Blackstar
AMPLIFICATION

the sound in your head

Designed and Engineered by
Blackstar Amplification UK

ST. JAMES PLUGIN

Owners' Manual

VERSIONS 1.3.0 (AND LATER)

Introduction

Our mission is to design the ultimate tools for self-expression for guitarists. In the 16 years since Blackstar was founded in Northampton, England, we have launched countless award-winning products that inspire guitarists around the globe.

The software amplifiers featured in the St. James plugin are designed by the same design team who created the benchmark products ranges of Artisan, Series One, ID:Series and St. James. By applying decades of world-class real-world amplifier design experience, the St James Plugins deliver the TONE and FEEL of real valve amplifiers in a visually stunning, low- latency package that is easy to use and will set new standards in the live and studio / recording world.

The St. James plugin will become your go-to tool for tone, with the versatility to traverse genres and styles effortlessly.

Find your tone using:

St. James Amplifiers

- EL34 - Vintage clean to chimey mid-gain tones.
- 6L6 – Dynamic clean to classic crunch and aggressive modern sounds.

Pre FX Pedals

- Compressor
- Drive
- Chorus
- Phaser

CabRig

- 9 iconic Blackstar speaker cabinets and combos
- 6 Industry standard microphones
- Fully configurable virtual room environment
- Comprehensive mix controls
- Custom IR loader

Post FX Pedals

- Flanger
- Tremolo
- Delay
- Reverb

Analogue EQ emulation

- 4 semi-parametric EQ bands
- Low Cut and High Cut
- Individual band bypass

Contents

Getting Started

Basic Requirements

In order to use the Blackstar St. James plugin you will need:

A computer running a supported operating system.

The most recent version of the iLok License Manager application and an iLok account.

If you have purchased the full version of the St. James plugin, you will also need an activation code from the Blackstar Plugins website.

To use the Blackstar St. James plugin within a DAW instead of as a standalone application, you will also need a supported DAW software.

Compatibility and Formats

Blackstar plugins are available in multiple formats, as well as having standalone versions. We provide the following formats:

- VST3
- AU
- AAX
- Standalone Application

Supported Operating Systems

- macOS 10.15 and later
- Windows 8 and later

Supported DAWs

- Pro Tools 2023.6 or later, Mac & PC - AAX Native
- Logic Pro X 10.7.8 or later - AU
- Cubase 12.0.60 or later, Mac & PC - VST
- Ableton Live 11.0 or later, Mac & PC - Mac: AU & VST; Windows: VST
- Reaper 6.80 or later, Mac & PC - Mac: AU & VST; Windows: VST
- Presonus Studio One 6.1.0 or later, Mac & PC - Mac: AU & VST; Windows: VST
- FL Studio 21.0.3 or later, Mac & PC - VST
- Reason 12.5.1 or later, Mac & PC - VST

Downloading

You can download the plugin installers from:

www.blackstarplugins.com

For details on how to purchase a licence or to start a free trial, please see the relevant sections below.

After going through the process of obtaining either a full licence or a free trial as outlined in the section below, you will be provided with a download option for Mac and a download option for Windows. Please click on the appropriate download for your operating system. The download will begin automatically.

Getting Started

Installing

Once the download is complete, unpack/extract the zip folder and open the installer inside. Follow the onscreen instructions to install your new software.

File Directories

The Blackstar St. James plugin will install as default into the following directories.

macOS

- AU:
  Macintosh HD/Library/Audio/Plug-ins/Components/
- VST3:
  Macintosh HD/Library/Audio/Plug-ins/VST3/
- AAX:
  Macintosh HD/Library/Application Support/Avid/Audio/Plug-ins/
- Standalone App:
  Macintosh HD/Applications/

Windows

- VST3:
  C:/Program Files/Common Files/VST3/
- AAX:
  C:/Program Files/Common Files/Avid/Audio/Plug-Ins/
- Standalone App:
  C:/Program Files/Blackstar/

Free Trial

Make sure you have the latest version of the iLok License Manager installed and running on your machine. Download and run the Blackstar St. James plugin installer.

When you first open the St. James standalone application or open a supported DAW after installation, an iLok activation window will appear on screen. To start your free trial, click the “Try” button in the window. If you haven’t already got an iLok account, click “Create new account” to make one.

Your 14-day trial should be added to your iLok account automatically.

Full License

To purchase a full license of the Blackstar St. James plugin, click on “add to cart” on the St. James page and complete the on-screen steps for purchasing. Collect the Blackstar Plugin activation code from the Blackstar Plugins website.

If you have already been using the St. James plugin as a free trial, open iLok License Manager, log in, and right-click on your free trial activation and click on “deactivate”. You will not need to do this if your trial is already expired.

Once this is done, go to the “Available” tab, right-click on your full license and select “Activate”.

NOTE: Your St. James plugin license can be activated on up to three different computers.

Overview


Blackstar
Ambient Breakup
BLACKSTAR
INPUT
VOLUME I
GAIN II
VOLUME II
BASS
MIDDLE
TREBLE
REVERB
POWER
MASTER
STBY
POWER
50/EL34
CH. II SELECT
CH. II BOOST
50W
SAG
ST. JAMES
ST. JAMES EL34
ST. JAMES 6L6
INPUT
GATE
MONO
STEREO
PRE-FX
AMP
CABRIG
POST-FX
EQ
OUTPUT

Header Bar

Preset Box

The current preset will be displayed in the centre of the top bar. Clicking on the arrows will cycle through your saved presets. You can favourite the current preset clicking on the Heart icon and favourited presets will appear in the favourites folder in the preset menu.

