friction.

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## What files does ARADAR skip during import?

Three categories are filtered automatically and surfaced in the import summary sheet:

- **Not audio** – files with an audio extension that aren't actually audio when probed (renamed images, corrupt headers, random docs). Prevents broken rows.
- **Remote files** – files hosted on Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive, Box, or iCloud Drive. ARADAR works only with files saved on your Mac. Save them locally first to import them.
- **Likely samples** – files shorter than 60 seconds. ARADAR is for tracking released tracks and demos, not loops, one-shots, or stems. Samples pollute label averages, frequency profiles, and fit scores. A 60-second minimum catches the overwhelming majority of sample content (one-shots, drum loops, vocal phrases) without false-positives on real tracks, which are almost always 90 seconds or longer.

The summary sheet at the end of each import lists every skipped file by category with a disclosure showing the filenames, so you can spot anything caught by mistake.

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## Will re-importing the same folder duplicate my tracks?

No. ARADAR deduplicates on file path during import – anything already in your library is silently skipped. Drag the same folder twice, drag a track out into a DAW and the same file back in later, or include a previously-imported folder inside a larger drop: in every case, only new files are added. Nothing is overwritten, no metadata is touched.

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## Can I import tracks that are stored on an external drive or NAS?

Yes. ARADAR stores a security-scoped bookmark to each file, not just its path, so it can access the file regardless of where it lives. If the drive isn't mounted when you launch ARADAR, those tracks show as Unreachable until the drive comes back online – then they're accessible again without any manual steps.

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## Why are some tracks showing in red with "permission denied"?

macOS blocked ARADAR from reading the file. This usually happens after a system update, or when tracks live in a folder ARADAR was never granted access to (Desktop, Documents, Downloads, an external drive, a network share).

A banner at the top of the Library shows how many tracks are affected. Click **Open Full Disk Access...** to jump directly to System Settings → Privacy & Security → Full Disk Access.

**If ARADAR isn't already listed there**, click the + button below the list and select ARADAR from /Applications, then make sure its toggle is on. ARADAR is intentionally not sandboxed (so it can read tracks from anywhere on your Mac, including external drives and synced folders), which means macOS only lists it in the per-folder grant panes after it has tried to access a protected folder. Full Disk Access avoids that bootstrap problem entirely – once granted, every previously denied track works again.

After granting access, right-click the affected tracks and choose Retry Analysis.

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## What metadata does ARADAR read from my files?

Artist, title, label, genre, year, BPM, and key – read from embedded ID3 tags at import time. If tags are missing or wrong, they'll be blank or incorrect in ARADAR. ARADAR doesn't write back to your files.

## 02 Audio Analysis

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### What does ARADAR actually measure?

For each track, ARADAR runs three measurements using the bundled ffmpeg:

- **Loudness** (via ebur128): integrated LUFS, loudness range (LRA), true peak
- **Dynamics** (via astats): RMS level, crest factor
- **Frequency profile** (via custom FFT): 10-band spectrum with a +4.5 dB/octave tilt

Results are stored in the local database and used for the Inspector, the Labels tab aggregations, and the frequency profile charts.

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### Why do some tracks show "Failed"?

Analysis failed after three attempts. Common causes: corrupted file, a renamed file whose actual format doesn't match its extension (e.g., an MP3 renamed to `.wav`), or file permission issues.

Right-click the track → Reveal in Finder to confirm the file opens. Then right-click → Retry Analysis. If it keeps failing, the file itself is likely the issue. You can select multiple failed tracks and retry them in bulk.

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## **Why do some tracks show "Unreachable"?**

The file was moved, renamed, or deleted after you imported it. ARADAR's bookmark to the file can no longer resolve.

Try right-click → Retry Analysis – if the file is back in its original location, this picks it up immediately. If not, remove the track and re-import from its new location. A manual relink feature is planned for a future version.

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## **Can I cancel analysis mid-run?**

Yes – click Cancel on the progress panel and confirm. All **pending** tracks are removed from your library. Completed and failed tracks are unaffected. There's no undo, but re-importing the batch after cancelling brings everything back.

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## **Does analysis run in the background if I switch tabs?**

Yes. Analysis runs as a background service; you can use all other parts of ARADAR while it runs. The progress panel floats in the corner until the queue empties.

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## **Why does the panel look different when I re-analyse a single track?**

Single-track re-analysis (Inspector → Retry Analysis, or right-click → Re-analyse) shows a simplified version of the panel – just a spinner and the file name, no progress ticker, no Cancel button. There's nothing meaningful to count down with one track, so the noise is stripped out. The full panel returns whenever a bulk import is running.

