



KeyCommander User Manual

Companion app for Steinberg Cubase & Nuendo — Version 1.1.0, June 2026

Thank you for purchasing KeyCommander. If you run into any issues or have feedback, reach out to me via birchlabs@thomasvanderburg.com and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

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1. Introduction

Cubase has hundreds of commands. You either memorize shortcuts, dig through menus, or waste time clicking around. KeyCommander gives you a spotlight-style launcher (think command palette, jump bar, or quick launcher) that sits in your system tray and appears on demand. With powerful searching you can quickly find and execute the exact command you were looking for.

What KeyCommander Does

- Reads your Cubase Key Commands XML file and builds a searchable command list.
- Assigns each command a unique MIDI CC value and injects the mapping into a Cubase MIDI Remote driver script.
- Provides a global hotkey that opens a floating search window from anywhere on your desktop.
- Supports repeat, category filtering, command history, most-used lists, and a macro recorder.

How It Works

KeyCommander runs silently in the background (system tray on Windows, menu bar on macOS). When you press the hotkey, a compact search window appears. Type a command name, use slash commands to filter or repeat, press Enter to execute, and the window hides itself again — leaving Cubase in focus and ready to respond.

2. System Requirements

Supported Platforms

- Windows 10+
- MacOS 12+ (Intel systems still in Beta)

Required Software

- Steinberg Cubase 12 or later / Nuendo 12 or later*
- A virtual MIDI loopback driver (e.g. loopMIDI on Windows, IAC Driver on macOS)

Note: The MIDI loopback driver creates a virtual port that KeyCommander writes to and Cubase reads from. It does not need to correspond to any physical MIDI hardware.

**The plugin insert feature shipped with version v1.1.0 requires Cubase or Nuendo v15.0.30*

3. First-Time Setup

The first time you launch KeyCommander a Setup Wizard walks you through every required configuration step. You can return to any setting later via the Settings window (accessible from the system tray icon or by typing `/settings` in the search bar).

Activate Your License

On first launch you will be prompted to enter your license key. Enter the key exactly as provided after purchase and click **Activate**. An internet connection is required for activation.

Note: A single license allows activation on three machines at a time. You can deactivate it in Settings > License to move it to another computer.

Step 1 — Select your DAW

KeyCommander needs to read your Cubase or Nuendo key commands file. The default locations are:

None

Windows: `C:\Users\<name>\AppData\Roaming\Steinberg\<product version>\Key Commands.xml`

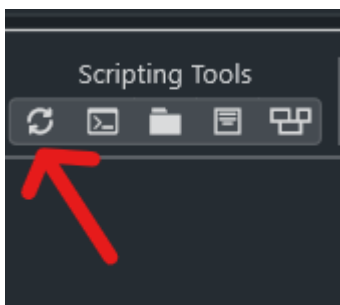
macOS: `~/Library/Preferences/Steinberg/<product version>/Key Commands.xml`

After selecting your main DAW it will find the most recent version folder and use its Key Commands.xml file.

It will also map the following VST cache files to map your FX plugins for the plugin insert feature:

- Vst3plugins.xml
- Vst2xPlugin Infos Cubase.xml
- Cubase Pro Module Cachce.xml

Note: If you add, change or remove Macros or Logical Editor Presets inside Cubase after setup, restart KeyCommander or go to settings > data and click “Force remap”. Afterwards you will need to reload the Midi Remote Script:



Step 2 — Select the Driver Scripts Folder

KeyCommander needs to write a MIDI Remote driver script into Cubase's Driver Scripts folder. The default locations are:

None

Windows: `C:\Users\<name>\Documents\Steinberg\Cubase\MIDI Remote\Driver Scripts`

macOS: `~/Documents/Steinberg/Cubase/MIDI Remote/Driver Scripts`

Click **Browse** and select the Driver Scripts folder. You must select the folder named exactly **Driver Scripts**.

Step 3 — Choose a Virtual MIDI Port

Select the virtual MIDI port that KeyCommander will use to communicate with Cubase. If you haven't created one yet:

- **Windows** — Download and install loopMIDI or an alternative, create a port, then refresh the list in the wizard.
- **macOS** — Open Audio MIDI Setup, double-click the IAC Driver, check "Device is online", and add a port.

