

CROW HILL | THE VERTICAL PIANO



USER MANUAL

VERSION V1.0.0 APR 2024



"Music can heal the wounds
which medicine cannot touch."

— Debasish Mridha

The Crow Hill Company thanks you for your purchase. Designed by professional composers with the sonic connoisseur in mind.

We're a small team and have worked hard to make everything as intuitive as possible. Our hope is this user manual can offer further help to best explain how to install and use our plugin.

In order to help you make music, your music, we have taken time to make this affectionate user manual get the best out of your purchase.

However if you find yourself still stuck with anything we have a great set of FAQ and videos at:

thecrowhillcompany.com/faqs

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Every piano has a story and the sound character the piano possesses bears witness to that story. Found within its unique complex harmonic choir of resonance are the echos, the expression, the blows of everyone who has come into contact with it, played on it, moved it, tuned it, dusted it. The humidity and change in temperatures it has endured. The love, and also the abandonment. Its sound board, bearing 1 ton of pressure in a curved "crown" that gradually over the years gives way to the pressure exerted on it. The days we sampled this piano are not repeatable, it will only sound like it did on the days we preserved it for future generations. This is what this piano sounded like at this point in its extraordinary lifetime. For this is no ordinary piano, it is a Victory Vertical.

The Victory Vertical, also known as the G.I. Steinway, is a special piano produced by Steinway and Sons during World War II for the American troops. These pianos were sometimes airdropped onto battlefields to provide some relaxation and boost the morale of the soldiers. They were manufactured in Steinway's Queens-based factory and were primarily sold to the U.S. government.

Initially, Steinway was prohibited from building pianos due to wartime restrictions on iron, copper, brass, and other raw materials. However, they were later granted a contract to send specially designed pianos to commissioned war soldiers. Between 1942 and 1953, Steinway made over 3,000 "Victory Vertical" pianos designed specifically for troops in battle. The pianos came in olive, blue, and grey drab, and the first "Victory Vertical" was dropped by parachute in 1942, complete with tuning equipment and instructions.

Music was crucial for American troops stationed far away during World War II. It provided peace of mind and reminded them of why they were fighting. One soldier wrote home about the joy of gathering around the piano to sing after meals. This sentiment was shared by many, and the Victory Vertical pianos created a strong appreciation on the battlefield not only for the music but also for the Steinway name.

Crow Hill has had the honourable task of preserving a recently refurbished original victory vertical. One of only a handful around the world that aren't stuck in glass display cabinets. The only victory vertical available for anyone wanting to play and forever more.

Over a week spent in Hans Zimmer's private studio complex in Santa Monica, the Crow Hill team carried out a meticulous set of recordings with the aim of capturing this piano's character born of its incredible story. Through vintage microphones (some rarities kindly lent to us by our friends at Kerwax). Neve mic pre's and vintage Neve desk efforts have been painstakingly made to provide you with something that is both responsive and playable. Whilst also being inspiring and characterful.

But the story doesn't end with us sampling the piano. The product team has slavishly prepared a total performance and production environment for this historic piano. From different mic mixes including ones derived from a host of traditional 1940s style mics. Noise sources (dial back in what we struggle to get out) including radios and loudspeakers from that era modelled by our team. Insane tape effects including a tape looper, granular synthesis generators, delays, bespoke reverbs, graphical EQs and a master section that will smash your signal to pieces. This environment is your next rabbit hole so let's read on!

INSTALLATION

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1. Getting The Installer

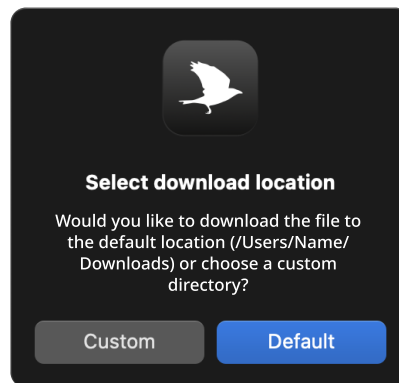
Each instrument has a dedicated download utility to assist in downloading each instrument's installer. This download utility (e.g. The Vertical Piano Downloader) is only a few megabytes in size and can be found directly from the product page or in your customer account on thecrowhillcompany.com

2. Opening The Downloader

Once downloaded, navigate to your download folder to open the utility. If on macOS this will be a .zip file that needs to be opened to show the .app and on Windows a .exe file.