## 03 Frequency Analysis

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### What is the frequency profile chart showing?

The chart shows how a track's frequency balance **differs from a reference curve** – not the track's absolute spectrum. The 0 dB line represents the reference. Points above 0 mean the track has more energy in that band than the reference; points below mean less.

A flat line at 0 dB means perfect match to the reference. Real tracks will deviate – the question is whether those deviations matter for what you're trying to do.

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### Do I need to align tracks by loudness before comparing them?

No. ARADAR normalises each track by its own total spectral energy before comparison, so the chart shows tonal *shape*, not absolute level. A quieter copy and a louder copy of the same track draw identical curves. No LUFS matching needed.

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## What are the built-in reference curves?

Five genre baselines – Electronic, Hip-Hop, Pop/Rock, Acoustic, Orchestral – plus one mathematical reference, **Pink Noise**.

The genre curves are intentionally broad: useful for rough tonal sanity checks but not precise enough for label-level targeting. Pink Noise is a mathematical baseline (equal energy per octave) – a mastering yardstick rather than a genre target. Most music shows a low-end drop against pink and a roughly flat upper region; the differences *between* tracks usually live in the genre curves, not in pink.

For label-specific targeting, build a custom curve from that label's actual tracks. See *Custom Reference Curves* in the help doc.

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## What is a custom reference curve?

A frequency profile you build from your own track selection. Select 3 or more tracks in the Library or My Tracks tab → right-click → Create Custom Reference Curve → give it a name.

ARADAR computes the median 10-band spectrum across those tracks and saves it as a named reference. Once created, it appears in the reference picker alongside the built-in curves.

Typical use: select 10–15 tracks from a label you're targeting, save as "[Label Name]". Now every track in your library can be measured against that label's sonic identity.

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## What's the shaded band on the frequency chart?

When a **custom** curve is selected, a shaded band appears around the 0 dB line. This is the  $\pm 1$  standard deviation corridor – how much the tracks used to build the curve varied from each other, per band.

- **Your track's curve inside the band:** tonally consistent with what that label releases.
- **Your track's curve outside the band:** a noticeable outlier in that frequency region relative to the label's catalogue.

The band doesn't appear for built-in curves – they're archetypes, not derived from a real catalogue, so variance around them wouldn't mean anything.

A narrow band means the label is tonally consistent. A wide band means their catalogue varies a lot – tonal match matters less.

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## What's the Tonal deviation number in the comparison view?

A single number summarising how far a track's 10-band spectrum sits from the selected reference, in dB. Computed as the root mean square of the per-band deviations.

Lower is closer. Roughly:

- **Under 2 dB:** strong tonal match – little to no tonal adjustments needed
- **2–4.5 dB:** moderate deviation – detectable differences, may or may not matter for the label
- **Over 4.5 dB:** significant deviation – obvious tonal mismatch relative to this reference

These aren't hard thresholds. A 5 dB deviation in the mids on a label that releases bass-forward music might be fine. Use the number to rank and compare, not as a pass/fail gate.

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## How do I compare multiple tracks against a reference?

Select 2 or more tracks (up to 10) in the Library or My Tracks tab → right-click → Compare Frequency Profiles.

The comparison sheet overlays all selected tracks on one chart with distinct colours, shows the reference curve and shaded corridor, and lists each track with its tonal deviation. Sort by deviation to find your strongest match. Click a track row to highlight its curve and fade the others.

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## Can I compare multiple labels against a reference?

Yes. In the Labels tab, select 2 to 10 labels → right-click → **Compare Frequency Profiles...** The same comparison sheet opens as the tracks flow, but each row in the legend is a label name + track count instead of title + artist. Useful for spotting which labels in your catalogue cluster around the same tonal balance – sister labels, sub-genre families, or alternate-target candidates when your first-choice label isn't biting.

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## What happens when I click a row in Label Matches?

That label's median frequency profile becomes the active reference curve in the Frequency Profile chart above – the chart immediately re-draws to show how the current track sits relative to what that label typically releases. A pill below the section title reads "vs [Label Name] · N tracks · NN%". If the label has 3 or more analysed tracks, the  $\pm 1\sigma$  corridor also appears around 0 dB.

The overlay is transient – it lives only while the current track's Inspector is open. Re-opening the same track resets the chart to the global default reference. To pick a different label, click another row. To return to a preset or custom curve, use the "vs ..." picker just under the section title (it intentionally lists only built-ins and custom curves, not labels – labels are picked from the matches list).

