Velvet

User Guide

Introduction

Velvet is a virtual instrument that can be used to add the realistic sound of vintage electric pianos to your recording.

Velvet provides five high-quality models of rare and legendary electric pianos, developed to deliver unprecedented realism in terms of sound quality and playability.

Using proprietary technology, Velvet provides all the nuanced details that influence the sound of a vintage electric piano. A built-in preamplifier and custom equalizer, as well as a multi-effect section with sixteen effects, make Velvet the perfect choice for reproducing all kinds of electric piano sounds of the past and present in your recording.

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System Requirements and Product Support

For complete system requirements, compatibility information, and product registration, visit the AIR website: **www.airmusictech.com**.

Installation

Windows®

1. Double-click the **.exe** installer file you downloaded.
2. Follow the on-screen instructions.

Note: Velvet uses PACE copy protection, so it will install the PACE InterLok driver on your system if you do not already have it. As most audio software uses PACE copy protection, though, this is probably already installed on your system.

Mac OS X

1. Double-click the **.pkg** installer file you downloaded.
2. Follow the on-screen instructions.

Using Velvet
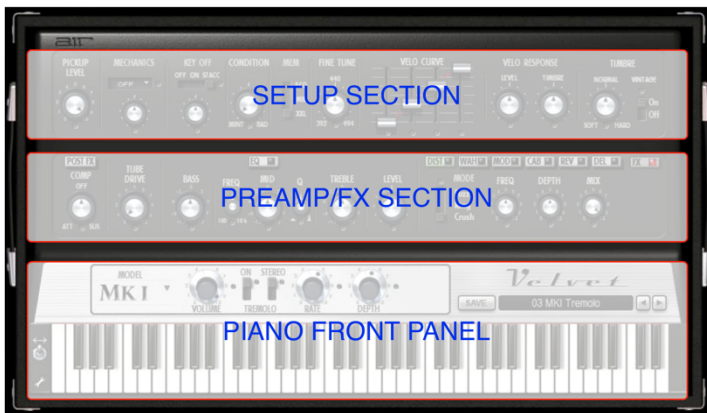
Velvet has a straightforward user interface with three separate sections. Each section provides parameters that affect an electric piano's sound:

- **Setup Section:** This section provides control over the basic sound and behavior of the selected electric piano model. You can manipulate and tune Velvet in this section—for example, mix in mechanical noises or adjust the velocity sensitivity. For more information, see ***Setup Section*** of this guide.

- **Preamp/FX Section**: This section provides controls to adjust and shape the electric piano sound using a one-knob Compressor, Tube Drive, Equalizer, and a selection of stomp-box and studio effects. For more information, see ***Preamp/EQ and FX Section*** of this guide.

- **Piano Front Panel**: This section provides a Piano Model selector, Master Volume control, and Tremolo/Autopan controls. You can play Velvet by using MIDI input from a MIDI keyboard, an Instrument or MIDI track in Pro Tools, or by clicking the 73 keys on screen. For more information about the Piano Front panel, see the next section of this guide.
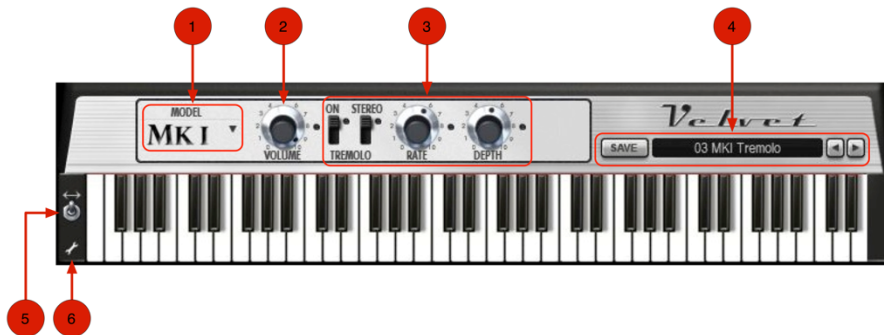
Piano Front Panel

The Piano Front Panel provides the Piano Model selector, a Master Volume control, Tremolo/Autopan controls, and a Keyboard Extension switch. The 73 keys in the Keyboard section correspond to the keys of a MIDI keyboard and their MIDI notes starting from **E0** on the left to **E6** on the right. You can play Velvet by clicking the on-screen keys, using MIDI input from a MIDI keyboard, or from MIDI data in an Instrument or MIDI track in your software.