Once you have opened the utility it will ask you to choose a desired download location.

By default, this will be your Download folder, but if you are low on system disk space you can choose to download to an external drive.

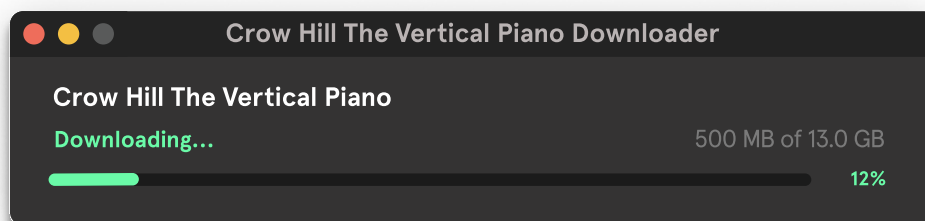


3. Downloading

Once opened the download utility will automatically download the instrument installer and open/mount the installer file.

!! What if the download has been completed and the installer files have not automatically opened after several minutes?

In this rare case, you can locate them in your chosen download location and open them directly by clicking on the file.





4. Installing

The installer has on-screen instructions to guide you through the process.

By clicking continue you are shown the End-User Licence Agreement. To install and use Crow Hill products this agreement should be read and agreed to. This agreement can be saved for your records and can be found in each instrument's user manual. Clicking Agree will take you to the next stage. Clicking Disagree will end the installation process.

5. Choosing A Sample Location

When installing your instrument, you will be presented with the option to select an install location for the audio content (.blob) and to de-select un required plug-in formats.

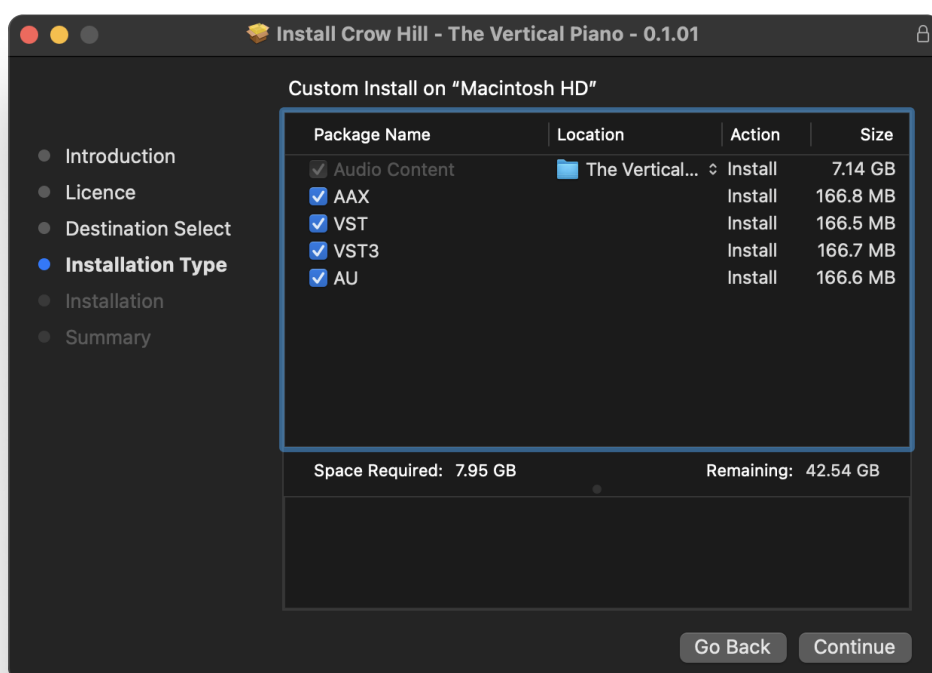
The default install location for the audio content is your system drive. For smaller products, this is perfectly fine. However, if you are running low on disk space you may install your instrument on an external drive. Select your desired location from the dropdown menu and proceed as instructed.

6. Choosing Required Plug-In Formats

If you only require a specific format (e.g. AU) then de-selecting other formats is a great way to save on disk space.