## 04 Library and Organisation

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### How do I filter the library?

Use the dropdowns above the track list: Label, Key, Year, BPM, Rating. Combine any of them – they stack as AND filters. The search box adds free-text matching on top. Active filters appear as chips with × to remove them individually.

To see every track for a specific label, artist, genre, year, etc., right-click any track → **Show All Tracks** → pick the facet. The library clears all active filters first and applies only the picked one, so you always get the full set for that facet – no stray search query or year filter silently narrowing the result. The same "clean slate" behaviour applies to **View Tracks** in the Labels view and to clicking an artist name in the Label Inspector.

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### How do I rate tracks?

Right-click any track → Rating → pick a star level (0–5). You can also click the stars in the Inspector panel (open it by clicking a track). Ratings filter with the Rating dropdown – set a minimum and the library shows only tracks at that level or above.

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### Can I create playlists?

Yes – use File → New Playlist... (⇧⌘N) or right-click a track → Add to Playlist. Multi-selection works too: select several tracks first, then right-click → Add to Playlist to add them all in one go. Playlists appear in the sidebar.

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## How do I drag a track into my DAW?

Click and drag any track row from ARADAR directly into Ableton, Logic, or any other DAW's arrangement or session view. ARADAR hands the original file path to the DAW – no copy is made.

If the drag seems to do nothing, confirm the track's status is Analysed. Pending or Failed tracks may not resolve correctly.

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## Can I edit track metadata inside ARADAR?

Yes. Click a track to open the Inspector and the metadata fields (title, artist, album, label, genre, year, BPM, key, notes) are all editable inline. Changes are saved to the ARADAR database immediately – they don't write back to the original file's ID3 tags.

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## What are tags and how do I use them?

Tags are freeform labels you attach to tracks for any organising scheme that doesn't fit the built-in fields – mood ( `dark` , `uplifting` ), purpose ( `set-opener` , `peak-time` ), production state ( `needs-mastering` , `pitched` ), reference category ( `kick-reference` , `vocal-reference` ), whatever helps you find tracks later.

Open the Inspector, type into the Tags field, press return to commit each tag. Existing tags auto-complete so you don't end up with `darks` , `dark` , and `DARK` as separate values. Remove a tag by clicking its × chip. Search by typing the tag text in the Library search box.

Tags live in ARADAR's database only – they're not written back to the original file's ID3 tags.

## 05 Themes

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### How do I change the theme?

Preferences → Appearance → pick a theme. The whole app updates immediately, including charts and the frequency-corridor shading. There's also a quick switcher in the toolbar.

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### What's the difference between the themes?

- **Nocturne** – deep neutral dark theme, low-contrast, designed for long studio sessions. Default for most users.
- **Pulse** – saturated dark theme with stronger accent colours.
- **Velvet** – warm dark theme with reduced blue light, easier on the eyes late at night.
- **Open Air** – bespoke light theme for bright rooms or screen-sharing.
- **System (Light)** – system-style light theme using Apple's native appearance colours.
- **System (Dark)** – system-style dark theme using Apple's native appearance colours.

Pick whichever your eyes prefer. Visual hierarchy, data colours, and contrast are all calibrated per theme – none of them sacrifice readability.

## 06 Labels Tab

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### How does ARADAR know which label a track belongs to?

From the Label field in the track's ID3 tags. If a track has no label tag, it won't appear under any label in the Labels tab.

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### What are the loudness metrics in the Labels tab?

Aggregations computed across all analysed tracks on that label:

- **Avg LUFS:** average integrated loudness – how loud the label masters
- **LUFS Range:** spread between the quietest and loudest tracks on the label
- **Avg Crest:** average crest factor – higher means more dynamic, lower means more compressed
- **Avg RMS:** average RMS level

These are useful for understanding a label's mastering style before you pitch.

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### What are the frequency band columns?

The Labels tab doesn't have per-band columns. Frequency data is in the Label Inspector – click a label row to open it and see the full 10-band frequency profile for that label's catalogue.

## 07 Submissions (A&R Tracker)

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### How does ARADAR decide which labels match my track?

ARADAR ranks labels using a composite score: frequency profile match (40%), loudness match (25%), tempo match (20%), and genre match (15%). The frequency dimension is the strongest – it's based on how closely your track's 10-band balance matches analysed tracks in your library whose **Label** metadata field matches each label's name (not custom Tags).

Labels without frequency data (no analysed tracks tagged to them in your library) are scored on the other three dimensions only and show "Freq –" in the breakdown.

