

AI-03857 Cakewalk Sonar Add-Ons

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Tags	Project
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Give me a list of free and essential Add Ons for the Cakewalk Sonar DAW (sound shaping). In my list already are VB-Audio, Voxengco SPAN, TDD Nova.

Since you already have **VB-Audio**, Voxengo SPAN, and TDR Nova, you already own 3 of the strongest free tools for sound shaping. For **Cakewalk Sonar**, I would add the following **essential free VSTs** in layers so you build a complete "studio toolkit" instead of randomly downloading plugins. Community recommendations from Cakewalk users, Reddit, and mixing guides consistently put these in the "worth installing" category. (Genesis Mix Lab)

1. Compression (must-have)

TDR Kotelnikov

Why: Transparent compressor for mix bus and mastering.

Use it for:

- Vocal leveling
- Glue compression
- Mix bus control
- Transparent mastering

Starting point:

- Ratio: **2:1**
- Attack: **20-40 ms**

- Release: **100–200 ms**
- Gain reduction: **1–3 dB**

Molot GE (free version available)

Why: Colored/analog-style compressor with punch.

Use it for:

- Drums
 - Rock vocals
 - Bass
 - Aggressive sound shaping
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2. Reverb (essential)

Valhalla Supermassive

Why: Probably the best free reverb/delay plugin available. Frequently recommended in mixing communities. ([Genesis Mix Lab](#))

Use it for:

- Vocal depth
- Ambient space
- Delay throws
- Stereo widening

Starting presets:

- Vocal room: **Gemini** → **Mix 10–20%**
- Big cinematic: **Andromeda**
- Delay-like echo: **Orion**

TAL-Reverb-4

Why: Simple, fast, warm vintage-style reverb.

Best for:

- Snare
 - Synths
 - Lo-fi sound
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3. Delay / Echo

Valhalla Freq Echo

Why: Creative echo + movement.

Best for:

- Stereo effects
- Psychedelic vocals
- Width enhancement

Baby Comeback by Baby Audio

Why: Easy-to-use modern delay.

Best for:

- Vocal slapback
 - Simple stereo delay
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4. Saturation / Analog Warmth (highly recommended)

Softube Saturation Knob

Why: One-knob analog warmth.

Use it for:

- Thin vocals
- Bass thickness
- Drum punch

Starting point:

Turn until you hear warmth, then back off **20%**.

FerricTDS MkII

Why: Tape-style saturation.

Best for:

- Master bus
 - Vintage feel
 - Smooth harsh highs
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5. Limiter / Loudness (important)

LoudMax

Why: Simple transparent limiter.

Use for:

- Prevent clipping
- Final loudness

Starting point:

- Output ceiling: **1 dB**
- Threshold: adjust until **1–3 dB reduction**

Youlean Loudness Meter Free

Why: Essential for Spotify loudness checking. Frequently recommended for free mixing/mastering setups. ([Genesis Mix Lab](#))

Target LUFS:

- Spotify music: **14 LUFS**
 - Podcasts: **16 LUFS**
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6. Imaging / Stereo

Ozone Imager 2

Why: Easy stereo widening.

Rule of thumb:

- Keep bass **mono below ~120 Hz**
 - Widen highs carefully
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7. De-Esser (for harsh vocals)

T-De-Esser Plus (free)

Why: Removes harsh "S" sounds.

Starting point:

- Detect around **5–8 kHz**
 - Reduce only enough to smooth harshness
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8. Visual Analysis / Learning

MAnalyzer (MeldaProduction FreeFX Bundle)

Why: Alternative analyzer beside SPAN.

Bertom EQ Curve Analyzer

Why: Compare Spotify reference tracks against your EQ curve.

9. Utility / Gain Staging

GainMatch by LetiMix (free)

Why: Compare before/after fairly.

Very useful because louder often tricks your brain into thinking "better."

My recommended “minimal pro free toolkit” for you

You already have:

1. VB-Audio → routing
2. SPAN → analyzer
3. TDR Nova → EQ / dynamic EQ

Add these:

1. TDR Kotelnikov → compressor
2. Valhalla Supermassive → reverb + delay
3. Softube Saturation Knob → warmth
4. LoudMax → limiter
5. Youlean Loudness Meter → Spotify loudness
6. Ozone Imager 2 → stereo width
7. TAL-Reverb-4 → quick room reverb

That set alone can take you surprisingly far in **Cakewalk Sonar**, from casual listening EQ to near semi-pro mixing/mastering. ([Genesis Mix Lab](#))