

Magnolia Studio Grand

Magnolia Studio Grand

An Impact Soundworks Instrument
for Kontakt Player 7.10.7+
Instrument Version 1.0.0

Product Manual

Introduction

The legendary Steinway Model L has been a staple of classical pianists for over a century. But every individual piano is as unique as a human voice, and we fell in love with this one the moment we heard it. This particular instrument has been lovingly, expertly maintained over the duration of its life, and we captured every detail with unparalleled precision. The combination of the instrument's intimate nuance and the presence of the recording hall is unique and, we think, highly inspiring. Perfect for concert hall works, jazz sessions, pop, jazz, and more, this Steinway's rich tone has made it a versatile, cross-genre powerhouse, and now that versatility is yours.

Magnolia Studio Grand, like Camellia Concert Grand, began life as an R&D project to test a new recording technique. When we heard the sound of what we had created, though, we felt we needed to put this in your hands as an affordable, beautiful, and truly playable instrument. We love the end result, and we hope you will, too.

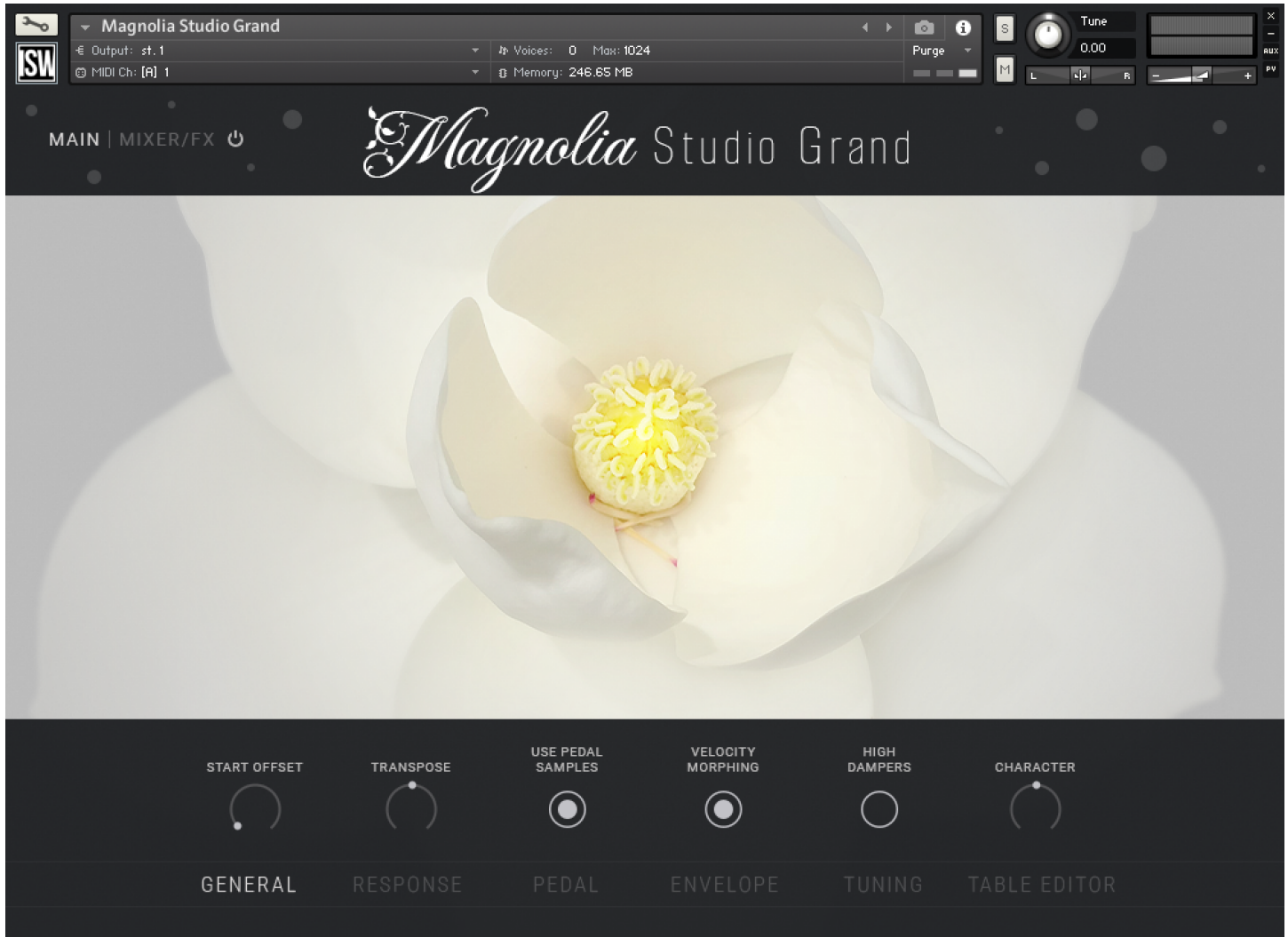
— *The Team at Impact Soundworks*

Installation

Please see our installation guide [here](#).

User Interface

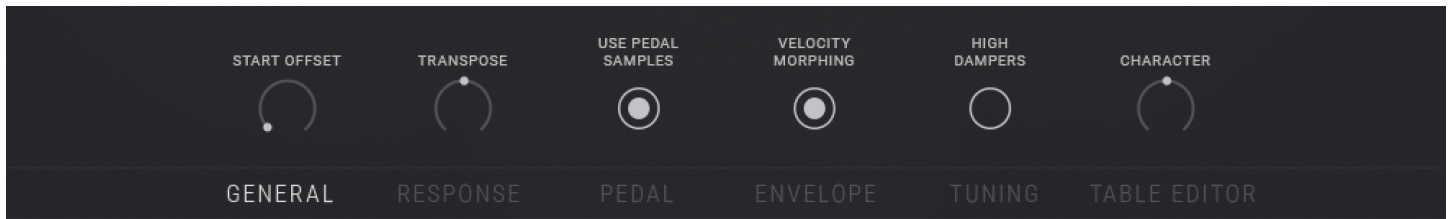
Page 1: MAIN



The Main page UI, in turn, has six sub-pages:

1. General (see page 5)
2. Response (see pages 5-6)
3. Pedal (see page 6)
4. Envelope (see pages 6-7)
5. Tuning (see page 7)
6. Table Editor (see page 8)

General



Start Offset

Adjusts the start offset of the note samples. to (optionally) cut into the recorded transients. A higher offset will feel more 'responsive' (lower latency), but will truncate the transient. This should almost always be set to 0 for rendering.

Transpose

Transposes the playable range up or down. This does not transpose samples, but alters the MIDI input directly.

Use Pedal Samples

Toggles whether dedicated samples are used when the Sustain Pedal is down. This option can be useful to reduce RAM usage if the Sustain Pedal isn't being played.

Velocity Morphing

Enables smooth transitions between the recorded dynamic layers, adding more of a gradient from low to high dynamics, and overall increasing realism. Enabling this feature increases voice count/CPU usage.

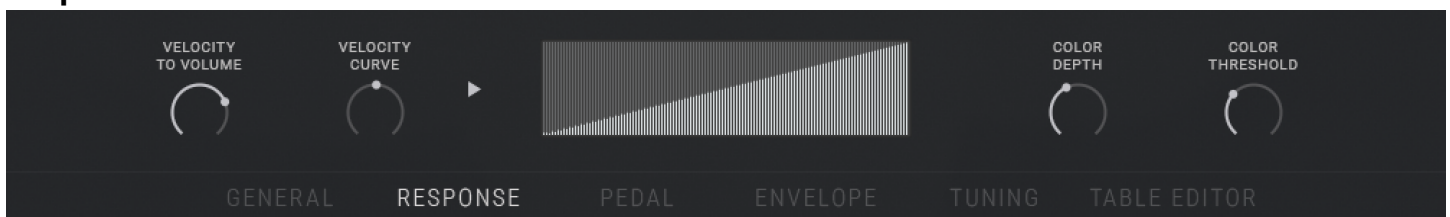
High Dampers

Enables dampers for the uppermost piano keys (i.e., **F#5** and above). *This behavior is physically unrealistic!*

Character

Modifies the timbre of the piano by tuning all the samples and re-pitching them under-the-hood. This gives the impression of changing the 'formant' of the piano for a richer, darker tone (character = low) or a thin, bright tone (character = high).