If you are unsure what plug-in format your D.A.W (Digital Audio Workstation) requires, we suggest installing them all to ensure maximum compatibility.

By default, all formats are pre-selected.



INSTALLATION (CONTINUED)

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7. Confirming space

After clicking Continue the next screen confirms the amount of system disk space the installation will require. This is a great time to double-check you are only installing the formats you require and if you want to use an external drive or not. To make changes to your previous selection simply select "Go Back".

8. Time To Install

Once you are happy to proceed click "Install".

Your operating system will then ask you to enter login credentials.

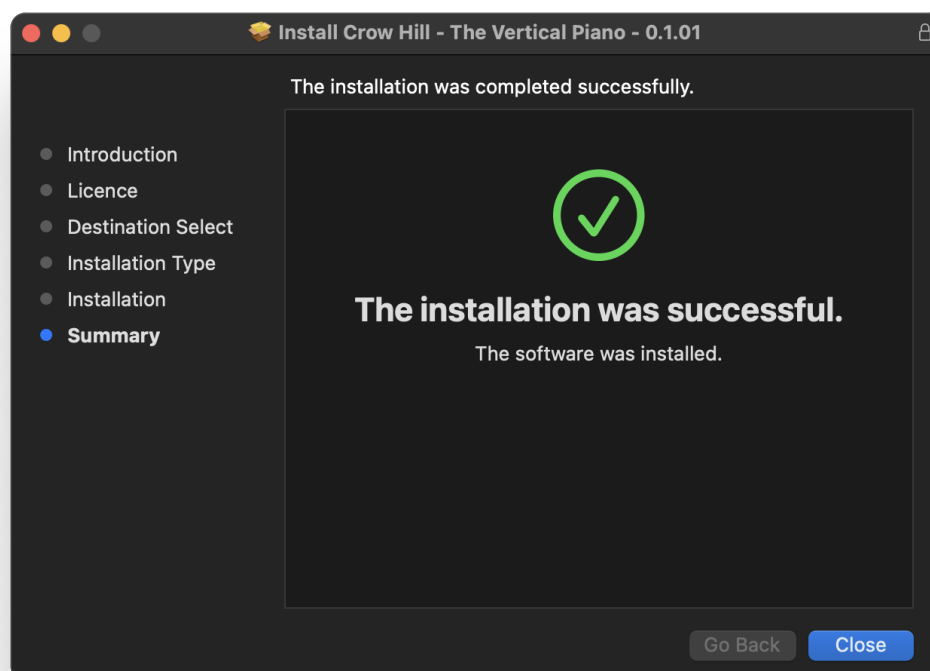
As the installer runs you will see onscreen progress. This process should only take several minutes with an estimated time presented throughout.

9. Next Steps

After a successful install your computer will ask you (macOS) whether you want to keep the installer or move it to your bin.

We suggest keeping a backup of all installers so, if needed you can use them again without having to re-download.

You are now ready to load up your favourite audio workstation, create a new instrument track, find the Crow Hill folder and load your new Plug-In.

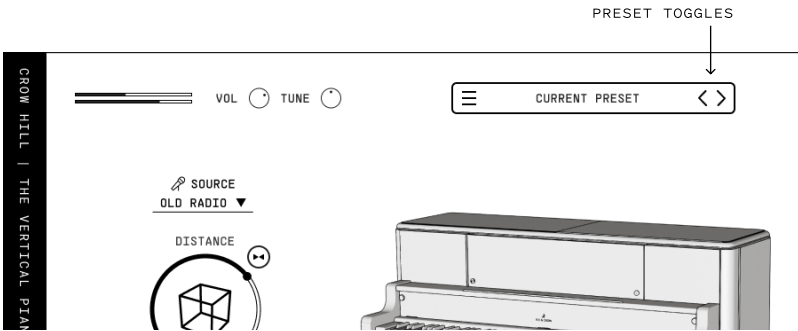


QUICK START

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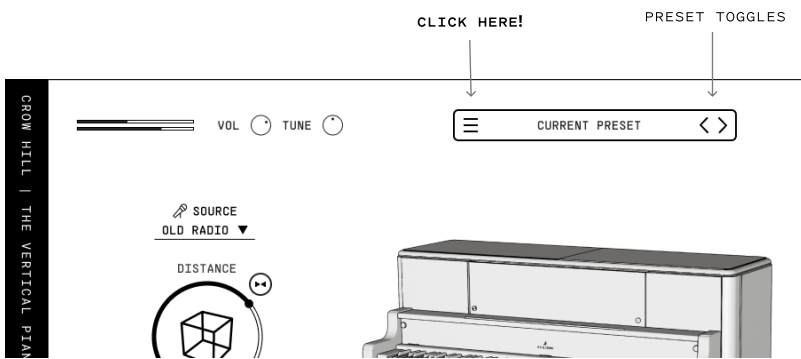