1. **Model Selector** – Velvet contains five different vintage electric piano models. Click the Model Selector and select a piano model from the pop-up menu.

    Note: Loading a piano model may take several seconds. During the loading process, Velvet and your software may temporarily become unresponsive.

2. **Master Volume** – The Volume knob on the Piano Front Panel controls Velvet's main output to your audio software.

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3. **Tremolo Controls** – Tremolo is a rhythmic variation in amplitude—a common effect that was built into many vintage electric pianos. Enabling its stereo mode applies a periodic variation of position in the stereo field. Velvet provides Tremolo effects for all models by reproducing the circuits of the Fender Rhodes Suitcase and the Wurlitzer A200.

   - **On/Off:** Enables the Tremolo effect.
   - **Mono/Stereo:** Enables Mono or Stereo Tremolo mode.
   - **Rate:** Adjusts the speed of the Tremolo effect.
   - **Depth:** Adjusts the amount of Tremolo applied to the sound.

4. **Save/Load Section** – This section lets you load and save sounds.

   - **Loading Sounds**: To load a sound, click the screen to bring up a categorized list of Velvet sound patches. You can also use the arrow buttons to the right of the patch name to quickly shift between sounds.
   - **Saving Sounds**: To save a sound, click the **Save** button. If you wish to quickly overwrite the file you are currently working on without changing the file name or bringing up the file browser, you can do so by shift-clicking the **Save** button.

5. **Keyboard Extension Switch** – The electric pianos in Velvet have the same key range as the original models (**A0**–**C6** for the A200, **E0**–**E6** for the others) to guarantee authenticity. The Key Extension switch lets you to play notes outside this range. To do this, set the switch to the **Up** position.

6. **Configuration** – This button brings up a page containing several global parameters affecting the operation of Velvet. This is described in detail in the *Configuration Page* section of this manual.

Setup Section
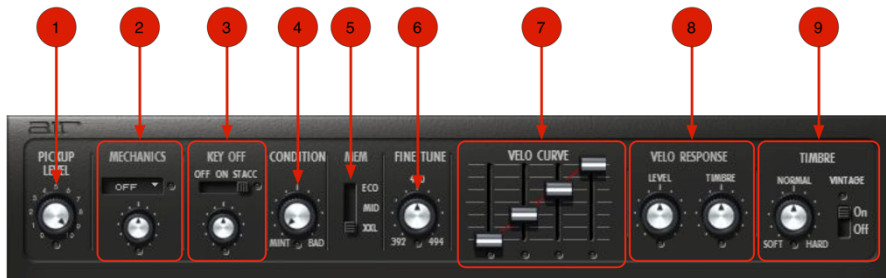
The Setup section provides controls for adjusting Velvet's basic setup and playing behavior—including adjustment of the Pickup level, mechanical noises, and Key release. You can also set the amount of waveform data loaded into RAM and adjust Velvet's dynamic response.

1. **Pickup Level** – The Pickup Level control adjusts the volume of the line signal captured by the instrument's pickups. Usually, a vintage electric piano is recorded by connecting the instrument's line out directly to an amp or mixer. The Pickup level control adjusts the amount of this signal. Turn the Pickup Level control to the right to increase the line signal's volume.

2. **Mechanics** – The Mechanics controls adjust the type and amount of mechanical noises that occur when playing an electric piano (i.e., the sound of keys being pressed, as heard by the player). These sounds are not captured by the Pickups. Velvet is the first virtual electric piano that lets you add original mechanical noise to the sound for increased realism. There are three Mechanics modes:

   - **Off:** Disables mechanical noises.
   - **On:** Enables mechanical noises. Turning the Mechanics knob clockwise increases the amount of mechanical noises.
   - **Open:** Enables mechanical noise, modelling the sound of an electric piano with the lid removed. Again, turning the Mechanics knob clockwise increases the amount of mechanical noise.