Response



Velocity to Volume

Adjusts how much playback volume is impacted by note Velocity. This does not affect which **dynamic** is played. You can effectively compress the output volume of the instrument by turning this knob **down**.

Velocity Curve

Modifies the curve applied to input MIDI Velocities. Moving the knob to the **left** curves velocities **up**, making the instrument feel more sensitive to MIDI velocity. Moving it to the **right** curves velocities **down**, making it feel less sensitive (i.e. you must play the keys harder to get higher velocities.)

Velocity Curve Table

Visually displays the effect of the Velocity Curve knob's setting. Also allows for 'hand-drawn' curve-setting. You can, for example, create a curve that does not trigger any high dynamics for a quiet, emotional piano-type sound.

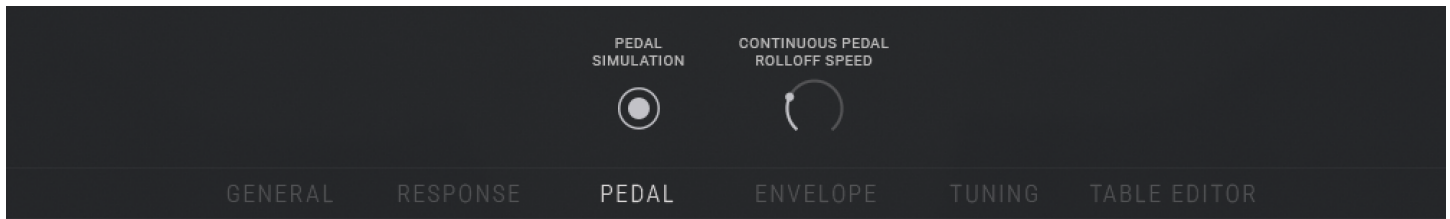
Color Depth

Our "Color" DSP applies gentle EQ to darken the high frequencies at lower velocities. This effectively increases the perceived dynamic range of the instrument, making softer notes darker and quieter. This **Depth** knob controls how **much** darkening is applied at lower velocities.

Color Threshold

The Velocity below which EQ-based sample softening (Color) will be applied.

Pedal



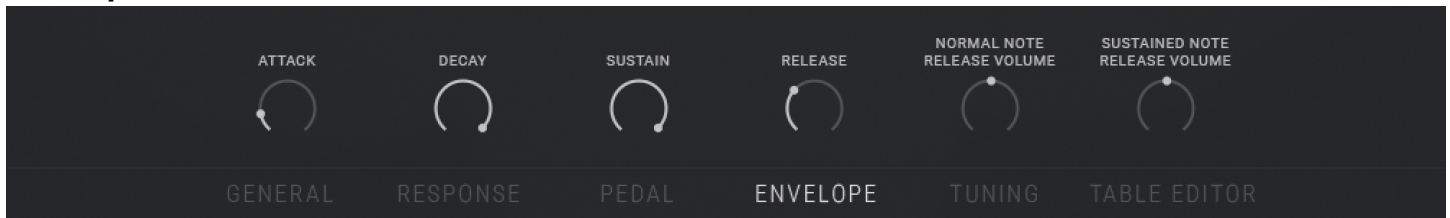
Pedal Simulation

Enables several realistic behaviors for the Sustain (damper) pedal. One is **Repedaling** - when enabled, you can release the pedal and quickly press it again to 'catch' notes that were previously sustaining. The window of time during which you can do this is set by the **Continuous Pedal Rolloff Speed** knob.

Another behavior enabled by this knob is **continuous pedal values**. The instrument will respond to more than just 'down' or 'up' (on/off) values, just like a real piano.

In order to support these behaviors, Pedal Simulation uses additional CPU. If you are not using the sustain pedal, we recommend keeping this **off**.

Envelope



The Attack, Decay, Sustain, and Release knobs all control the **volume** (amplitude) envelope applied to each sample. You can think of the envelope as an automatic volume fader that starts the moment you press a key.

For realistic playing, Attack, Decay, and Sustain should all be left alone - only **Release** should be tweaked to taste.

Attack

Adjusts the length of fade-in applied to each sample. Again, for realistic playing, this should be set very low. Higher values give a pad-like or reverse-piano type effect.