If you want to get up and running quickly or audition some presets, simply load the plug-in, navigate to the top preset panel.



Whilst we'd encourage you to mess around with all the controls. The preset toggles will move you forward and backward through the different expressions.

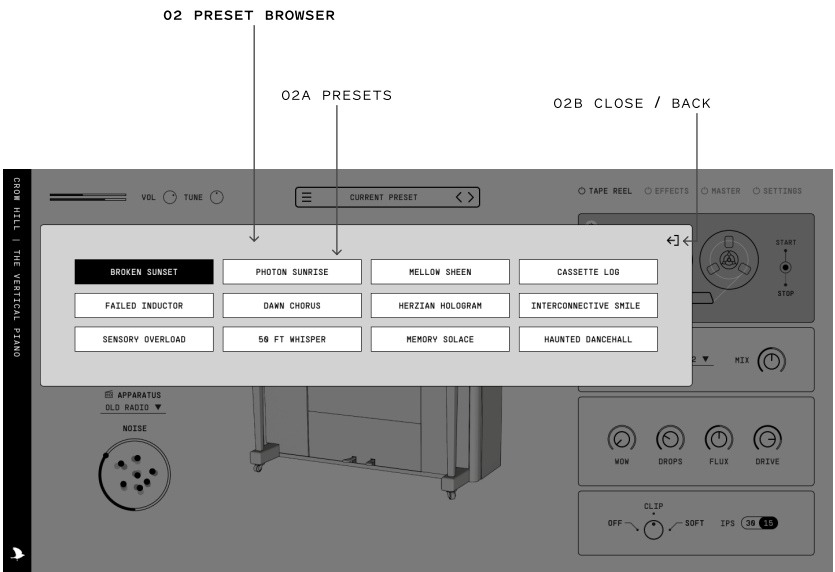
THE BROWSER WINDOW



Whilst you can work your way through the presets using the arrow toggles there is also a way of getting to where you want even faster. By opening the preset browser panel.

02 PRESET BROWSER

- 02A PRESETS - Click to load a preset, double click to return to the front panel.
- 02B CLOSE/BACK - Closes browser and returns you to the front panel.

