USER GUIDE

GEOSONICS II

Soniccouture

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INSTALLING YOUR SONICCOUTURE PRODUCT

If you do not own Kontakt, you can install the free
[Kontakt Player](#).

Kontakt 6.6 or above is required for this product.

The most up to date installation instructions can be found on the
[Soniccouture Website](#)

ABOUT CHRIS WATSON

Chris Watson is one of the world's leading recorders of wildlife and natural phenomena.

Born in 1953, in Sheffield, Watson was a founding member of the influential Sheffield based experimental music group Cabaret Voltaire during the 1970's and early 1980's. His sound recording career began in 1981 when he joined Tyne Tees Television. Since then he has developed a particular and passionate interest in recording the wildlife sounds of animals, habitats and atmospheres from around the world.

As a freelance composer and recordist for Film, TV & Radio, Watson specialises in natural history and documentary location sound together with sound design in post production.

His television work includes many programmes in the David Attenborough 'Life' series including 'The Life of Birds' which won a BAFTA Award for 'Best Factual Sound' in 1996. More recently Watson was the location sound recordist with David Attenborough on the BBC's series 'Frozen Planet' which won a BAFTA Award for 'Best Factual Sound' (2012).

Watson has recorded and featured in many BBC Radio productions including; 'The Ice Mountain, 'The Reed Bed', 'Jules Verne's Volcano', 'The Ditch', 'The Listeners' and 'The Wire' which won him the Broadcasting Press Guild's Broadcaster of The Year Award (2012). His music is regularly featured on the BBC Radio 3 programme 'Late Junction'.

Soniccouture
ABOUT GEOSONICS

2013

Geosonics was first conceived as an idea when we heard a documentary about the wire fence recording projects (www.wiredlab.org) taking place in the Australian outback. Chris featured on this programme, and we were captivated by the sounds and the concept of these huge expanses of space producing micro-sound along wires.

There was no way we could produce these recordings ourselves, so that meant we had to try and contact Chris. We had been fans of his for a long time, and this seemed a great opportunity to work with him.

Contacting Chris is not always easy; it takes time, because generally he is away in the Arctic or the Sahara when you want to to talk to him. But over a period of a year to 18 months we collaborated with Chris, and he spent some time going through his archives to supply us with interesting recordings for the project.

As we worked with Chris selecting material from his archives, the idea evolved to select material according to 4 distinct environments : Swamp, Ice & Water, Wind, and the Wires. These made up the initial four categories used in the original Geosonics release in 2013.

2021

In 2021 we decided to update Geosonics.   We wanted to make a more general instrument in which you could choose any of Chris's recordings without loading a new NKI.   There were many features we wanted to add and some things we wanted to simplify.   We contacted Chris again and he was happy to add some more Geosonics ambiences (50 altogether) in two new categories: Forests and Marine Life.

This became the completely re-designed Geosonics II edition.

ABOUT THE RECORDINGS

We spoke with Chris at length over Skype about the various recording processes used in the Geosonics archive. These form the basis of 4 videos, which you can view on our Youtube channel.
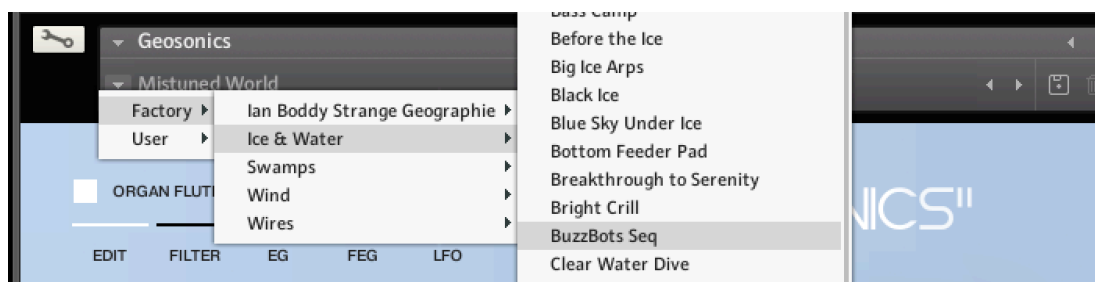
INTERVIEW VIDEOS

Swamp | Ice and Water | Wind | Wires
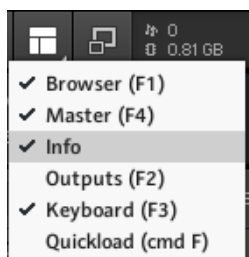
THE KONTAKT INSTRUMENT

SNAPSHOTS


Kontakt stores presets as Snapshots, and you can use these to save your setups.

We have provided a selection of Snapshots in different categories to provide some initial inspiration.

BUILT-IN HELP

If you activate the Info pane in Kontakt, you can hover over any control in the instrument and a short note will appear in the Info pane at the bottom describing what that control does.
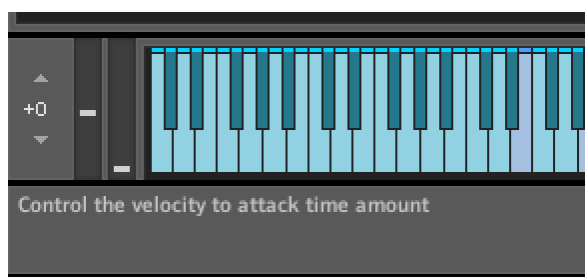
MAIN PAGE OVERVIEW

The main page of Geosonics displays three elements, sound sources, with a Prism controller (XY pad) in the middle. Chris Watson's natural GEO ambience element is at the bottom, and there are two Pitched waves are at the top left and right. The Prism controller adjusts the relative level of these three elements.
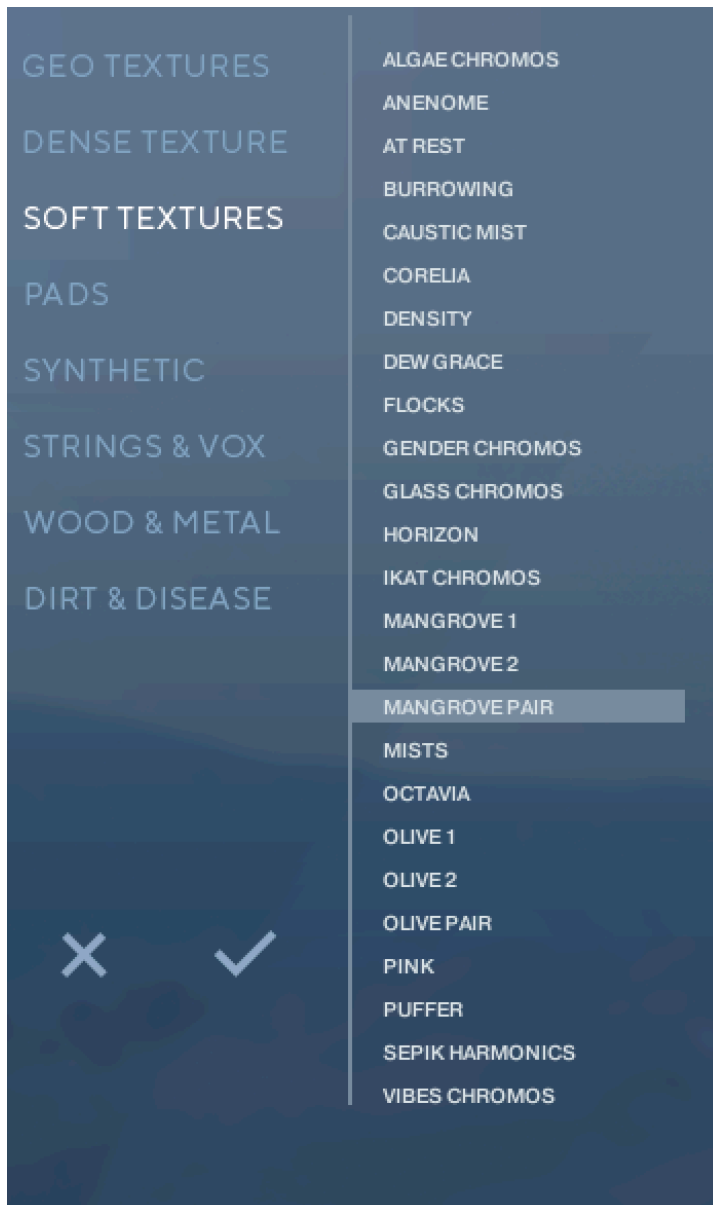

There are white squares beside the names of each of the three elements that enable or disable that element.