The dropdown sorts all your labels by composite score, highest first. If a label you want to submit to doesn't rank highly, it usually means your track is significantly off-profile on one of the four dimensions – the breakdown in the inspector shows which.

You can still submit to any label manually from the Labels tab. The dropdown is a shortcut for likely matches, not a hard filter.

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### My track has no genre or BPM tag – does that hurt the score?

Yes. The 15% genre weight and 20% BPM weight can only contribute when those tags exist on your track. A track with neither tag caps at 65% no matter how good the loudness and frequency fit is. Open the Inspector, fill in the missing fields, and the label matches recompute. This is the single most common reason scores look mysteriously low.

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## What does the "N tracks" pill next to a label mean?

It's the number of analysed tracks ARADAR has on hand for that label's frequency profile (tracks whose Label field matches that label). The pill is always visible – useful for seeing how much evidence backs each score (an 89% match from 12 tracks is more trustworthy than the same 89% from 2). Fewer tracks means lower confidence, so ARADAR dampens the composite score to reflect that. Profiles built from **8 or more** tracks are considered fully reliable. To grow a label's profile, import more of their releases and ensure their Label metadata matches.

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## How do I make ARADAR's scoring more or less strict?

Preferences → Audio Analysis → Fit Scoring has a **Lenient / Balanced / Strict** picker. Lenient surfaces more labels as fits, Strict only the most confident matches. Balanced is the default tuning. The setting takes effect immediately – re-open a track Inspector to see the recomputed scores.

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## How many labels show up in the Label Matches list?

Five by default. Adjust in Preferences → Audio Analysis → Label Matches → **Matches Shown** – range is 3–10. Use a tighter shortlist for a focused workflow, or a longer list to explore lower-confidence fits. Changes take effect immediately; re-open a track to see the new list length.

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## How do I log a submission?

Right-click a track in the Library → Add Submission to Label → choose the label. The submission appears in the A&R Tracker tab with status draft.

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## What submission statuses are available?

Draft, Submitted, Responded, Accepted, Rejected. Update a submission's status as the conversation progresses by clicking the status badge in A&R Tracker.

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
### **Can I add notes to a submission?**

Yes – click a submission row to expand it and add free-text notes. Useful for tracking who you contacted, what response you got, and any follow-up.

## 08 Statistics Window

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### How do I open the Statistics window?

 , or Window → Library Statistics. It opens as a separate window – leave it on a second monitor while you work.

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### What's in the Statistics window?

- **Overview** – totals (tracks, labels, hours of music) and library-wide averages (LUFS, crest, BPM).
- **Top Lists** – top labels by track count, top genres, top years.
- **Distributions** – histograms of BPM, key, year, and rating.
- **Quality Averages** – average loudness and dynamics by year, useful for spotting how mastering style in your reference collection has shifted over time.
- **Action Items** – tracks needing attention (missing metadata, failed analysis, unrated, untagged). Click any row to jump to those tracks with the right Library filter applied.
- **Submissions** – pipeline summary by status, average response time, top labels you've submitted to.

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## 09 Licensing

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### Is there a free trial?

Yes – 14 days, full features. Nothing is gated during the trial; you're evaluating the real app, not a demo.

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### What happens when the trial ends?

Your library, ratings, submissions, tags, custom curves, and analysis data **stay accessible** – you can browse, filter, listen, drag into your DAW, and view analysis. What's locked is *creating new* content: importing new tracks, creating new custom reference curves, logging new submissions, adding new tags. Buying a license lifts the lock instantly.

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### How do I purchase?

Click **Buy ARADAR** in the trial banner above the library or in Preferences → License. The button opens the ARADAR store at [shop.aradar.app](https://shop.aradar.app). Lemon Squeezy handles checkout as the Merchant of Record (they invoice, manage taxes, and issue your receipt).

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## How do I activate my license?

Two paths:

- 1 **One-click from the email.** The Lemon Squeezy receipt has an "Activate ARADAR" button. Click it on the Mac where you want ARADAR licensed – the app opens, jumps to the License tab, prefills the key, and runs activation automatically.
- 2 **Manual paste.** Copy the license key from the email → Preferences → License → paste into the License Key field → click Activate.

Either way the License tab confirms with a green success message once activation completes.

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## How many Macs can I use one license on?

Three. Studio Mac, laptop, spare – or whatever combination you prefer. You don't need to use all three slots.

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## "Activation limit reached" – what now?