   Tip: If you set the Mechanics control to **On**, and turn the Pickup Level control all the way down, you will hear the sound of a switched-off vintage electric piano.

3. **Key Off** – The Key Off controls adjust the type of noise that occurs when releasing keys and the associated knob sets the volume of the noise. There are three Key Off modes:

   - **Off** Disables key release noise.
   - **On** Enables key release noise.
   - **Stacc (Staccato)** Enables key release noise with a special behavior when short notes are played. Playing staccato notes on a real electric piano keeps the dampers from cutting off the note as quickly as normal, resulting in a different release sound.

4. **Condition** – This knob has the effect of increasing the "age" of the piano model. Turning the knob clockwise introduces increasing note-to-note deviations in tuning and dynamic response, simulating an old electric piano in need of service.

5. **Mem (Memory Selector)** – Use this control to adjust the amount of waveform data Velvet loads into your computer's RAM.

   - **Eco:** Is the smallest possible load size. Eco uses fewer system resources, but also limits the range of expression available.

   - **Mid:** Provides a good balance between system load and range of expression.

   - **XXL:** Is the default load size. XXL, the largest possible load size, provides the maximum range of expression available, but also places the greatest demands on system resources.

6. **Fine Tune** – The Fine Tune control adjusts the tuning of Velvet. The maximum tuning deviation is 2 semitones up or down.

7. **Velo Curve (Velocity Curve)** – Use the Velo Curve sliders to adjust Velvet's velocity sensitivity. The four sliders from the left to the right represent Velvet's velocity response from low to high.


(wide dynamic range)   (no velocity response)   (normal response)

8. **Velo Response (Velocity Response)** – These controls adjust the range of volume and timbre available when playing at different velocities.

    - **Volume:** Adjusts the range of volume available. Turn the knob counter-clockwise to reduce the variation in volume when playing from low to high velocities. Turn the knob clockwise to increase the range.

    - **Timbre:** Adjusts the range of timbre available. Turn the knob counter-clockwise to reduce the variation in timbre when playing from low to high velocities. Turn the knob clockwise to increase the range.

    Tip: MIDI keyboards can have different velocity response behavior. Use the Velocity Response parameters to tune Velvet to the maximum velocity output of your keyboard.

9. **Timbre** – These controls change the overall sound of the selected electric piano model. Turn the knob counter-clockwise for a soft, mellow sound; turn clockwise for a hard, bright sound. Used in combination with the Velocity Response controls, you can achieve a wide range of timbral responses. The Vintage Mode switch simulates the sonic characteristcs of many vintage electric piano recordings by adding a gentle low shelf boost to the overall sound.

Preamp/EQ and FX Section
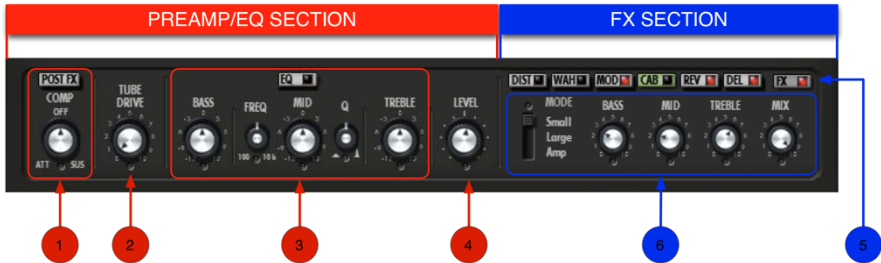
This area of Velvet can be sub-divided into two sections: Preamp/EQ and FX.

- **Preamp/EQ:** These controls adjust Velvet's sound using a compressor, tube overdrive, and a three-band equalizer with a sweepable parametric mid-band. Velvet's signal passes through the Preamp section before being sent into the FX section.