Clicking on the name of the element opens the element BROWSER, and you can also hit random, decrement or increment, to choose a different element:
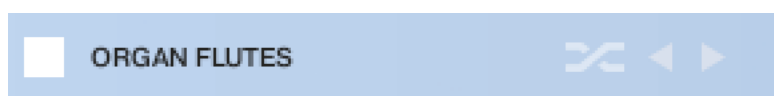
THE BROWSER

When you click the name of an element the BROWSER opens up. You will find categories and element waveforms you can choose within each category. You will hear a chosen element when it's selected, in context, exactly as if you had replaced that element.

GEO TEXTURES	ALGAE CHROMOS
	ANENOME
DENSE TEXTURE	AT REST
	BURROWING
SOFT TEXTURES	CAUSTIC MIST
	CORELIA
PADS	DENSITY
	DEW GRACE
SYNTHETIC	FLOCKS
	GENDER CHROMOS
STRINGS & VOX	GLASS CHROMOS
	HORIZON
WOOD & METAL	IKAT CHROMOS
	MANGROVE 1
DIRT & DISEASE	MANGROVE 2
	MANGROVE PAIR
	MISTS
	OCTAVIA
	OLIVE 1
	OLIVE 2
	OLIVE PAIR
	PINK
✕ ✓	PUFFER
	SEPIK HARMONICS
	VIBES CHROMOS

If you CANCEL with the X, you will revert to the element that was in place before you launched the BROWSER. If you OKAY, with the √ symbol, you will replace the element with the currently chosen element in the BROWSER.

You can also exit the browser by clicking in the empty area away from the element list. This will keep the selected element.

THE EDITOR

Each of the three elements has a similar editor, and the edit pages can be chosen using the five tab controls.


These five switches open six different parameter editors. From left to right they are the EDIT, FILTER, EG, FEG, and LFO editors.

NOTE that clicking the tabs changes all three element editors at once. If you need to change pages on just one element you can ALT or OPTION click on the tabs.

NOTE that holding down ALT or OPTION when adjusting most of the editor control knobs will set the two Pitched elements to the adjusted value. If you want to set the two Pitched elements the same, adjust one of them with OPTION key held down. If you want to set all three the same, adjust the GEO element with the OPTION key held down.

EDIT
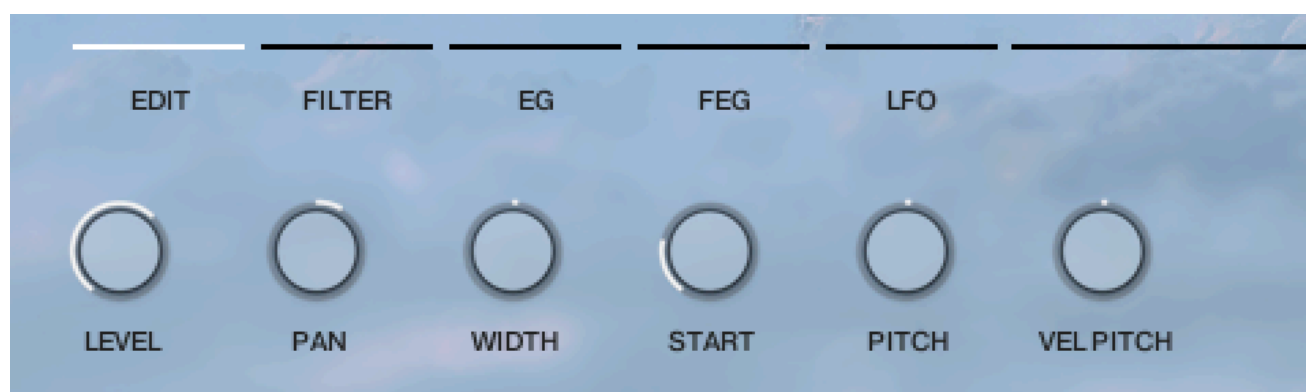
The first EDIT tab gives you access to some basic parameters such as the element LEVEL, PAN, stereo WIDTH, START time offset, PITCH and VELOCITY to PITCH.

PITCH adjusts the note in semitones unless you hold down SHIFT to adjust the cents.

FILTER

The FILTER tab displays the controls for the filters. There is a menu between the FREQuency and RESonance knobs that allows you to choose the type of filter for that element.   Then you have VELocity, High Pass Filter, KEY follow, ENV to the LPF, ENV to the HPF, and envelope FOLLOW for the main LPF.
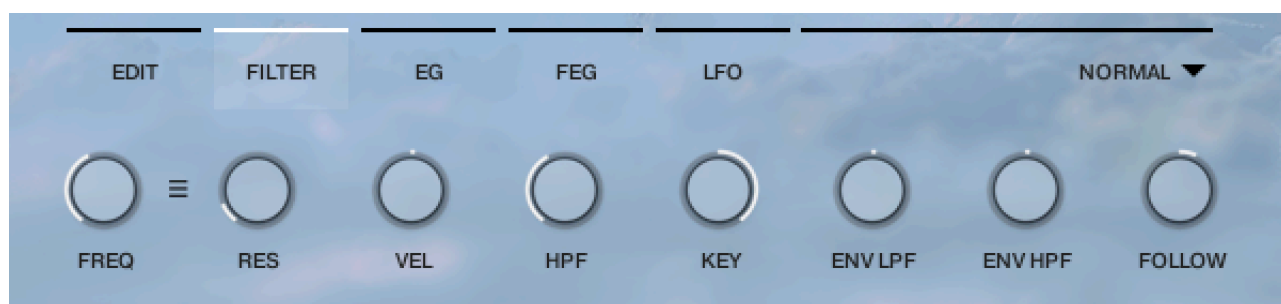

TUNING THE FILTER

You can set the filter cutoff at precise key-tracked frequencies using key commands. Shift-Alt, Alt, Shift, Ctrl-Shift, and Ctrl-Shift-Alt step through five octaves from lowest to highest. Bring the resonance up and this can tune an ambience recording with a pitch.

EG

The EG tab displays the controls for the amplitude envelope.   You can also set the VELocity to level sensitivity on this page.
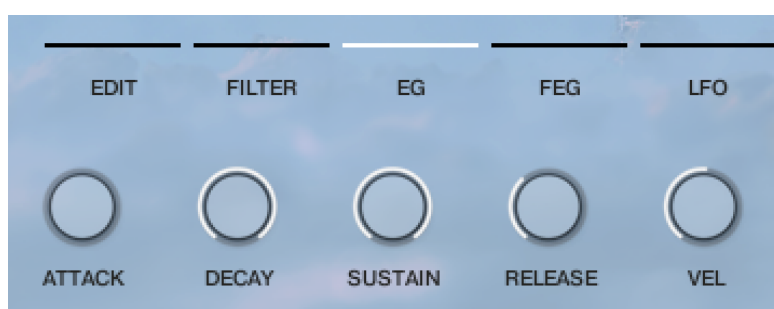
FEG

The FEG tab displays the controls for the filter envelope. You can also set the VELocity to FEG depth sensitivity on this page.