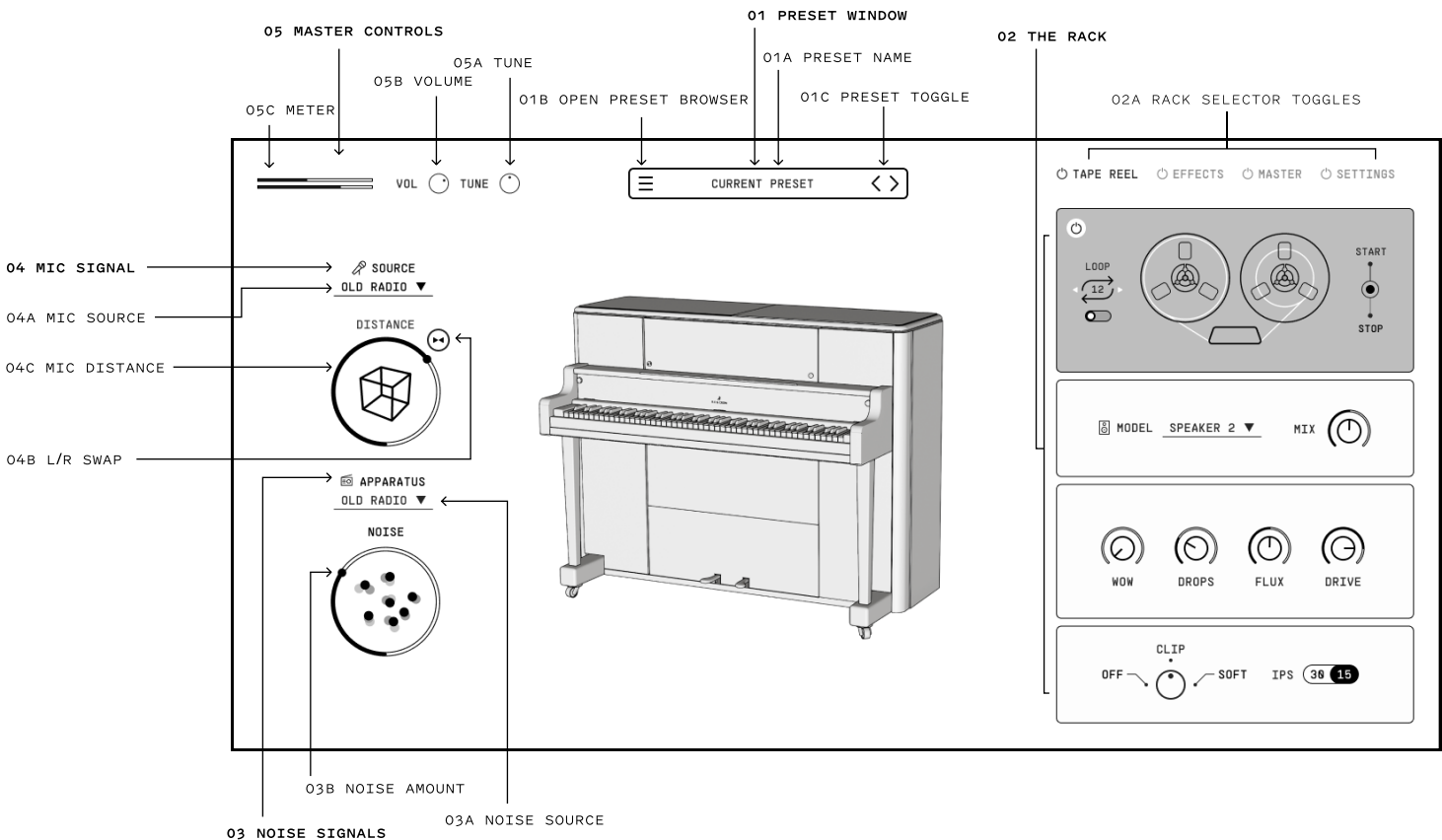


FRONT PANEL OVERVIEW

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On this page we take you through the basic functionality of the vertical piano and the various signals we have recorded and processed it through. But that is only half the story with VP! Over forthcoming pages we unwrap the many wonders of “The Rack” controls.



01 PRESET WINDOW

- 01A PRESET NAME - Displays the preset you're currently playing.
- 01B PRESET BROWSER - Opens the preset browser menu.
- 01C PRESET TOGGLE - Toggles to the previous or next preset.

02 THE RACK

- 02A TUNING - Fine tunes the instrument.

03 NOISE SIGNALS

- 03A SIGNALS - A dropdown to select the signals
- 03B AMOUNT - Controls the overall volume of the Room Tone.

04 MIC SIGNALS

- 04A SIGNALS - A dropdown to select the signals "source signal/mix"
- 04B MIC DISTANCE - A control which changes the balance of the mix from "Close" and directly in front of the piano, to "Far" and a more ambient room position.
- 04C L/R SWAP - A binary control which inverts the left and right stereo channel positions.

05 MASTER CONTROLS

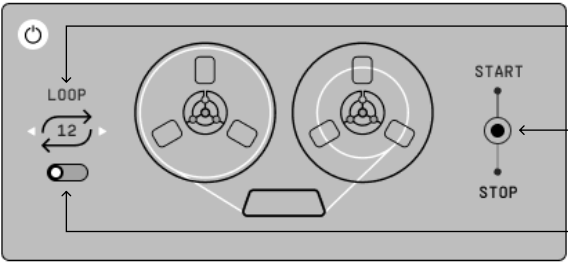
- 05A TUNING - Fine tunes the instrument.
- 05B VOLUME - Adjust the master volume of the instrument.
- 05C METER - A place to help identify issues and resolve frustration. If you can see it, you should hear it.