- **FX:** Velvet provides six categories of classic vintage effects. All of these effects can be switched on simultaneously, but the parameters of only one effect can be viewed at the same time. The FX section receives signal from the Preamp/EQ section and and passes its output to the Master Output Volume on the Piano Front Panel.

1. **Comp (Compressor)** – The Compressor control adjusts Velvet's dynamics using a soft-knee compressor. Turn the Compressor control to the left to accentuate the attacks, and to the right to boost the piano's sustain.

2. **Tube Drive** – The Tube Drive control adds harmonics and compression to the signal, emulating the behavior of a tube preamp responding dynamically to the input level. Turn the knob clockwise to increase the Tube Drive amount.

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3. **Equalizer Section Controls** – The three-band Equalizer provides a low band, a high band, and a parametric mid band for adjusting Velvet's tone. The EQ section can be engaged or bypassed by clicking the EQ button at the top of this section. The corresponding light is illuminated when the EQ is active.

4. **EQ Level** – The EQ Level control rebalances the volume of Velvet's signal to compensate for level changes caused by the Equalizer. Turn this knob counter-clockwise to attenuate, or clockwise to boost the signal before it is sent to the FX section.

5. **Insert Selector** – Velvet has six insert effects that can be independently edited or switched on and off.

   - To select an insert effect for editing, click the button corresponding to the effect.
   - To switch an effect on or off, click the small light to the right of each button. When an effect is active, this red light will be illuminated. If an effect is not active, the light will not be illuminated.

   Tip: Click the FX button to quickly switch all insert effects on or off.

6. **Insert Effect Parameters** – The knobs and sliders in this area change depending on what insert is selected above. Each effect can have up to four variations that can be selected using the vertical slider. The knobs and buttons to the right of the slider can then be used to fine-tune the effect.

Configuration Page
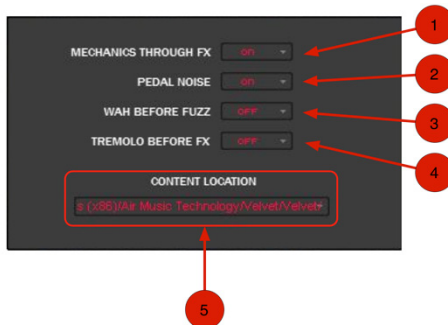
1. **Mechanics Through FX –** Velvet gives you the option of either routing mechanical noises through the FX section or to let mechanical noises bypass the FX section. By default, the mechanical noises bypass FX section (i.e., this parameter is set **Off**) as this most closely models real-world recording conditions. However, if you would like the mechanical noises of Velvet to also be sent through the FX section, set this menu to **On**.

2. **Pedal Noise –** This parameter lets you switch sustain pedal noises on and off. By default, this parameter is set to **On**.

3. **Wah Before Fuzz –** By default, Velvet routes its signal through distortion insert effects before the wah effect. Some players prefer to route their piano's signal through the Wah first, followed by the distortion. This can be done by setting this parameter to **On**.

4. **Tremolo Before FX –** By default, the tremolo effects of Velvet happen after the FX inserts. If you would prefer to have the tremolo effects happen before the FX section, set this parameter to **On**.

5. **Content Location –** Velvet contains a large file called **Velvet Data.big** that contains all of the sample data for the modeled instruments. If Velvet is unable to locate this file at startup (for example, if you have moved the file to a new hard disk), you can manually locate the new file by clicking here.

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MIDI Controller Mapping

Velvet lets you assign standard MIDI controllers to virtually any parameter so that you can control Velvet from a MIDI controller in real time.

To assign a MIDI controller to a parameter:

1. Right-click (Windows or Mac) or Control-click (Mac) a control.
2. Do one of the following:

   a. Select the desired MIDI controller from the **Assign** sub-menu.

   b. Select **Learn** and then move the desired control on your MIDI controller. The parameter is automatically assigned to that control.