LFO

The LFO tab displays the controls for the two LFOs. You can choose the LFO waveform with the tiny menu drop down to the right of the RATE controls.
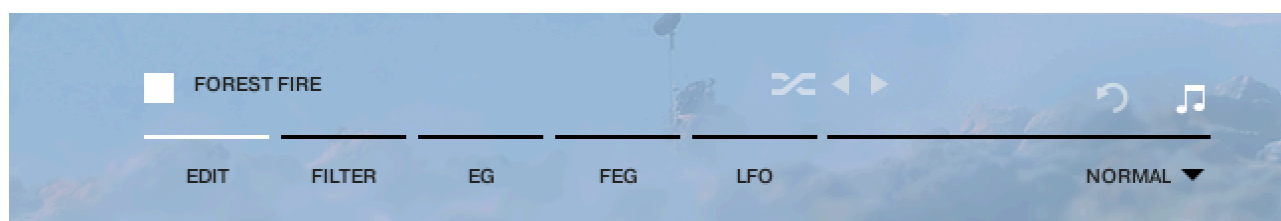
LFO 1 can be routed to LEVEL and PITCH. LFO 2 can be routed to PAN and FILTER.

OTHER CONTROLS

All elements have a RESET and GEN TOOLS RESPONSE switch. RESET will initialise the element.   GEN TOOLS RESPONSE means that element will play when the GENERATIVE TOOLS are playing. (If the GEN TOOLS RESPONSE switch is OFF, then that element only responds to Kontakt's incoming MIDI).

The GEO element also has a pull down menu at the far right.   This can be set to NORMAL, in which case the GEO wave will play normally.   BACKDROP means that the element will only be triggered once, at it's original pitch, and function as a backdrop ambience.   FIX PITCH means the element will trigger normally, but without changing pitch.

OPTIONS

The option page is accessed by clicking the big cog icon at the bottom right of the main page.

Here you will find some controls for the XY pad, a Microtuning Editor, and PITCH BEND OPTIONS.

X CC: 16   ≡▾   Y CC: 17

Above the XY Prism pad you can set the MIDI controllers for X and Y.   These are options that are saved for the entire Geosonics library, so you only have to set those once.

There is also a menu in the middle with mouse mode options for the XY pad.
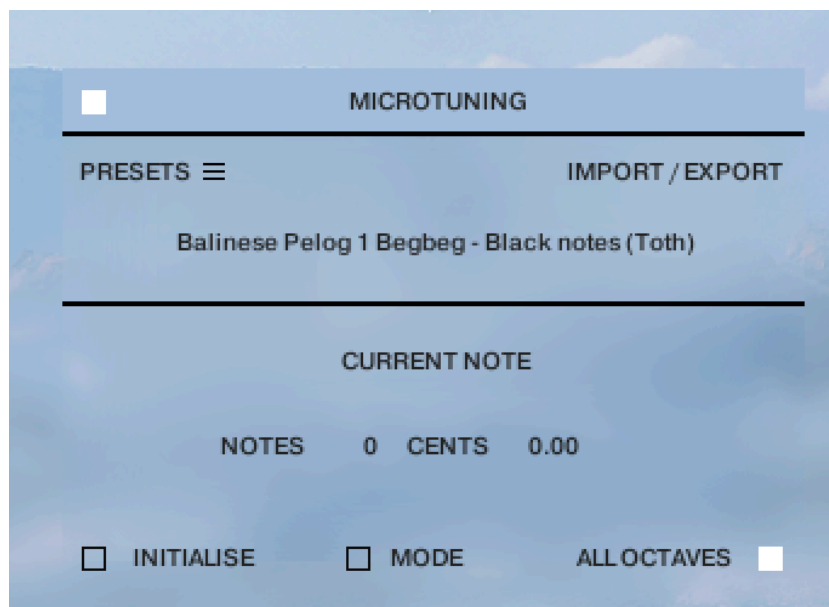
PITCH BEND

Pitch bend can be set to a semitone range, or else to GLISSANDO mode.

PITCH BEND GLISSANDO

2 semitones

MICROTUNING EDITOR

Using the microtuning editor you can design or import/export scales to and from other Soniccouture instruments.

There is a menu of some example factory tunings at the top left, and the import/export menu on the top right.

In the middle is displayed the current TUNE KEY, the key that is currently being edited. You can adjust the NOTES (semitone) or CENTS offset of this key.

If ALL OCTAVES is checked (at the bottom right) then all instances of that key will change together… this is very useful if you're designing a scale that repeats at the octave, which many of course do.

INITIALISE will set the microtuning to nominal, no offsets for any notes.

If MODE is on, the sample for that key will be stretched to the destination pitch, no matter how far. If MODE is off, the nearest semitone will be stretched to the destination pitch.
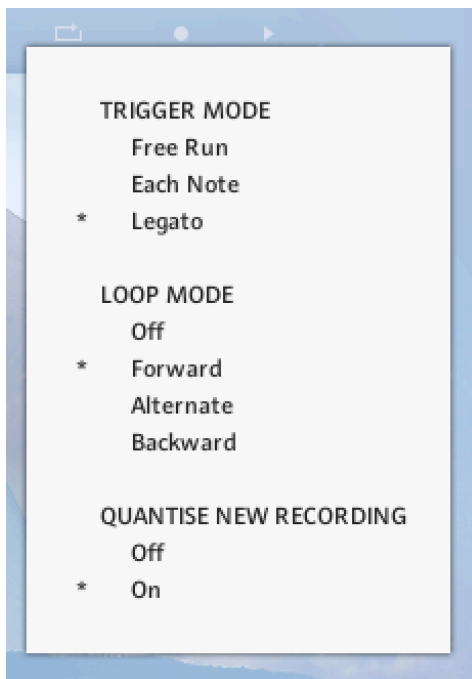
THE PRISM TRANSPORT

Above the XY Prism control is a row of smaller icons. These offer you control of recording a path in the XY pad and playing it back.

From right to left, on the far right is the PLAY button, followed by the RECORD button.

To record a path, hit the record button, and the path will begin recording when you next play a note.

To the left of RECORD there is a menu with the playback options for the path.

TRIGGER MODE. This tells the transport when to start the path again; never, on each note, or only when all notes are lifted (LEGATO).

LOOP MODE. This sets whether and in what way the PATH itself will loop when it reaches the end.

QUANTISE NEW RECORDING. If this is ON, the next time you record a path it will be quantised to the nearest beat length.

Recorded PATHS are always tempo aware.   If you change the tempo of your song, the path will change tempo with it.

To the left of the playback options, there is a speed menu.   The PATH can be set to playback at half or double it's recorded speed.

To the left of that, there is a long menu with many options to create or manipulate a path.

THE USER WAVE

You can drag one of your own waves into Geosonics to replace Chris's GEO wave.

This wave will be remembered if you save the NKI or a Snapshot, and you can find it again using the BROWSER in the GEO category USER WAVE.

Your wave will play back looped at C3 original pitch.

EFFECTS

The EFFECTS panel is divided into 5 sections.