RACK - TAPE REEL / EFFECTS

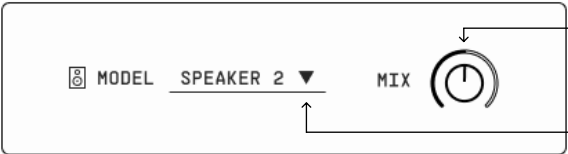
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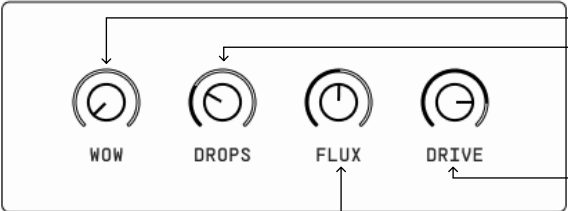
TAPE



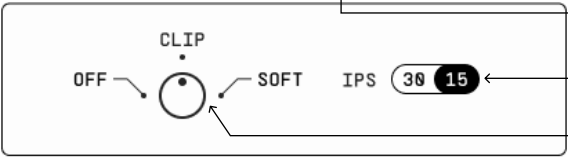
- LOOP LENGTH - Determines length of tape loop.
- START / STOP - Enables you to create start / stop tape effects.
- LOOP - Switches the loop function on and off.



- MIX - Control over the mix of the processed signal.
- MODEL - A dropdown to select the emulated speaker type.

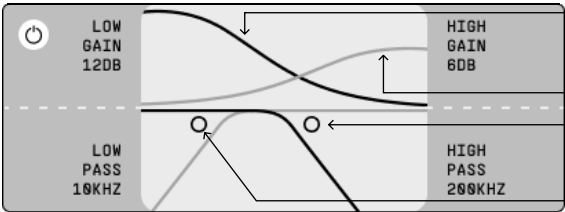


- WOW - A control to increase the amount of slow pitch variations.
- DROPS - A control to increase the intensity of variations in volume.
- DRIVE - Control over distortion of the signal when BIAS is active.
- FLUX - Control over the frequency of random start and stop pitch effects or "snags"

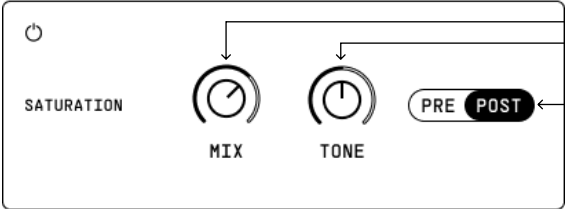


- IPS - (Inches per second) Tape speed also subtly alters the overall quality.
- BIAS - Control over an internal effect modelling the effects of lower voltages resulting in bias.

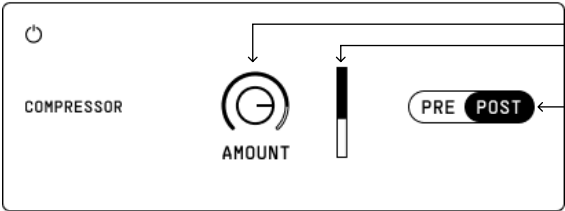
MASTER



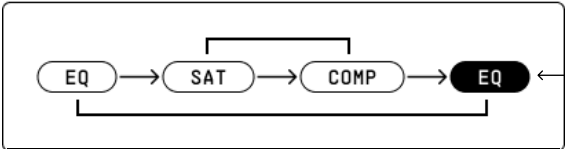
- LOW GAIN - Boosts/reduces low end frequencies.
- HIGH GAIN - Boosts/reduces high end frequencies.
- LOW PASS FILTER - Drag this nubbin to desired cut frequency.
- HIGH PASS FILTER - Drag this nubbin to desired cut frequency.



- MIX - Adjusts amount of saturation applied to signal.
- tone - Adjusts amount of filtering to the saturated signal.
- PRE/POST - Adjusts whether the processing is placed before or after the included effects.



- AMOUNT - Adjust how much your signal is compressed.
- INDICATOR - A visual display of how much your signal is being compressed.
- PRE/POST - Adjusts whether the processing is placed before or after the included effects.