Decay

Once the fade-in (attack) is finished, **Decay** is the amount of time it takes to fade down to the **Sustain** volume level. If **Sustain** is turned all the way up, this does nothing. An example of how to use this control for sound design would be to use a low value of around 400-500ms, and a very low Sustain value, to get a 'staccato' or pluck type effect.

Sustain

Controls the volume level after the **Decay** time. For example, if this is set to 50% (12:00 on the knob), the output volume will be about half of the actual recorded sample volume.

Release

Adjusts how long it takes for the sample to fade-out completely after the MIDI note is released. For example, if this is set to 100ms, the note will fade to zero (silence) over the course of 100ms. This *doesn't* affect the Release noise samples.

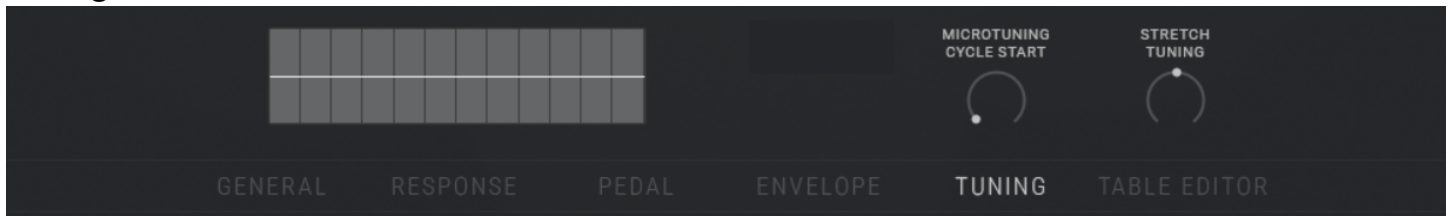
Normal Note Release Volume

Magnolia has actual recordings of the hammer lifting off from the strings when the key is released. This knob controls the volume of those 'release' recordings when the Sustain Pedal is **up**. Note that the release samples naturally scale to the length of the note, so if you release the note very quickly, the release sample will be played louder than if you hold the note for a long time.

Sustained Note Release Volume

The same as the previous knob, but applies to release recordings when the Sustain Pedal is **down**.

Tuning



The table and “Microtuning Cycle Start” knob together control ‘microtuning’ - offsets of as little as 1 cent (1/100th of a semitone). The way it works is by first setting a **root key** via the “**Microtuning Cycle Start**” knob. For example, say this is set to **C**.