To un-assign a MIDI controller:

1. Right-click (Windows or Mac) or Control-click (Mac) an assigned control.
2. From the pop-up menu, select **Forget**.

About the Velvet Piano Models

Velvet provides five models of legendary electromagnetic pianos. While Velvet offers a large range of options for changing and adjusting the sound, choosing the right piano model is the most important step to achieve the desired sound and feel. Each of the five models has been accurately replicated from selected originals that have been adjusted and modified to perfection. Sound character, playing feel, and behavior are all based on the models.

Note that model names of the models do not refer to the exact original pianos that were studied during the development of Velvet, but rather give you a hint to which kind of Rhodes or Wurlitzer sound is widely associated with the model.

Piano Model: SC73

SC73 creates the typical sound of the Rhodes Suitcase 73. The tines are set to a soft character with lots of body. This model is ideal for ballads and blends nicely with other instruments.

Tip: For an accurate suitcase sound, use the **Stereo Tremolo** on the Piano Front panel (**Suitcase** tremolo effect) and the **Large** setting of the **Cab** effects (**Suitcase** amp/speakers).

Musical styles: Jazz, Pop Ballads

Songs famous for featuring this instrument:

- Stevie Wonder: "You Are the Sunshine of My Life"
- Billy Joel: "Just the Way You Are"
- Miles Davis: "In a Silent Way," *Bitches Brew* (album)
- Bill Withers: "Just the Two of Us"

Piano Model: MK I

MK I is a model of a very dynamic, vintage-style reproduction of a Fender Rhodes piano usually associated with the Mark I. The tines were moved close to the pickup for a full, harmonically rich timbre and a very hard sound at high velocities.

Tip: Use this model for rhythmic chords and soloing—especially when you want the piano to stick out of the mix or compete against other instruments.

Musical styles: Jazz Fusion, Jazz Rock

Songs famous for featuring this instrument:

- Herbie Hancock: *Head Hunters* (album)
- Jamiroquai: "Space Cowboy"
- George Duke: "From Dusk to Dawn"
- Chick Corea: "Spain"

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Piano Model: MK II

MK II is a model of the bright Rhodes piano sound that became famous in the '80s, usually with a condenser upgrade/modification for a very bright sound accentuating the metallic attack of the tines, further improved by tines set close to the pickups. This sound is very often referred to as "Dyno Rhodes," used by keyboardists David Foster (often combined with Grand Piano) and Robbie Buchanan.

Musical styles: Westcoast, Fusion, Pop

Songs famous for featuring this instrument:

- Al Jarreau: "I Will Be Here for You"
- Whitney Houston: "Saving All My Love for You"
- Chicago: "Bad Advice"
- Donald Fagen: "Green Flower Street"

Piano Model: A200

A200 is a model of a Wurlitzer electric piano. The Wurlitzer was originally designed as a portable and cheap replacement for a real piano, but its aggressive, powerful sound character soon made it the only real competitor to the Rhodes pianos in pop and rock music. Many people refer to it as "the Supertramp sound." The Wurlitzer can sound very nice and mellow in ballads, but it really excels in power accompaniment and rhythmic chords.

Musical styles: Blues, Pop, Rock.

Songs famous for featuring this instrument:

- Ray Charles: "What'd I Say"
- Marvin Gaye: "I Heard It Through the Grapevine"
- Three Dog Night: "Mama Told Me Not to Come"
- Steely Dan: "Pretzel Logic"
- Pink Floyd: "Money"
- Supertramp: "Dreamer"
- Supertramp: "Logical Song"

Piano Model: Model-T

Model-T creates the typical sound of a small "suitcase-style" piano. The instrument had a unique tone due to the ground stainless steel reeds, a pick-up using variable capacitance, and leather-faced activation pads. The instrument was manufactured from the 1950s through the early 1980s and was found on many hit recordings from the 1960s and 1970s.

Musical styles: Pop, Progressive Rock

Songs famous for featuring this instrument:

- The Beatles: "I Am the Walrus," "Getting Better," "The Night Before"
- The Zombies: "She's Not There"
- Herb Alpert: "This Guy's in Love With You"
- Three Dog Night: "Joy to the World"

Support

For technical support, please contact us through the **Support** page of our website: **www.airmusictech.com/support**.

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