Insert Effects
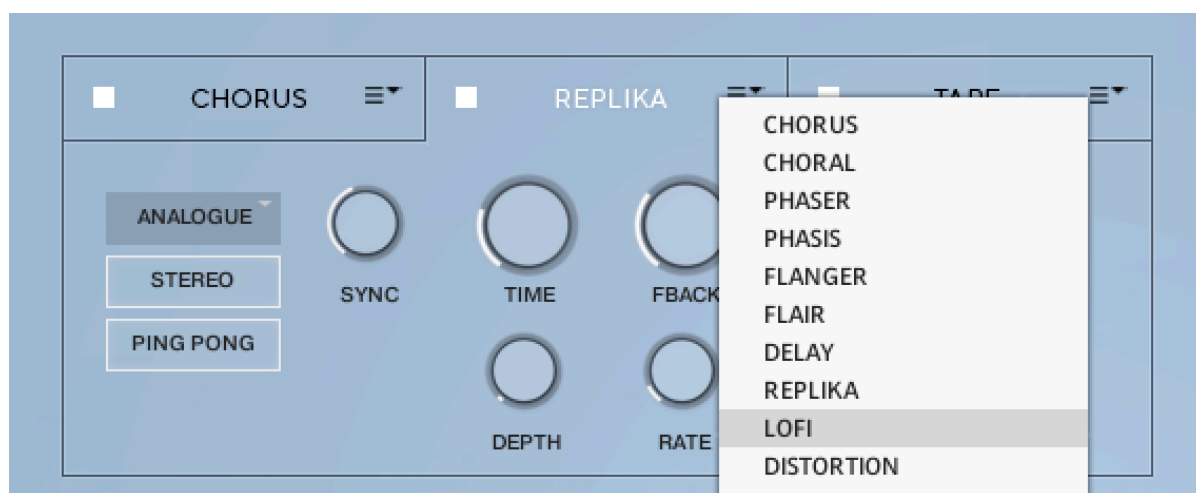Equaliser
Stereo
Saturation
Space

THE INSERT EFFECTS

Here you can choose up to 3 insert effects. The effect is enabled with the square power switch to the left of its name at the top of the tab, and the appropriate controls will appear below when its tab is selected.

You can select from a list of effects using the menu to the right of the effect name in the tab.
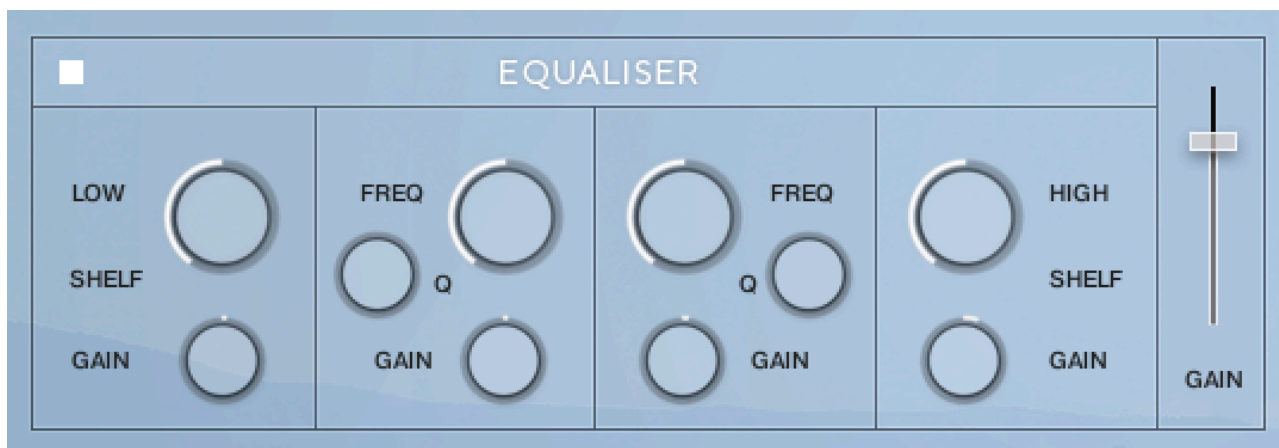

The effects are in routing order from left to right, and are before the EQ and other effects on this panel.

You can only select each type of effect once, if you select an effect already in use, then the position of those effects will be swapped.
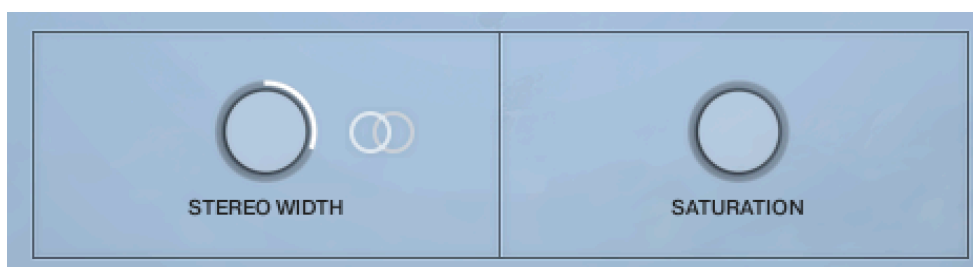
EQUALISER

This is a fairly obvious four band parametric EQ. The fader on the far right is the output level from the EQ.

Note that BELL and SHELF are drop down menus, you can choose either for the top and bottom bands.   You can enable or disable the EQ with the power switch at the top left.

STEREO AND SATURATION

Here you can adjust the STEREO WIDTH (the natural recording is nominal at 12 o'clock). Moving the control left narrows the width, and to the right increases it.

There is a stereo SWAP feature, enabled with the symbol:

SATURATION will adjust the SATURATION effect.

SPACE

This is the convolution reverb section.   In the middle there is a drop down menu with a selection of our impulse responses.

As usual, the power switch is at the top left.

The controls below are the PREDELAY, the convolution impulse SIZE, a High Pass and Low Pass Filter, as well as the return MIX level on the large central knob.
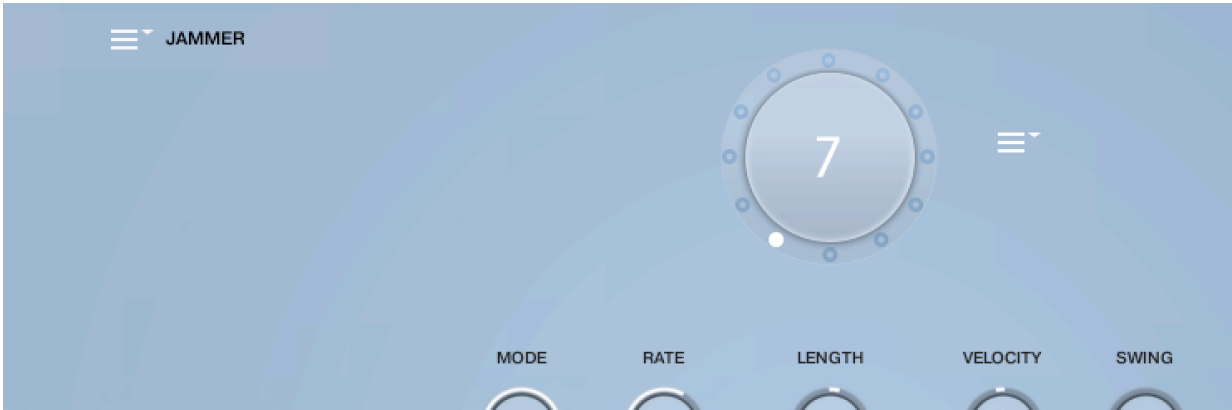
REVERSE will reverse the reverb impulse response.
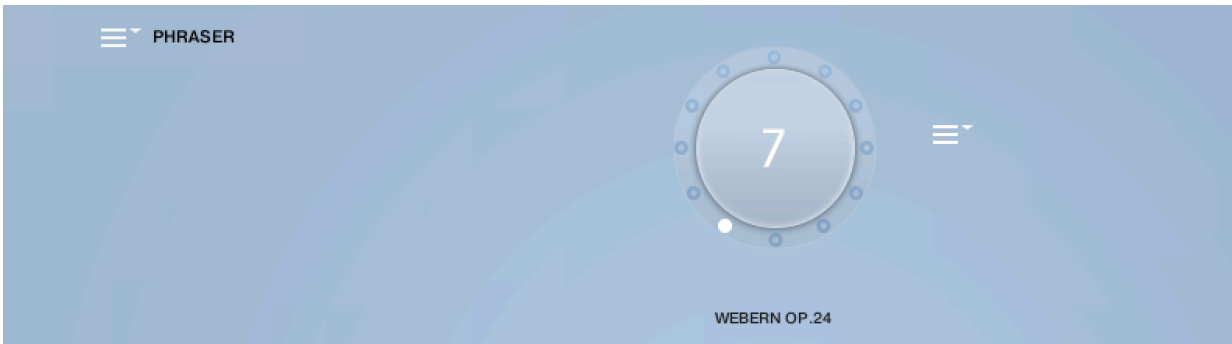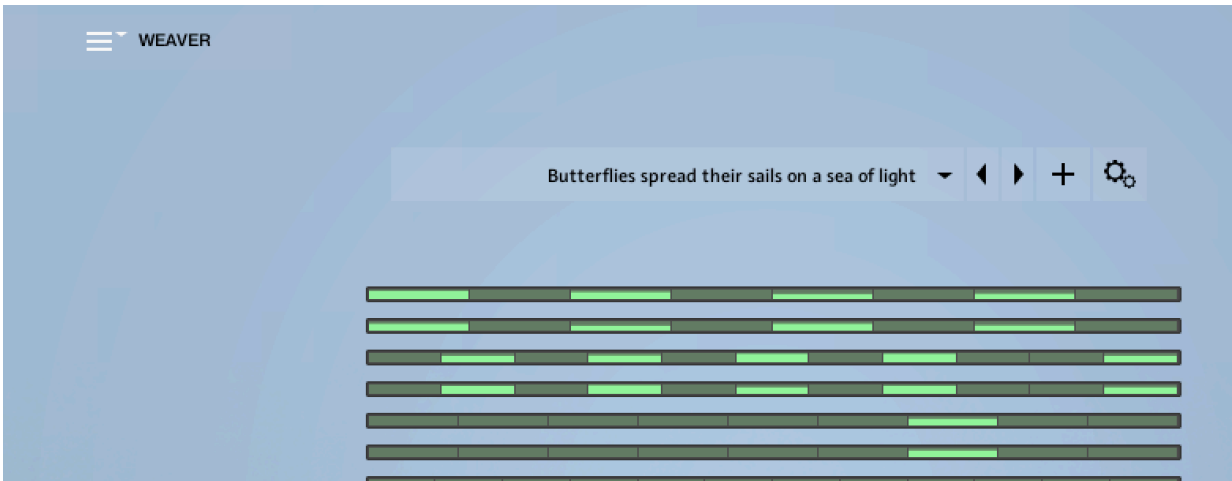
GENERATIVE TOOLS