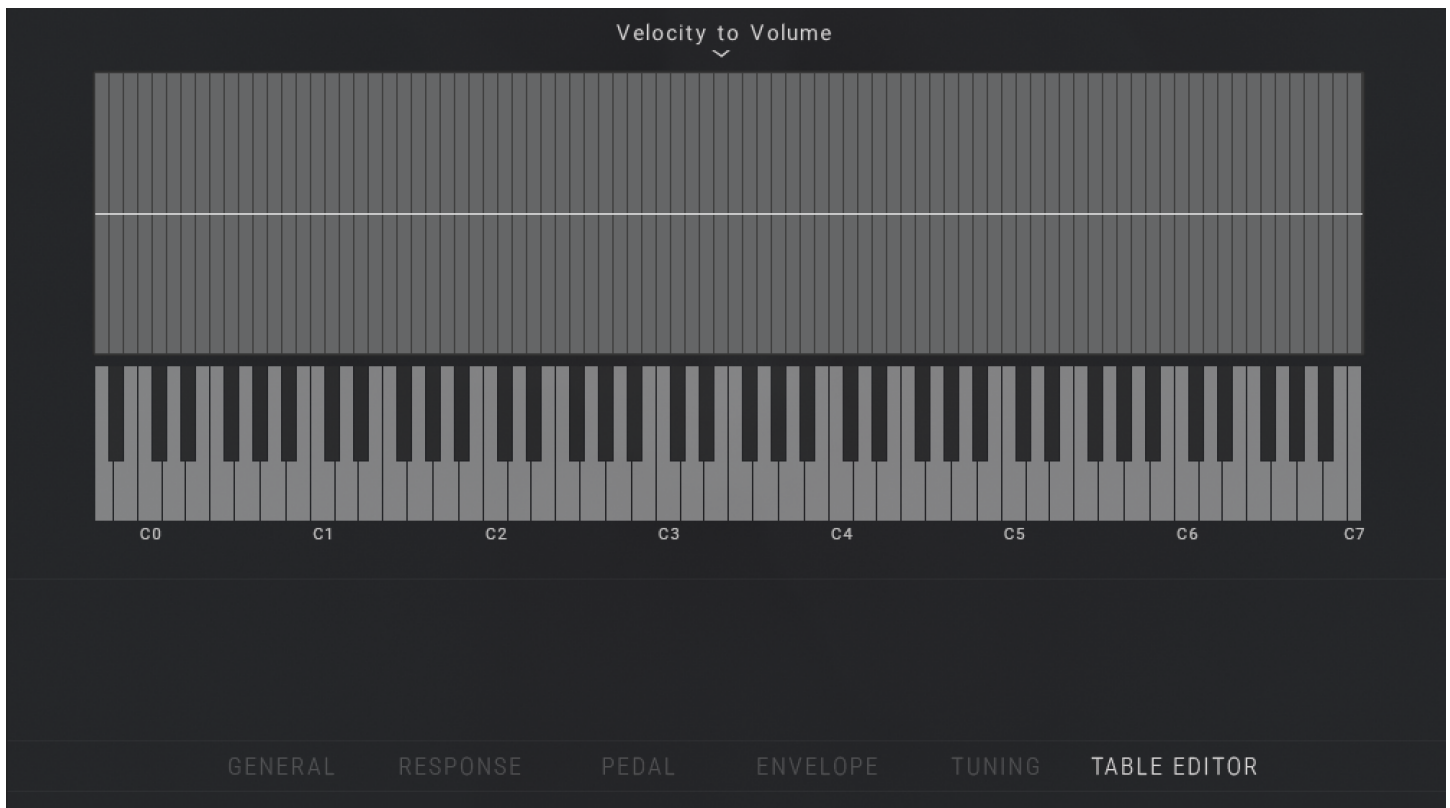
The **Table** on the left has **12** columns corresponding with **12** steps of the scale starting from the root note (**C** in our example) with a white line in the middle representing 0. Clicking above this line will tune each note.

If we are in the key of **C**, the first column will adjust the tuning of **every C note on the piano**. The second column will adjust every **C#** note, and so on.

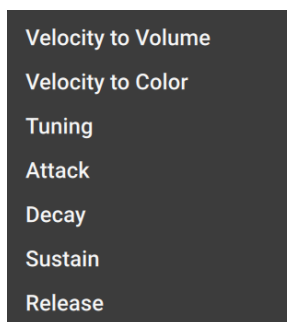
Stretch Tuning

A subtle effect, separate from Microtuning, that makes notes above middle C gradually more sharp, and notes below middle C gradually more flat. This effect is exaggerated with higher knob values. If you turn the knob to the left (negative), the inverse happens - notes above middle C will become more flat, and below middle C will become more sharp. *This effect is additive with those of the other tuning adjustments and tables.*

Table Editor



This tab is for advanced users and is not necessary in almost all normal use cases. It offers **per-note** adjustments for 7 different parameters. It is also not accessible for visually-impaired users due to limitations of the Kontakt table editor widget.



The available per-key parameters are:

1. Velocity to Volume (*see page 5*)
2. Velocity to Color (*see 'Color Depth' and 'Color Threshold', page 6*)
3. Tuning (*see page 7*)
4. Attack (*see page 6*)
5. Decay (*see page 6*)
6. Sustain (*see page 6*)
7. Release (*see page 6*)

Tip: The values in these tables are additive with the prior knob controls, and thus do not override them (or vice-versa).