Step 4 — Set Your Hotkeys

Two hotkeys are required:

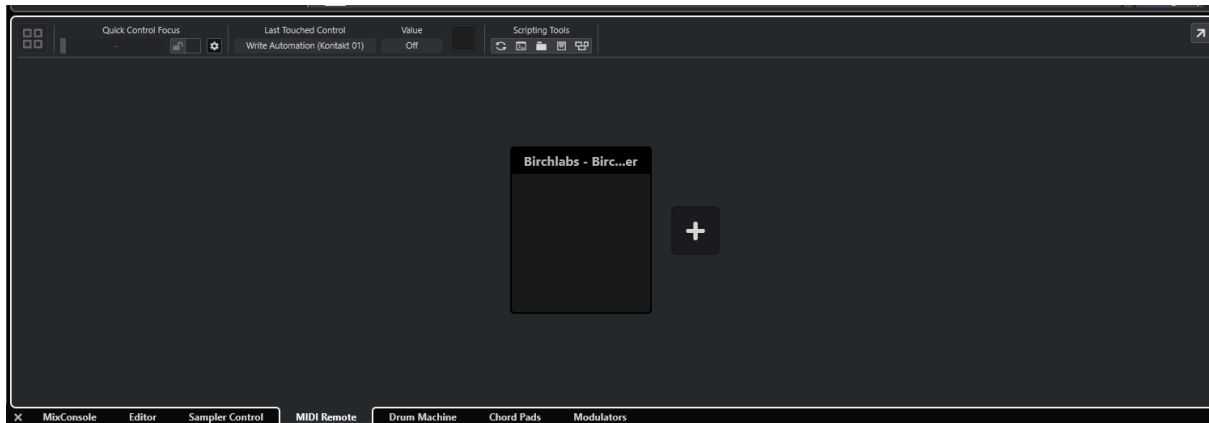
- **Open KeyCommander Window** — brings up the floating search window from anywhere.
- **Retrigger Last Command** — re-fires the most recently executed command without opening the window.

Click **Set Hotkey** next to each field, press your desired key combination, and the field will update automatically. Both hotkeys must be different from each other and not conflict with any hotkey inside Cubase.

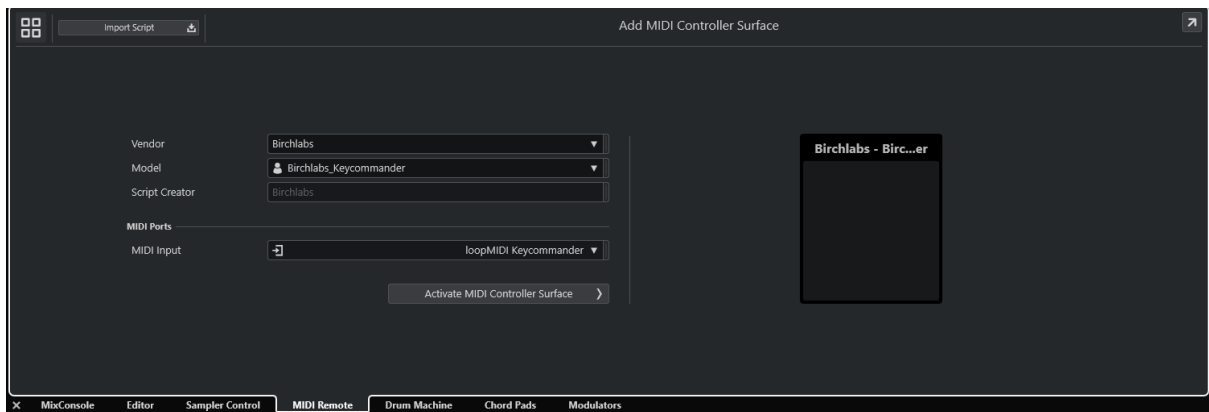
Step 5 — Cubase MIDI Remote Setup

After completing the wizard, restart Cubase. In Cubase, open the MIDI Remote Manager (Studio > MIDI Remote Manager) and confirm that the KeyCommander driver appears in the list and is connected to the virtual MIDI port you selected.