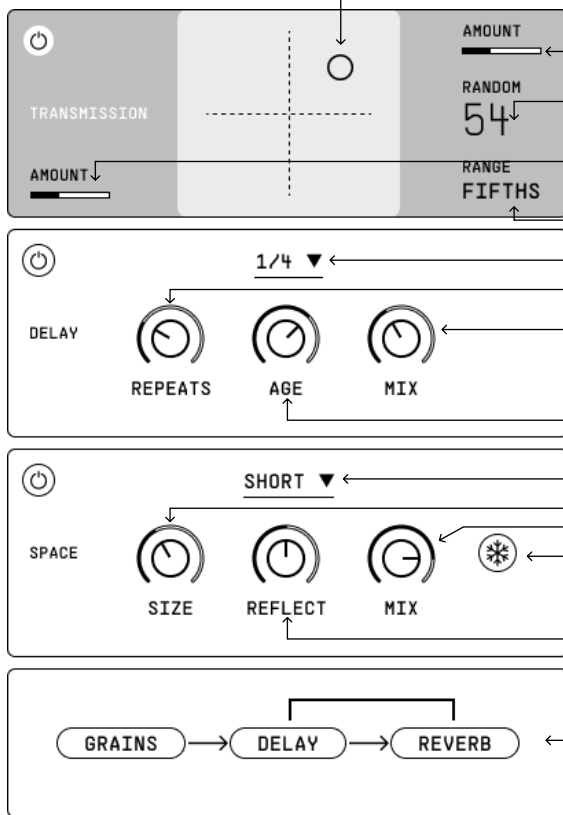
- EFFECTS CHAIN ORDER - Determines your signal path. Click a module to alter its path.

RACK - MASTER / SETTINGS

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EFFECTS



X/Y YOKE - Controls the effects Amount & Mix.

AMOUNT - Also controlled with "X", this alters the overall Mix of the effect.

RANDOM - Controls the amount of random variation to the size and panning of each grain.

AMOUNT - Also controlled with "X", this alters the size/density of the effects.

RANGE - Control over the frequency range of the granular signal.

SPEED - Controls frequency of delay, sync'd to host tempo.

REPEATS - Controls the number of delay repeats.

MIX - Controls balance of processed signal vs dry signal.

AGE - Controls how each delay step degrades over time.

TYPE - Selects Reverb/Room type

SIZE - Controls the length of the reverb.

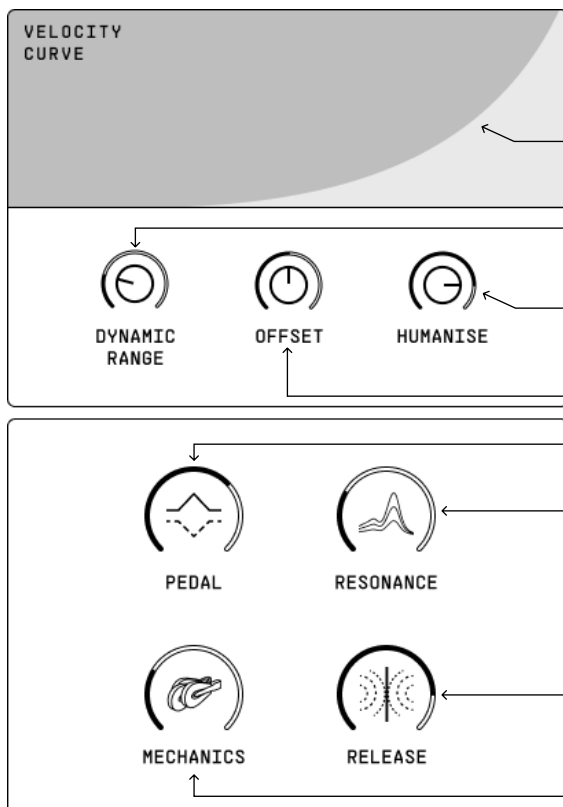
MIX - Controls balance of processed signal vs dry signal.

FREEZE - Freezes the reverb signal... frosty!

REFLECT - Determines amount of reflections are included in the processed signal.

EFFECTS CHAIN ORDER - Determines your signal path. Click a module to alter its path.

SETTINGS



VELOCITY CURVE - The overall responsiveness of the instrument. "Exponential to Logarithmic".

DYNAMIC RANGE - A bi-polar control which introduces a floor or ceiling to the dynamic range, making it easier to only play softer, or only play louder.