Page 2: MIXER/FX

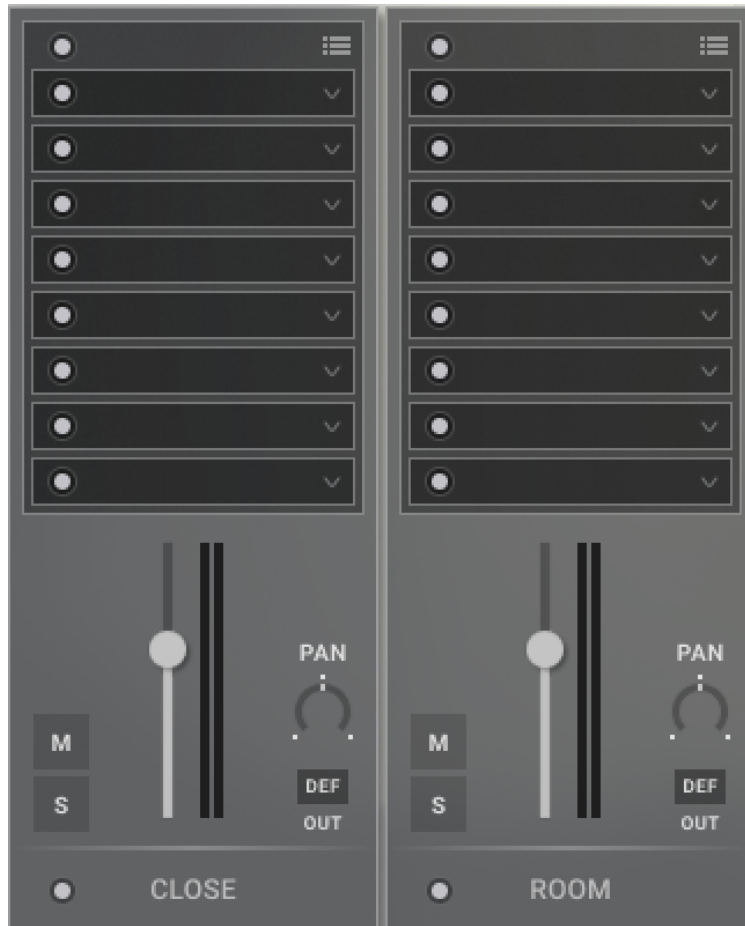


Magnolia Concert Grand features an implementation of our modular **Console FX Rack & Mixer** script engine used in many other Impact Soundworks products.

Global FX Power Button



To the right of the **MIXER/FX** tab there is a **Global FX Power Button** (🔌). When this button is *on* (**lit**), ALL FX on this page will be enabled. When this button is *off* (**dimmed**), ALL FX on this page will be disabled.



These **channel strips** can be used to mix and apply effects to each of the recorded mic positions. The **Close** position features mics inside and under the piano, for a full-bodied, wide sound with virtually no room ambience. The **Room** position was mixed down from a Decca tree on the stage as well as various hall mics.

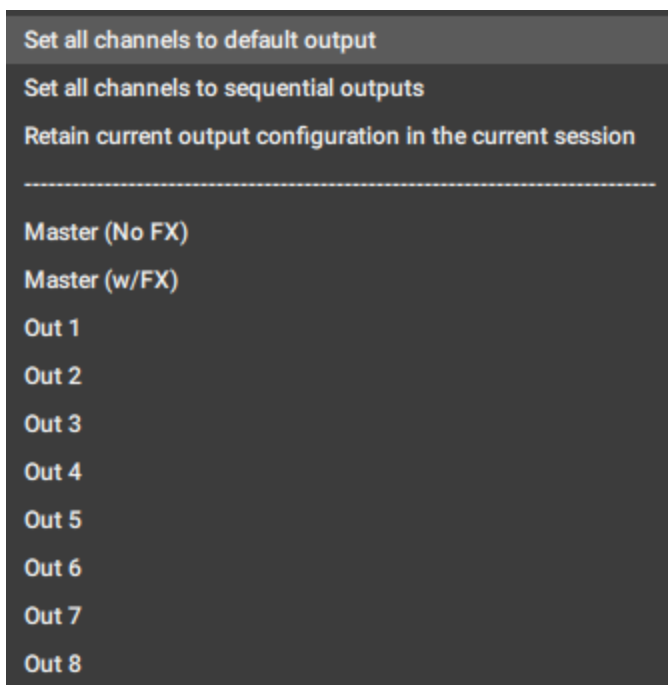
We almost always recommend using at least some **Close** mic to capture the richness of the piano, while adding more **Room** will result in a sound reminiscent of most classical piano recordings.

To save memory (RAM), you can completely disable a channel by clicking the grey power LED to the left of each channel name ("Close" or "Room"). This will instantly unload all samples from memory.

The **Volume** and **Pan** knobs work as you would expect, controlling volume and panning for each channel. They can also be automated or MIDI learned, as with most controls in the library.