It should either appear automatically, or after pressing the refresh button at the scripting tools section,



Or add the controller surface manually:



4. The Search Window

The search window is the heart of KeyCommander. Press your hotkey to show it, type to search, and press Enter to execute a command. The window hides itself after execution so Cubase stays in focus.

Window Position and resizing

Use the handle at the bottom right to resize the search window.

Note: If you resize the window while there are search results visible, it will disable the auto height resizing. Right click or double click to reset to the default size and re-enable auto resizing.

By default the window is centered on your main screen. It will remember at which screen and which position you moved it too. Right click or double click to reset it to the middle of the main screen.

Basic Search

Start typing any part of a command name and KeyCommander immediately filters the list using fuzzy matching. The scoring weights name matches more heavily than category matches, so "quantize" will surface Quantize commands before unrelated commands that happen to belong to a category containing that word.

- **Arrow keys Up / Down** — move the selection through results.
- **Enter** — execute the selected command.
- **Escape** — hide the window without executing anything.

Quick Navigation with Arrow Keys

With an empty search bar, the arrow keys offer quick access to special lists without typing any slash command:

- **Up arrow** — shows your recently executed commands (/h history view).
- **Down arrow** — shows your most-used commands by frequency (/top view).

Press any letter key to exit the quick view and start a normal search.

Results

The results table shows the command name, its category, and the key binding assigned in Cubase (if any). Column headers can be toggled in Settings > Preferences.

Note: Commands marked as "missing" were previously in your XML file but are no longer present. They can be hidden via *Settings > Preferences > Hide missing commands*, or cleared entirely via *Settings > Data > Missing Commands*.

5. Slash Commands Reference

Type a forward slash (/) in the search bar to see a live list of all available slash commands.

Modifier Commands

Modifier commands prefix your search term and change how the selected command is executed.

Command	Description
<code>/r<N> <search></code>	Repeat the selected command N times. Example: <code>/r3 play</code> repeats the Play command 3 times. The delay between repetitions is configurable in Settings (default 500 ms).

Navigation Commands

Navigation commands change what is displayed in the results table.

Command	Description
<code>/c <category> <search></code>	Filter results to a specific category. Type <code>/c</code> , then the category name, then an optional search term within that category. You can use the Tab key to select a partially typed category.
<code>/h</code>	Show recently executed commands (command history). Also triggered by pressing the Up arrow on an empty search bar. Not persistent at this moment so history is cleared when exiting the app.
<code>/top</code>	Show your most frequently used commands. Also triggered by pressing the Down arrow on an empty search bar. This one is persistent. Can be cleared in settings.
<code>/kb <optional combo></code>	Show which commands have a key binding assigned, optionally filtered by a combo. (<i>key bound</i>)
<code>/kf <optional combo></code>	Show which commands have no key binding assigned yet, optionally filtered by a combo. (<i>key free</i>)

Effect Plugin Insert Commands

Requires Cubase/Nuendo 15.0.30

Search your effect plugins and insert them on the selected track. Either on the first available slot or a specified slot.

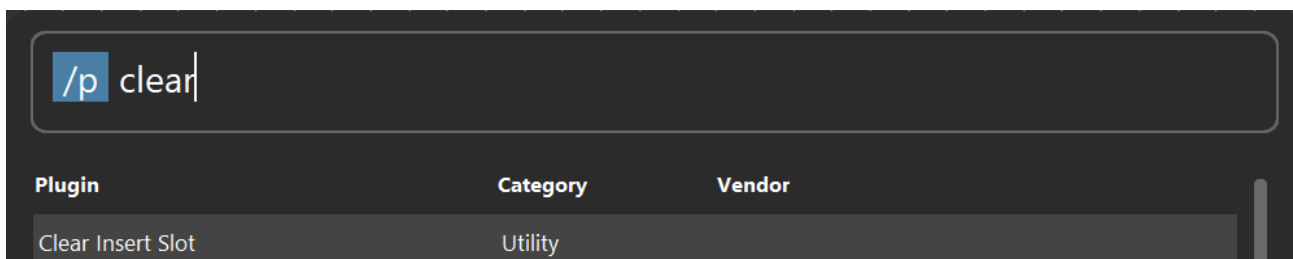
Command	Description
/p <search>	Search your FX plugins and insert it on the first available insert slot
/p[1-16] <search>	Search your FX plugins and insert it on the specified insert slot

Channel Strip Effects

You can also insert the Cubase/Nuendo native channel strip effect plugins. You can recognise them via the “(channel strip)” addition to the plugin name. If you pick one of these, they will be added as a channel strip instead of as an insert.