This panel panel has three options, chosen with the menu at the top left:

JAMMER

WEAVER

PHRASER

The play-notes icon at the bottom left enables or disables all of the Generative Tools.   This control is duplicated on the other pages for convenience.

JAMMER

The large knob in the top middle is a Preset wheel with 12 presets.   You can overwrite these, copy them, import and export them, using the menu to the right of the wheel.

The seven knobs along the top of the Jammer are global controls, these are:

MODE   This sets the type of arpeggiation used to create patterns.   The original Jammer mode is Random mode, but you can also choose Up, Down, or Up Down, for somewhat more traditional arpeggiator results.   This controls how the notes are selected from what you are holding down.

RATE controls the speed of the Jammer, this is always related to the tempo of Kontakt or the host sequencer.

LENGTH is an offset to the duration of the created notes.   In the centre position, the notes are created at the same duration set by the Rate knob, but using LENGTH you can make these longer or shorter.

VEL OFFSET adds or subtracts from the velocity of the notes created by the Jammer. Automating this can be useful for creating fades.

SWING adds some time to the offbeat notes to give a shuffle or swing feeling to the rhythm.

DENSITY and STEPS are controls for the Euclidean density of the pattern.   When the Density is equal to the number of steps, then there will be a note played on each step of the sequence.   When the Density is less than the number of steps, there will be some longer notes played, evenly distributed (Euclidean rhythm) within the number of steps. This is nice for creating some interesting rhythmic patterns in the Jammer.
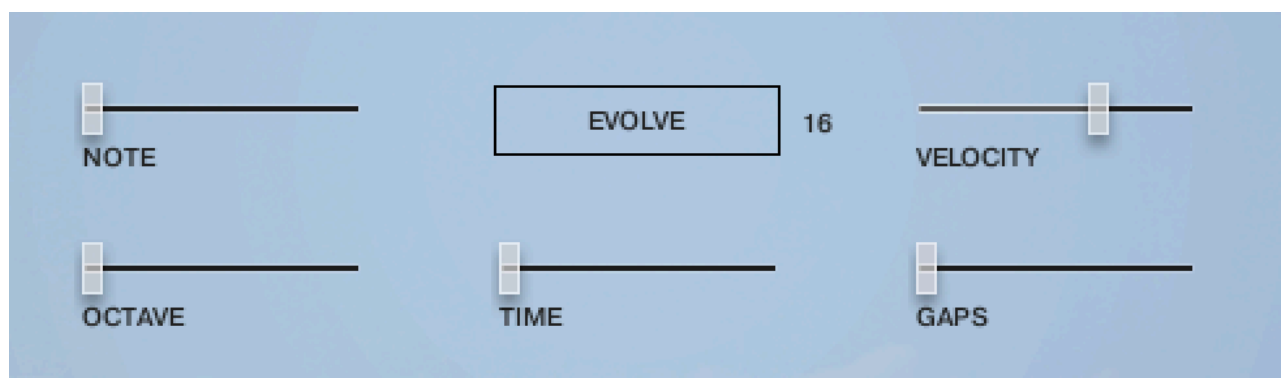
The next five sliders are controls for the generative part of Jammer, which are essentially randomising various aspects of note generation.   These are:

NOTE add random offsets to the pitches you give Jammer (are holding down).   This is in semitones, so if it's set to "1" the Jammer will output notes plus or minus 1 from the notes you play, as well as the note you play.

OCTAVE add random octave offsets to the pitches created by Jammer.   This control only ADDS octaves, it doesn't subtract octaves.

TIME add random changes to the timing of the Jammer, so that the result is less stable and rhythmic.

VELOCITY add random changes to the velocity of the output notes. This always uses the input velocity as a starting point, so if the VELOCITY range is small, it will just add small changes to your input velocity.

GAPS add random rests or silent beats into the Jammer sequence.
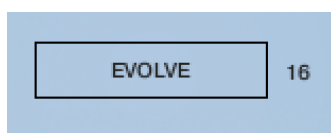
In the middle of this section you'll see a button titled "EVOLVE", with the number 16 to the right of it (by default).   EVOLVE mode means that the Jammer is working to generate new data constantly, the randomisers are always creating new patterns from your input notes.

If you click on EVOLVE, the button changes to display LOOP.   Now the Jammer is repeating the pattern it most recently created. The length of this pattern is determined by the number to the right, so by default it repeats the last 16 generated 'notes'.

It's important to remember that the Jammer is not storing the 'notes' themselves, but rather the choice of, and offsets to, the input notes you play into it.   So even in LOOP mode, the Jammer will output different notes depending on what notes you play. The pattern is stored, not the exact notes themselves.   This means you can created quite complicated patterns, but play them with any chord or input notes.
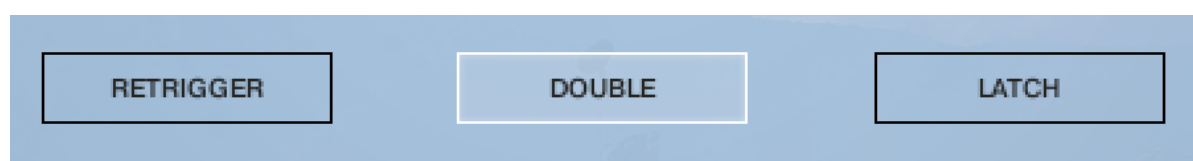

RETRIGGER will force the Jammer to start from the beginning after all notes are lifted (legato).