The **M** and **S** buttons are for **Mute** and **Solo**, respectively. These function just as in any DAW mixer and do not load/unload the samples from memory.

Directly underneath the Pan Knob is the **channel output select**. In the above screenshot, it is set to "DEF" (default). The options you will see here depend on whether you are running Kontakt in standalone mode or in your DAW. Example:



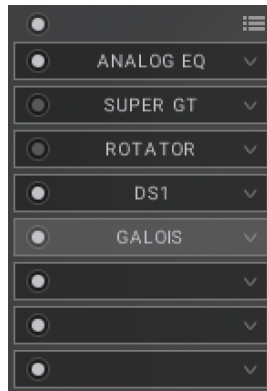
Configuring Kontakt itself for multiple outputs will work differently depending on what DAW you are using - please see [this Native Instruments article](#) about it.

The main thing to note is that if you assign a mic channel output to **Master (No FX)**, it will bypass all of the effects on the **Master** channel. As an example, in this configuration:



With Close and Room both set to **Master (No FX)**, the output selector changes from DEF to BYP (bypass). These channels will **ignore/bypass** the RAUM and Analog EQ effects on the Master channel.

FX Slots



The eight **FX Slots** in each channel strip (including the master channel strip at the right of the UI) are for **Insert effects**. There are over 40 to choose from ranging from EQs, compressors, reverbs, and delays, to modulation effects like choruses and phasers, distortion, tape, and more.

The effects we find **particularly** useful for pianos are as follows:

Analog EQ and **Parametric EQ** for general sculpting and sound shaping.

Raum, **Impulse Reverb**, **Galois Reverb**, **Plate Reverb** for adding unique space and ambience. Each of these reverbs has a distinct character and are fun to experiment with.

Delay, **Psyche Delay**, **Replika** for echo effects, great for ambient and atmospheric music.

Solid G Comp and **Supercharger GT** for clean or saturating compression, respectively, useful for pop and rock mixes.

Tape Saturator, **Wow/Flutter**, and **Lo-Fi** for various flavors of sonic degradation; either fairly mild or heavily bit-crunched and destroyed.

HQ Limiter as a general safety measure to limit spikes in volume from other effects.

Setup & Tweaking

Tips for Getting the Most out of the User Interface

- Almost all controls can be MIDI-learned by (1) right-clicking the UI and (2) selecting 'MIDI Learn'. You will then need to move the control of your choice (*i.e.*, fader, knob, *et al.*) on your MIDI control surface or in your DAW to establish the link.

Pro Tip: Once you MIDI-learn something, you should save your modified version of that NKI so you won't have to do it again! To do this in Kontakt 8, open the **Kontakt** menu on the top left and select "Save as."

- You can view Help Text by hovering over controls in the **Magnolia Studio Grand** UI. The Help Text will appear at the bottom-left of the Kontakt UI plug-in window. Enable this help text by clicking the Info Pane button  on the lower left corner of the Kontakt window (**Kontakt 8**).
- The colorful Kontakt virtual keyboard, seen in our videos, is a Kontakt feature and not specific to **Magnolia Studio Grand**. To enable the virtual keyboard, simply press **F3** on your computer (*not* MIDI!) keyboard. Alternatively, you can click the Keyboard button  on the lower right corner of the Kontakt window (**Kontakt 8**).
- **Magnolia Studio Grand** is fully NKS Compatible and features quite a few existing host-automatable controls. If you have a Komplete Kontrol keyboard or use the Komplete Kontrol application, you will be able to benefit from this functionality!

Credits & Acknowledgements

Executive Producer: Andrew Aversa

Performance & Recording: Simon Dalzell

Robot Control: Simon Dalzell

Sample Editing: Jared Le Doux

Programming: Sarah Mancuso

User Interface & Graphic Design: Paulo Nunes

Marketing: Lauren Liebowitz

User Manual: Andrew Aversa, Kent Kercher

Quality Assurance: Kent Kercher

...And a special thanks to our Beta Team!

Troubleshooting

Having trouble with **Magnolia Studio Grand**? Use it in a project you want to tell us about? Drop us a line via our [Contact page](#) (but be sure to [read the FAQ](#) first!)

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