Remove/Clear insert slot

If you search for “clear”, it will show “Clear Insert Slot” in the results. This one allows you to clear the specified slot.



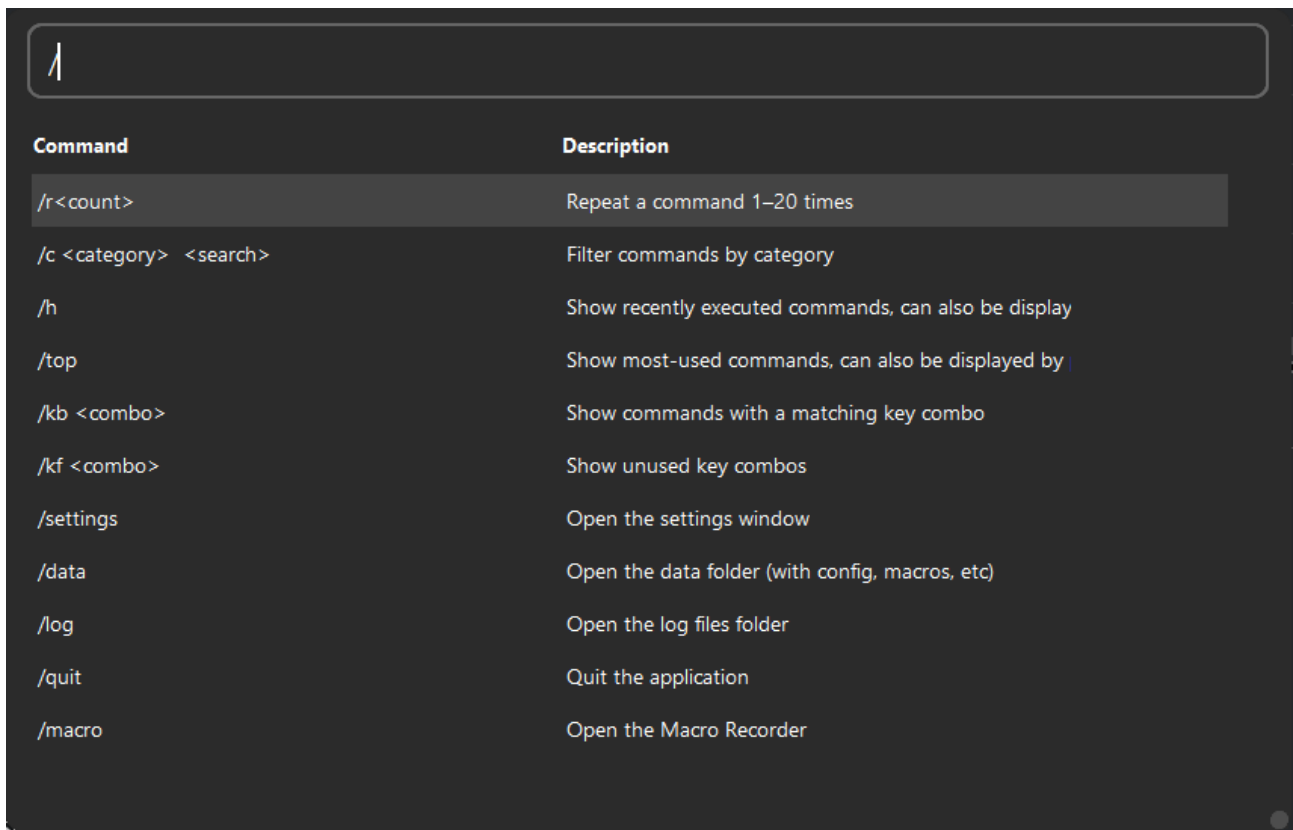
Automatically open effect editor after insert

If you are used to an effect editor opening after inserting an effect plugin, you can enable this in *Settings > Preferences*. The /p command unfortunately ignores what you have set in Cubase preferences.