You've already activated on 3 Macs. To free a slot:

- **Best path:** open ARADAR on a Mac you no longer use → Preferences → License → **Deactivate This Mac**. The slot is released immediately, and you can activate on the new Mac.
  - **No access to the old Mac:** email [hello@aradar.app](mailto:hello@aradar.app) with your license key and we'll free the slot.
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## Activation shows "Unexpected response from license server" – what now?

The license server returned something ARADAR didn't recognise. The banner quotes the exact message the server sent back, and a **Contact Support** button opens a pre-filled email.

Two things to try:

- 1 **Wait a minute and retry.** Many of these are transient and clear themselves.
- 2 **If the message persists,** click **Contact Support** and include the quoted text from the banner. The exact wording maps to a specific Lemon Squeezy condition.

Unrecognised server messages are reported to Sentry automatically (no license key, no email – just the message text and version info), so the underlying cause is often patched before you need to write in.

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## Can I use ARADAR offline?

Yes. Once activated, ARADAR validates with the license server in the background. If you're offline (no network, on a plane) the app stays fully licensed for **30 days** without contacting the server. The status badge in Preferences → License shows "Licensed (offline N days)" so you can see how long it's been since the last successful check.

After 30 days offline the license falls back to "invalid" and content-creation features lock – exactly like the trial ending. The moment you reconnect and ARADAR successfully revalidates, full access returns automatically.

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## How do I free a slot before selling or wiping a Mac?

Before you sell, give away, or wipe a Mac, open Preferences → License → **Deactivate This Mac**. The slot is released back to your pool. If you forget, email hello@aradar.app with your license key.

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## **Where's my receipt?**

In your email – search your inbox for "Lemon Squeezy" or for the ARADAR store name. The receipt has a "View Order" link that opens your order page, where you can re-download the receipt, see the license key, request a refund within the policy window, or update payment details for subscription renewals.

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## **Is my license tied to my email address?**

No. The license key is the credential. We don't store your email in ARADAR, and we don't require an account or login. (Lemon Squeezy has your email from the purchase for billing purposes – that's their record, not ours.)

## 10 Technical

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### Where does ARADAR store its data?

All data lives locally in `~/Library/Application Support/aradar/`. The database is `library.sqlite`. Artwork cache is in the `artwork/` subfolder. Nothing in your library is uploaded.

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### How do I export logs for troubleshooting?

Preferences → Diagnostics → Export Log as File. Attach the file to your support email with a description of what you were doing. Logs reflect the current session – if you restarted ARADAR since the issue occurred, reproduce it first.

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## What data does ARADAR send over the network?

Your library, audio files, listening history, ratings, tags, custom curves, and submissions **never leave your Mac**. There's no telemetry on how you use the app.

Three narrow exceptions, all tied to paid use:

- 1 **License activation, validation, and deactivation** – sends your license key and this Mac's name to [api.lemonsqueezy.com](https://api.lemonsqueezy.com) for the license server to manage your activation slots. No library data is included. Validation re-runs periodically; deactivation releases the slot.
- 2 **Crash reporting** – when ARADAR crashes or hits an unhandled error, a report is sent to Sentry (stack trace, OS version, app version, error type). No file paths, track names, license key, or email. Opt-out toggle in Preferences → Diagnostics → Crash Reporting.
- 3 **Update checks** – ARADAR fetches the appcast at [aradar.app/appcast.xml](https://aradar.app/appcast.xml) on launch and once a day to learn whether a new version is available. Just an HTTPS GET; no identifiers sent. Updates are EdDSA-signed so a hijacked feed can't push a tampered build.

That's the whole list. No analytics, no usage telemetry, no "phone home" to count users.

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## Can I turn off crash reporting?

Yes. Preferences → Diagnostics → Crash Reporting → toggle off. Takes effect immediately; no restart needed. Crash reports are sanitised (no file paths, no track or label names, no license key, no personal identifiers) so leaving it on helps fix bugs without exposing your library.

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## **Why does ARADAR need permission to access my files?**

macOS protects certain folders (Desktop, Documents, Downloads, external drives, network shares) and requires apps to explicitly request access. ARADAR is intentionally **not** sandboxed, so it can read your music from anywhere on disk – but the trade-off is that for files in protected locations you need to grant Full Disk Access once. After that, every track is reachable indefinitely without further prompts.

ARADAR also stores a security-scoped bookmark for each imported track. Bookmarks survive renames and moves better than raw file paths, and let ARADAR reach the file on every subsequent launch without re-asking permission per file.



ARADAR

Still stuck? Export a diagnostic log from Preferences → Diagnostics and send it our way with a short note on what you were doing.

[hello@aradar.app](mailto:hello@aradar.app) →