DOUBLE will trigger two notes on each step, as if you are playing with both hands simultaneously.

LATCH will tell the Jammer to hold the current notes until new notes are received.

At the bottom right is a small keyboard that represents a pitch filter.   Here you can limit the output notes of the Jammer to a certain key or chord or any selection of notes you like.   At the top of the small keyboard is a drop down menu with some popular scales, but you can click on the keyboard directly to allow or disallow any pitch as you like.
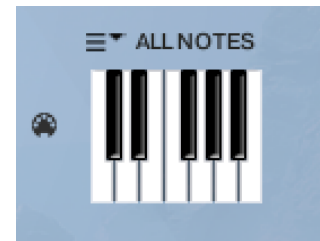
You can also use the MIDI input switch on the left of the keyboard to LEARN a scale by playing it into the Jammer.

WEAVER
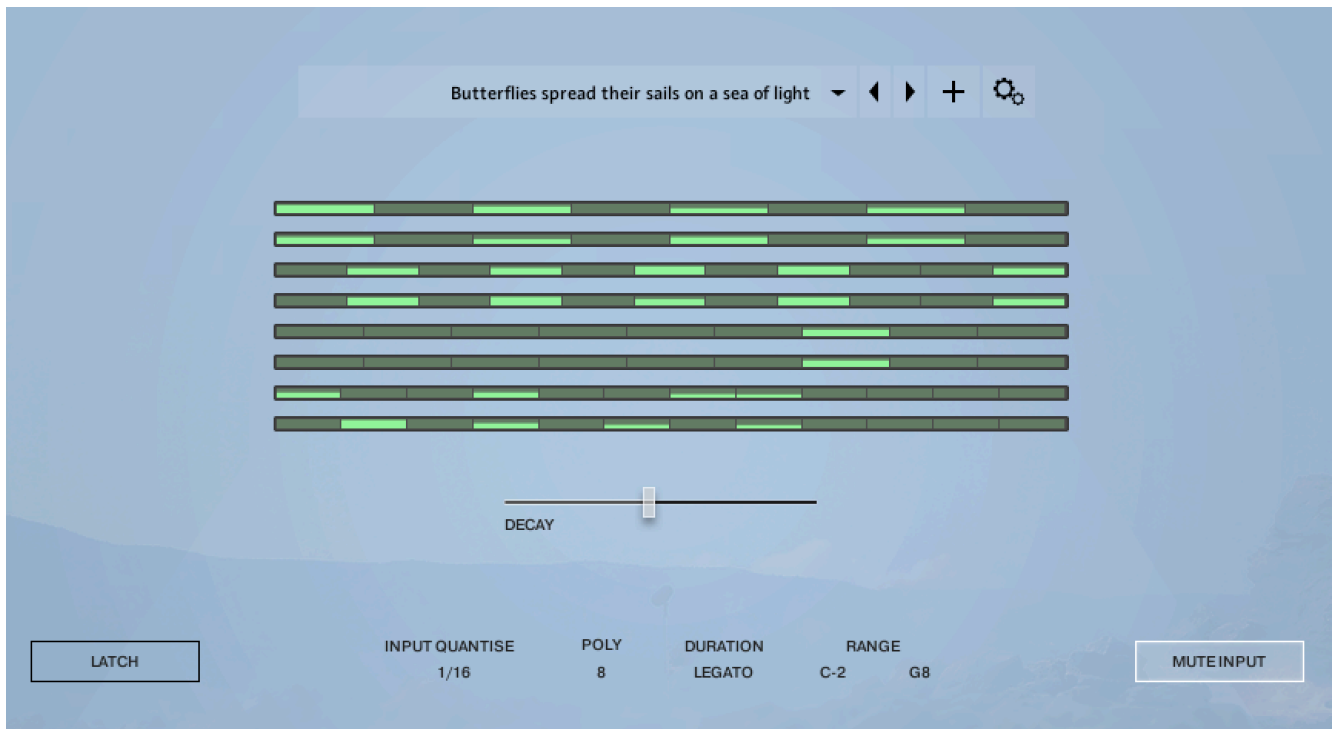
The WEAVER is a tool that allows you to define a rhythmic sequence to be played by an input note.   More about how this works later, in the Weaver Editor section below.
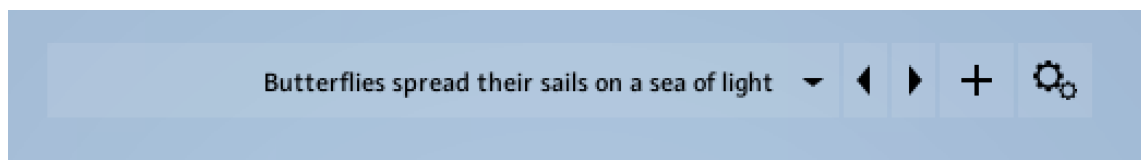

The main page has a PRESET menu at the top, you can choose these from the drop down or by stepping through them.   You can store your own settings to any of these menu positions using the + button. And you can import and export presets if you need with the cog menu on the far right of the PRESET bar.

In the middle of the page is a rough representation of the WEAVER pattern, and if you click on that you will open the WEAVER EDITOR.

Below that, there is a large slider labeled DECAY. This controls the overall decay time of the sequence, since each pattern will loop.   If set all the way to the right, the pattern will never decay.

LATCH		INPUT QUANTISE	POLY	DURATION	RANGE			MUTE INPUT
		1/16	8	LEGATO	C-2	G8		

At the bottom are some global controls for the WEAVER sequence.

LATCH will hold the current notes, even if you let go of the keys.

INPUT QUANTISE.   This is very useful, but only works if Kontakt is running it's own transport, or else is inside a running DAW.   But when this is the case, none of the WEAVER patterns will trigger until they're in sync with the value set in INPUT QUANTISE. (ie. 1/16th note) This keeps your patterns really tight and in sync with the song you might be working on.

POLY is the polyphony of the WEAVER pattern. From 1 to 8.   If you play more notes than that, they are ignored by the WEAVER engine.

DURATION is the duration of the notes generated by WEAVER, and this can be set to a value, or else to LEGATO, in which case it will play until the next note on any given row comes along.
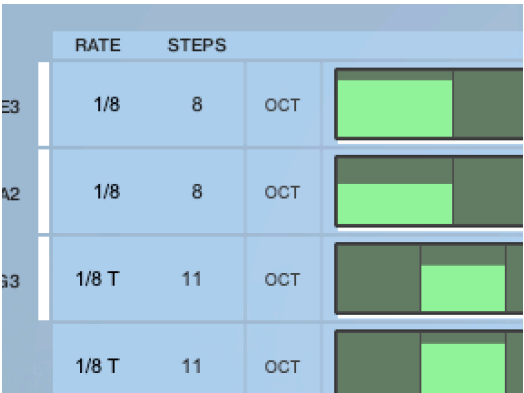
RANGE allows you to limit the range of the WEAVER, so you could in theory play a bass line with your left hand and have WEAVER only respond to notes played with your right hand.