Action Commands

Action commands execute immediately when you press Enter — they do not search for a Cubase command.

Command	Description
/settings	Open the Settings window.
/macro	Open the Macro Recorder window.
/data	Open the KeyCommander data folder (contains settings, macros, and the command mapping cache).
/log	Open the log files folder (useful for troubleshooting).
/quit	Quit the application.



6. Macros

The Macro Recorder lets you record sequences of Cubase commands and play them back as a single step. Macros are stored locally and appear in the search results just like any other command.

Opening the Macro Window

Type `/macro` in the search bar and press Enter, or open it from the system tray / menu bar context menu.

Creating a Macro

1. Click **New Macro** in the Macro Recorder window.
2. Recording is now enabled. Start searching commands and pressing enter. By default the commands will be actually executed. This can be turned off by pressing the **“Executing commands live”** toggle.
3. Click **Finish** when done and choose a name, or close by clicking on the **X** to cancel.

Note: Macros are executed step-by-step with the same delay used for the `/r` repeat command (configurable in Settings > Preferences > Repeat / macro step delay).

Editing a Macro

Select any existing macro in the list and click **Edit**. You can reorder steps by dragging, delete individual steps, or append new ones by clicking **Record** again.

Exporting a Macro to Cubase XML

Each macro can be exported as a Cubase Logical Editor or Macro XML file. Click the export button on the macro row, choose a save location, then import the file inside Cubase via Edit > Key Commands. **Make sure to have Cubase or Nuendo closed while editing the xml file.**

Running a Macro

Macros appear in the main search results with the category **KC Macro**. Search for the macro name, select it, and press Enter to run it. On Windows you will see a progress bar, on MacOS this is unfortunately not (yet) visible.

7. Settings

Open Settings via `/settings` in the search bar, or via the system tray / menu bar icon.

Settings is split up into four sections: Main, Hotkeys, Preferences and Data & Info.

Main

DAW Data Folder

Here you will see and are able to edit the source for the files used to map everything inside KeyCommander.

Driver Scripts Folder

Path to the Cubase MIDI Remote Driver Scripts folder. KeyCommander writes its driver script here; Cubase reads it on startup.

MIDI Configuration

Select the virtual MIDI output port that KeyCommander will use. Click the refresh button to update the list if you created a new port after launch.

Note: The index at the end will normally be ignored and is there to differentiate two ports with the same name if necessary.

Hotkeys

Main Hotkeys:

- **Open KeyCommander Window** — summon the search window from anywhere.
- **Retrigger Last Command** — re-execute the last command without opening the window.

Quick Search Hotkeys

Assign a hotkey that opens KeyCommander with the search field already filled in. Type the text to insert (a plain search or a slash command like `'/c addtrack'` or `'/p'`)

You are allowed an unlimited amount of Quick Search Hotkeys.

Preferences

Option	Description
Start at startup	Launch KeyCommander automatically when you log in to your computer.
Appearance mode	Choose Light, Dark, or System (follows your OS theme).
Only activate when Cubase/Nuendo is in focus	The search window hotkey only works when Cubase or Nuendo is the foreground application.
Clear search on re-open	Clears the search bar each time the window is shown.
Show column headers	Toggles the column header row in the results table.
Maximum search results	Limits the number of results displayed. Set to -1 for no limit.
Hide missing commands	Excludes commands that are no longer in the XML file from search results.
Open plugin editor after inserting via /p search	For if you want to mimic the Cubase/Nuendo preference of the effect editor opening after inserting a plugin. <i>Note: You have to also reload the Midi Remote Script inside Cubase (Or restart Cubase) for any changes to take effect.</i>
Repeat / macro step delay	Delay in milliseconds between repeated commands or macro steps (50–5000 ms, default 500). On slower machines this value might need to be increased to make sure all steps are registered by Cubase.