HUMANISE - Control from "Strict" to "Relaxed" which introduces random variation in velocity and timing to the inputted MIDI so drawn MIDI lines appear more natural.

OFFSET - Adds a more natural pre delay to the sample (in ms).

PEDAL - Controls the volume of the pianos pedal.

RESONANCE - Controls the volume of resonance when playing with a sustain pedal pressed down.

RELEASE - Controls the volume of the piano re-dampening the strings.

MECHANICS - Controls the volume of the piano's hammers.

TROUBLESHOOTING

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I Can't Hear Anything!

As much as we all love John Cage, we are sure you want to hear your instrument. Included in each instrument are a few utilities that can be used to diagnose some likely causes.

Each plug-in has a combination of ways to control the overall volume.

- Ensure Expression (CC11) is at its maximum value.
- If included, check that the mixer controls are not set to -Infinity or muted (m).
- Check that your Master Output Volume is not set to its minimum value (-Infinity).

This can be quickly checked by looking at the Volume Meter, which should be moving while sound is passing through your instrument.

Still no luck?

If you have tried the above and still hear nothing, the onscreen MIDI keyboard can be directly played by Left-Clicking a piano key in the user interface.

If you can now hear the instrument then the issue is likely the connection between your MIDI keyboard and your workstation's associated track.

Ensure there are no loose connections, triple-check your MIDI input settings, and remember to arm your track.

Help! My Plug-In's interface is entirely blank.

Don't worry. Looks can be deceiving, this means the plug-in is unable to locate the audio (.blob) files.

Ensure your external drives are connected and restart your digital audio workstation (D.A.W).

Unable to locate your .blob files, lost track of where you installed them, or had the misfortune of misplacing a drive? Simply re-run the installer to be up and running in no time.

We recommend frequent back-ups of your system, as well as archiving your instrument installer files to ensure a speedy recovery should it ever be needed.

How Do I Relocate My Instruments Audio Files?

The simplest way to relocate your instrument's audio files (.blob) is to delete the previous files (where you previously installed your .blob's) and re-run the installer, selecting the newly desired install location.

This ensures no files are accidentally removed and will automatically overwrite any pre-existing instrument files.

APPENDIX - CREDITS



The Vertical Piano wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for the efforts of these amazing, talented and generous individuals.

Lead Player:.....Ant Steep
Produced & Played by:Calum Minuti-Goold
Co-Produced & Played by:.....Christian Henson

Engineer:Jacob Johnston
Assistant Engineer:.....Nolan Bacardi
Piano Tech:Teri Meredyth

Development:Calum Minuti-Goold
Art :Prokopi Constantinou
CX:Marley Petropoulos
Tech Stack:Stephen Tallamy
Editing:Kieran Greig

Crow Hill would like to thank Russell Emanuel for letting us capture this unique instrument and to Jillian Abood and Jessica Gibson for making us feel so at home in Remote Control Studios.

APPENDIX - EULA (END USER LICENSE AGREEMENT)

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15. Entire Agreement. This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties on the subject matter hereof. There are no understandings, agreements, or representations, oral or written, not specified herein regarding this Agreement.

16. Force Majeure. We will not be liable or responsible for any failure to perform, or delay in performance of, any of our obligations hereunder that is caused by events outside our reasonable control including but not limited to: natural disasters (fire, storms, floods), governmental or societal actions (war, invasion, civil unrest, labour strikes), infrastructure failures (transportation, energy, electricity), or any epidemic or pandemic.

17. Severance. If any part, term, or provision of this Agreement shall be held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be illegal, unenforceable, or in conflict with any relevant law, the remaining portions or provisions shall still remain valid and continue in full force and effect.

18. No Waiver. No waiver, express or implied, by either party of any term or condition or of any breach by the other of any of the provisions of this Agreement shall operate as a waiver of any breach of the same or any other provision of this Agreement.

19. Variation. This Agreement may be varied from time to time and any such amendment will be applicable from the date and time such revised terms have been made publicly available. Your continued use of the Product constitutes agreement with and acceptance of any such amendment or other changes.

20. Law and Jurisdiction. This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of England and any disputes shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Courts of England.

21. Contacting Us. If you have any questions, please contact us at www.thecrowhillcompany.com/faqs