Let's click on the middle panel and open up the WEAVER editor.   It can look a little intimidating at first.
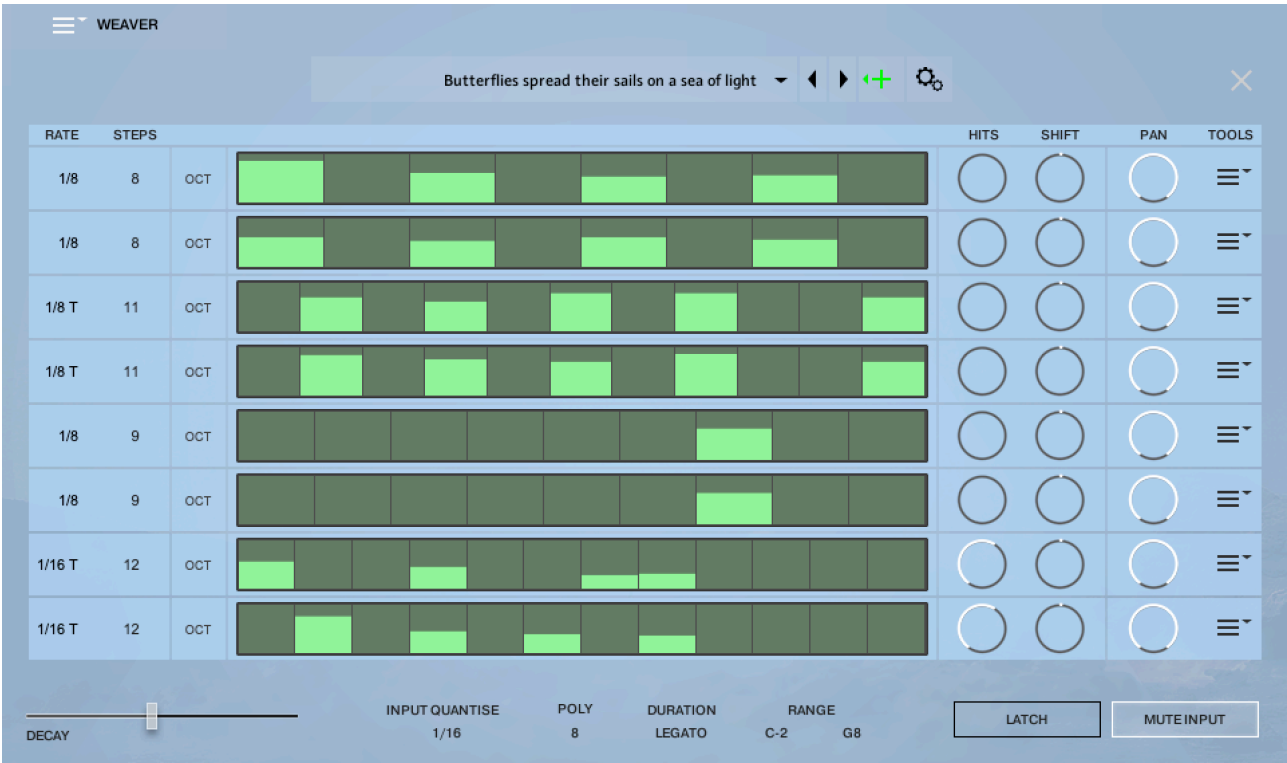
You can close this window again with the X at the top right.

The above display shows all 8 rows active (POLY set to 8). All rows are the same.

Notes are assigned a row in the order they're received. You can see the notes assigned to each row at the far left when you play.


At the left of each row, you can set the RATE and the number of STEPS for the row. Here this row is set to 8 steps of 1/6th notes.

There is also an OCT switch here, OCTAVE, which we'll discuss a bit later.

In the middle is the velocity steps table. You can draw in here as you like. This pattern uses the input velocity, so the maximum output velocity will be the velocity of the note that triggered the pattern.
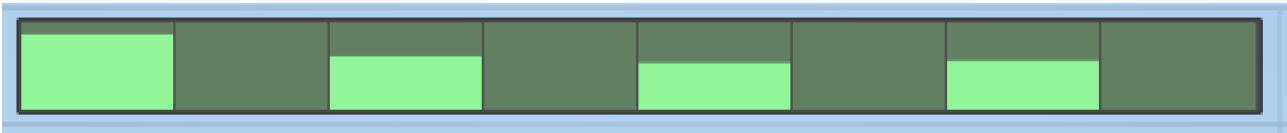

If you ALT-drag, you can set all active steps to the same velocity.

On the right there are two EUCLID generator controls. HITS and SHIFT.   Be careful with these, because they will write new data into the pattern table, and overwrite anything you may have drawn.

EUCLID rhythm generators basically spread a number of hits, as evenly distributed as possible, within a number of STEPS. So if you set this HITS to 5, it will try to evenly distribute those 5 hits among the 8 steps we set that row to contain.

SHIFT shifts the position of those EUCLID HITS, left or right, in the pattern.
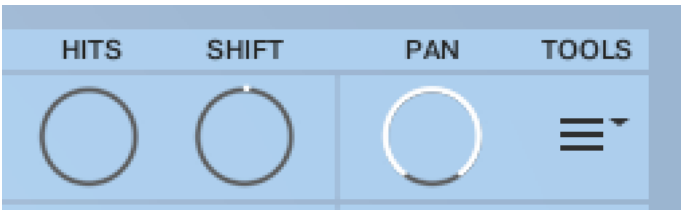
The PAN control introduces random panning to notes generated on that row.

POWER TIP   *IF YOU WANT TO SET ALL ROWS THE SAME, HOLD DOWN ALT OR OPTION WHILE ADJUSTING A PARAMETER*
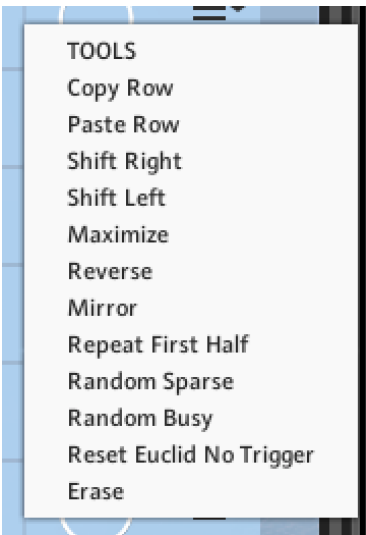
And lastly at the far right, there is a menu with some drop down tools to manipulate the row.

OCTAVE

When you press the OCT button on the left, you see a purple table instead of the green one.   This is an octave shift table that can transpose the incoming note one or two octaves up.   This is nice for adding some variation to the WEAVER pattern.
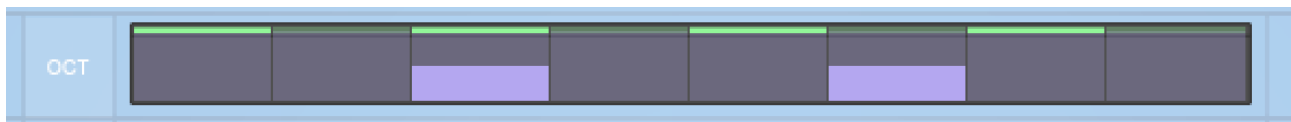
A NOTE ABOUT THE PRESET STORE BUTTON

When you press the preset store button, it turns green:

This is a kind of "store enable" mode.   If you now choose a menu item, your preset will be stored at the menu location you store.

If you just hit the store button again, it will overwrite the preset you had selected when you started editing.   So you can just click it twice quickly to store the preset where it is.

PHRASER

The PHRASER is a tool that originally appeared in our Scriptorium product back in 2008. This is an updated version with several new features.

The main concept is that you can record a series of notes, a phrase, into a buffer.   This buffer is then re-triggered by the MIDI input, replacing the notes you play and generating new melodic material based on your recorded phrase.   You can either trigger manually (MANUAL), or automatically (AUTO) have it play back at a certain rate.

The phrase, or sequence of notes, is played back with no transposition when you trigger it by playing middle C (MIDI note 60).   If you trigger using a higher or lower pitch, the phrase is transposed accordingly (in standard TRANSPOSE mode, more about that in a moment).

A phrase has no rhythmic or duration or velocity information, it's simply a series of pitches.   In fact, it's better to think of it as a series of relative pitches since you can manipulate that series and transpose it so readily.