Data & Info

Data Overview

An overview of the results of mapping your commands and plugins, as well as some of your commands.

It also shows the VST cache files KeyCommander uses behind the scenes to map your VST plugins.

Open Data folder: Click to directly open the folder used to store most data related to KeyCommander (Settings, Command mapping, Plugin mapping, Logs)

Force Remap: Force a remapping of the key commands and plugin XML files. You have to also reload the Midi Remote Script inside Cubase (Or restart Cubase) for any changes to take effect.

Missing Commands

If commands that were previously in your XML file are no longer present, they appear here. You can view details per category and clear them from the list. Clearing removes them from search results permanently (until they reappear in the XML).

Note: Commands are persistently stored inside a mapping, so if a command gets removed within Cubase/Nuendo and later readded, its mapping is restored and mapped to the same Midi Message again. (!) **Clearing missing commands will remove the missing commands from mapping and thus will potentially get a new Midi Message.**

Command History

Usage counts power the /top view and the Down-arrow quick list. Click **Reset command usage counts** to start fresh.

License

Displays your masked license key, the name the license is registered to, and the activation date. Use **Deactivate on this machine** to free the license for use on another computer — the application will close after deactivation.

8. Troubleshooting

Most issues are solved by either restarting KeyCommander, Cubase and/or your Computer. **Also make sure you start KeyCommander before you start Cubase.**

The search window doesn't appear when I press the hotkey

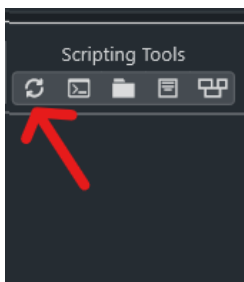
- Confirm the hotkey is set in Settings and is not in conflict with another application.
- On Windows, try running KeyCommander as administrator if another app is consuming the hotkey.
- If "Only activate when Cubase/Nuendo is in focus" is enabled, make sure Cubase is the active window.
- Make sure the settings window is not still opened/minimized

Commands don't execute in Cubase

- Make sure Cubase/Nuendo is the focused window when you press Enter in the search window.
- Check that the MIDI Remote driver appears in Cubase's MIDI Remote Manager and shows as connected.
- Verify the virtual MIDI port is running (e.g. loopMIDI on Windows, IAC Driver on macOS).
- Try regenerating the driver script by going to *Settings > Data > Force Remap*

The driver script doesn't appear in Cubase

- Confirm the Driver Scripts folder path in Settings ends with a folder named exactly **Driver Scripts**.
- Check that KeyCommander has write permission to that folder.
- Restart Cubase after saving Settings — Cubase only scans for scripts at launch. Or use the refresh scripts button:



MIDI port not listed in Settings

- Make sure your virtual MIDI port driver is running.
- Click the refresh button next to the MIDI port dropdown in Settings.
- On macOS, open Audio MIDI Setup and confirm the IAC Driver port is online.

Commands are marked as missing

Missing commands were saved in your mapping cache but are no longer present in the current XML file. This can happen between Cubase versions (Steinberg removes or renames commands sometimes) or if you personally deleted macros or logical presets.

Commands are persistently stored inside a mapping, so if a command gets removed within Cubase/Nuendo and later readded, its mapping is restored and mapped to the same Midi Message again.

Go to Settings > Data > Missing commands to see an overview of which commands are missing. You can view details per category and clear them from the list. Clearing removes them from search results permanently (until they reappear in the XML).

Note: (!) Clearing missing commands will remove the missing commands from mapping and thus will potentially get a new Midi Message.

Where are log files stored?

Type /log in the search bar and press Enter to open the log folder directly. Or manually go to the log folder location:

None

Windows: C:\Users\<name>\.local\share\Keycommander\keycommander.log

macOS: ~/Library/Application Support/KeyCommander/logs

Where is the data folder?

Type /data in the search bar and press Enter. The folder contains:

- keycommander_settings.json — all settings
- keycommander_macros.json — saved macros
- command_mapping.json — MIDI CC mapping cache
- commands_for_cubase.json — The command mapping in a format used to populate the midi remote script.
- plugin-mapping.json - mapping of your effect plugins used to populate the midi remote script.