This implementation of PHRASER has a preset wheel at the top, in which you can store 12 different phrases.   This stores and recalls only the phrase itself, not the parameter settings below.
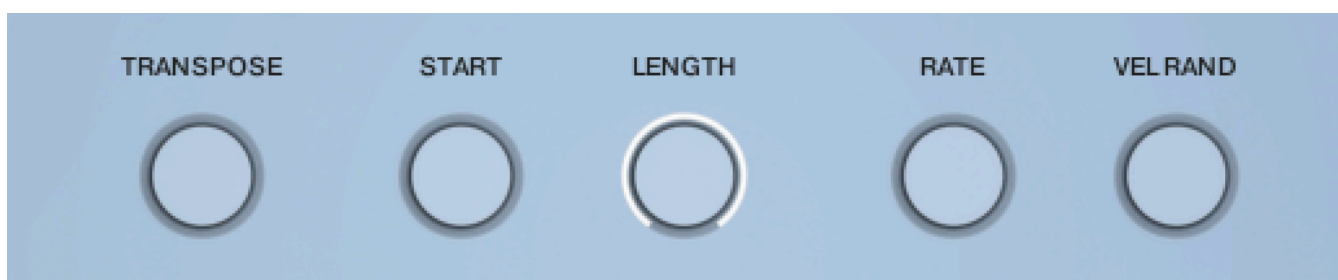
WEBERN OP.24

For each phrase, you can enter some information below and it will be saved as well. (If you add your own, you will need to save a Snapshot or the entire NKI to save your changes.)

There is a menu here to allow export/ import of phrases, one at a time, or the entire set of 12. You can also import a MIDI file to be a phrase, more on that in a bit.

There are five knobs in a row here.

TRANSPOSE is the transpose mode. The default, TRANSPOSE will transpose the triggered phrase relative to middle C as we mentioned. If you play a major third above middle C, then the phrase will be transposed a major third higher, etc. There are also two other modes available here: FIXED, which does no transposition at all. This is a little dangerous because if you play more than one note, they'll all be shifted to the one phrase note, so you'll be layering many copies of one note on top of itself. But it can be useful if you simply want to trigger a phrase with your own rhythm, in MANUAL mode. OCTAVES only transposes the phrase by octaves, based on the octave you trigger at.

START and LENGTH are offsets to the beginning and LENGTH of the phrase. For example, if you have a long phrase in the buffer, but bring the LENGTH down to 8 notes, you will loop just those 8 notes starting at the position of START. This allows you to cut segments out of your phrase, or repeat or loop at different points to create new melodic output.

RATE sets the playback speed for AUTO play mode.

VEL RAND randomises the output velocity by the amount you set.
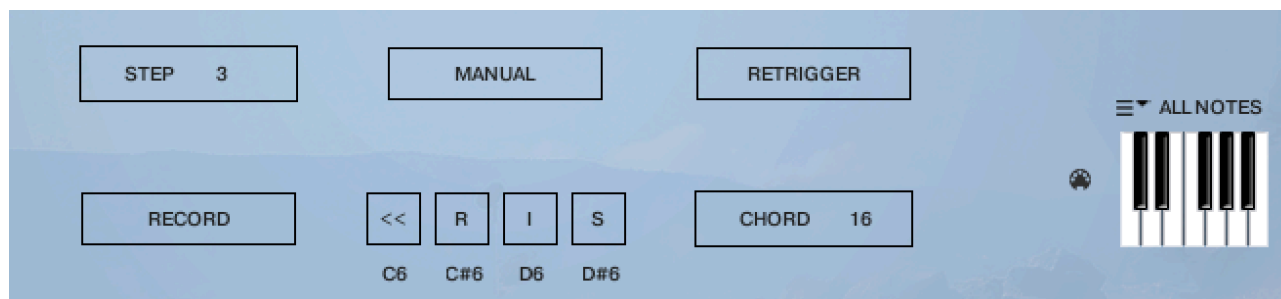
The following set of controls look like this

STEP is just a display of the currently played step of the original phrase.

MANUAL is the switch to choose MANUAL or AUTO modes.

RETRIGGER will force the sequence to start again when all notes are lifted.   This should generally be OFF if you're in MANUAL mode, although not necessarily.   Try it and you'll see it's easy to get stuck on step 1 repeatedly if you keep lifting the keys in MANUAL mode with RETRIGGER on.   But you don't have to lift all the keys of course, so you can use this how you like.

RECORD is how you record a new phrase by playing it in.   Hit record, play a few notes, and those are now entered into the buffer.

CHORD on the right is the number of milliseconds to allow for simultaneous notes to be considered a chord, and thus trigger the same phrase step, during MANUAL triggering.

On the very far right there is a pitch filter, similar to the one found in JAMMER.   This simply forces any generated notes to the nearest note 'allowed', helping you to keep your generated material in a key if you wish.

In the middle, there are three smaller buttons, that each have a keyswitch equivalent.

From left to right these are REWIND, REVERSE, INVERT, and SHUFFLE.   Their default keyswitches are C6, C#6, D6, and D#6 respectively.
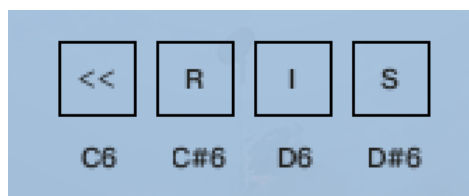
REWIND forces the phrase to play from the beginning on the next trigger.

REVERSE tells the phrase to read in the reverse order.

INVERT tells the phrase to play inverted, or "upside down".   In other words, if your original phrase went C3, D3, E3… and you triggered it from C3 it would play C3, Bb2, Ab2… the same melodic intervals, but in the opposite direction.

SHUFFLE randomises the order of the entire phrase, but keeps the exact same pitches in there, the same number of times (officially a 'permutation' of that collection of pitches). Each time you activate SHUFFLE it will do this again, ie. shuffle the set again, so if you really like a SHUFFLE result you should save a Snapshot or an NKI and not press it again.

Note also that SHUFFLE works on the entire phrase at once, not the section you may have focused on using the START and LENGTH controls.
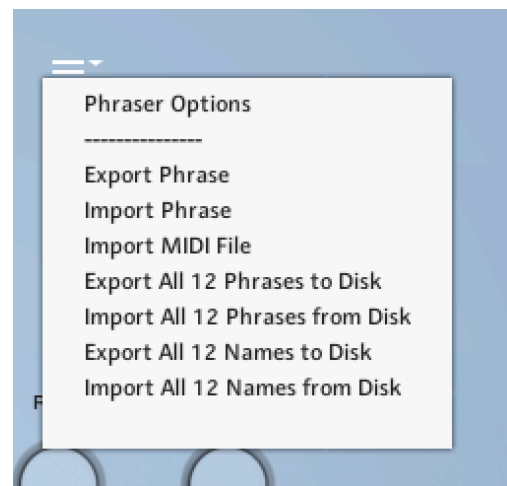
OPINION   *PHRASER is more powerful in MANUAL mode than AUTO mode.*

IMPORTING MIDI TO PHRASER

There is a command in the PHRASE options menu to import a MIDI file to the system.   To do this you need to put your MIDI file at the same file position as Geosonics itself, in the Instruments folder.   And you need to name it "phrase.mid".

Only the note on data is considered, and only the first 512 notes will be loaded into the phrase.

Phraser Options

Export Phrase
Import Phrase
Import MIDI File
Export All 12 Phrases to Disk
Import All 12 Phrases from Disk
Export All 12 Names to Disk
Import All 12 Names from Disk

SUPPORT

If you have any problems or questions relating to the use of this product, please feel free to contact us. You can email us at :

http://www.soniccouture.com/en/support/

We will always endeavour to reply to any enquiry within 24 hours. We are based in the UK, so please bear in mind differences in time zones.

While you are waiting, you will find lots of answers to common questions in our FAQ.

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