Preset Menu

To open the preset menu, click on the preset box. All saved presets will appear here, organised by folder. Click on the arrow icons to open each folder and load a preset by clicking on it.
Search for specific preset names by clicking on the search bar in the preset menu and typing out the appropriate preset name. Searching will return results from all folders.

Use the Import button to add non-factory presets to the St. James plugin, such as preset packs or presets made by another user. Click on the Import button, browse to the relevant directory and select the preset files you wish to import.

Use the Export button to export presets you have created and saved whilst using the St. James plugin, in order to transfer them to another computer or give them to another user. Click on the Export button, select the presets you wish to export and choose the directory you want to export them to.

MIDI (standalone version)

Click on the MIDI port icon to view the MIDI menu. From this menu you can enter/exit MIDI Learn, open the MIDI Map, or reset all MIDI mappings. For more information on MIDI please see the MIDI section (page 19).

Settings

Click on the Settings icon to view the settings for the St. James plugin. For the standalone version, settings is where you can configure your audio device IO and/or select your MIDI devices. You can also reset the plugin to the default state from the settings menu.

Info Box

All parameter adjustments will be displayed in the Info box on the right side of the top bar. This can be used for fine adjustment of controls and when setting tempo sync divisions.

Footer Bar

Input
Use the Input Level meters on the left of the footer bar to view the signal level into your St. James plugin. The input level can be adjusted using the Input control next to the Input Level meters.

NOTE: The Input Level meters will display when clipping occurs with red Clip Indicators at the top of the meter bar. If clipping occurs, turn down the Input control and clear the Clip Indicators by clicking on them.

Gate
The Gate control affects the threshold of the Noise Gate. Turning the Gate control up will increase the threshold and result in lower-level signals, such as noise, being muted. To turn the Noise Gate off, turn the Gate control all the way down.

NOTE: Turning the Gate control up too high may result in your guitar signal being affected. To set the Noise Gate correctly, turn the Gate control up slowly until the unwanted noise is only just muted.

Mono/Stereo Switch
The Mono/Stereo switch affects the input configuration of your St. James plugin. When the switch is set to Mono, there will be a single mono input to the plugin and when the switch is set to Stereo, the input to the plugin will be stereo across a pair of channels.

Signal Chain
The signal chain is shown in the centre of the footer bar. The plugin modules shown in the signal chain are applied to your guitar signal in this exact order.

To navigate to a module page, click on the Page button you want to navigate to. The button will depress and the page will be shown in the main plugin window.

Individual modules can be activated and deactivated using the On/Off buttons next to the Page buttons. When a module is active, the On/Off button will be lit.

Tuner
Clicking on the tuning fork icon will open the Tuner window. To close the Tuner window click on the tuning fork icon again, the ‘X’ button in the top left or anywhere on the background behind the Tuner window. For more information on the Tuner please see the Tuner section (page 11).

Output and Window Size
Use the Output Level meters on the right of the footer bar to view the signal level coming out of your St. James plugin. The output level can be adjusted using the Output control next to the Output Level meters.

Adjust the overall window size by clicking on the resize icon on the far right of the footer bar.

NOTE: The Output Level meters will display when clipping occurs with red Clip Indicators at the top of the meter bar. If clipping occurs, turn down the Output control and clear the Clip Indicators by clicking on them.

AMP Page

The St. James plugin includes software versions of both the 50W EL34 and 50W 6L6 variations of the award-winning Blackstar St. James range of valve amplifiers. The amp model can be switched using the Amp Model buttons underneath the amplifier on the Amp Page.
The currently selected Amp Model button will be lit.

EL34

Channel I is inspired by clean, dynamic American amps of the mid ’60s. St. James brings these sounds right up-to-date, producing a whole new level of clean headroom and dynamic compression to deliver inspired musical-mids and tight-lows. This channel is a perfect pedal platform.

Channel II of the EL34 powered St. James is vintage in nature. The brand-new preamp design delivers the raucous crunch you’d expect from an EL34 amp but with stunning clarity and chime. All this is topped off with a switchable 10dB front-end boost.

6L6

Channel I is inspired by clean, dynamic American amps of the mid ’60s. St. James brings these sounds right up-to-date, producing a whole new level of clean headroom and dynamic compression to deliver inspired musical-mids and tight-lows. This channel is a perfect pedal platform.

Channel II is an absolute gain machine. Channel II has a gloriously British, ‘punch in the chest’ roar. However, with the Voice switch activated, the saturation gets cranked ‘to 11’ and the emulated power-stage damping is reduced for a modern-sounding, tight low-end chug.

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Pre FX Page

Pre FX Page

Activate any of the Pre FX pedals by clicking on the pedal footswitch. When the pedal is active, the footswitch LED will be lit.

Compressor

The Compressor pedal contains two options for compression type:

- Fast: Compression with a quick attack time, great for smoothing out dynamics and extending sustain.
- Slow: A slower attack time, perfect for accentuating the articulation in your playing.

For both types, the Comp. control controls the amount of compression and the Blend control adjusts the amount of dry, uncompressed, signal is mixed with the compressed sound.

Drive

The Drive pedal has two options for altering the drive Type:

- TS: Tighten up the low end and push your chosen amp hard into screaming saturation.
- Overdrive: Smooth, transparent and versatile overdrive.

Fine tune your selected Drive Type with the Gain, Level and Tone controls.

Chorus

Lush and vibrant, the Chorus pedal is based on a legendary unit responsible for iconic sounds from the 80s. Alongside familiar Speed and Depth controls, create all encompassing stereo washes using the Width control.

NOTE: To sync the Chorus pedal to the tempo of your session, set the Sync switch to On. With Sync On, the Speed control adjusts the note division.

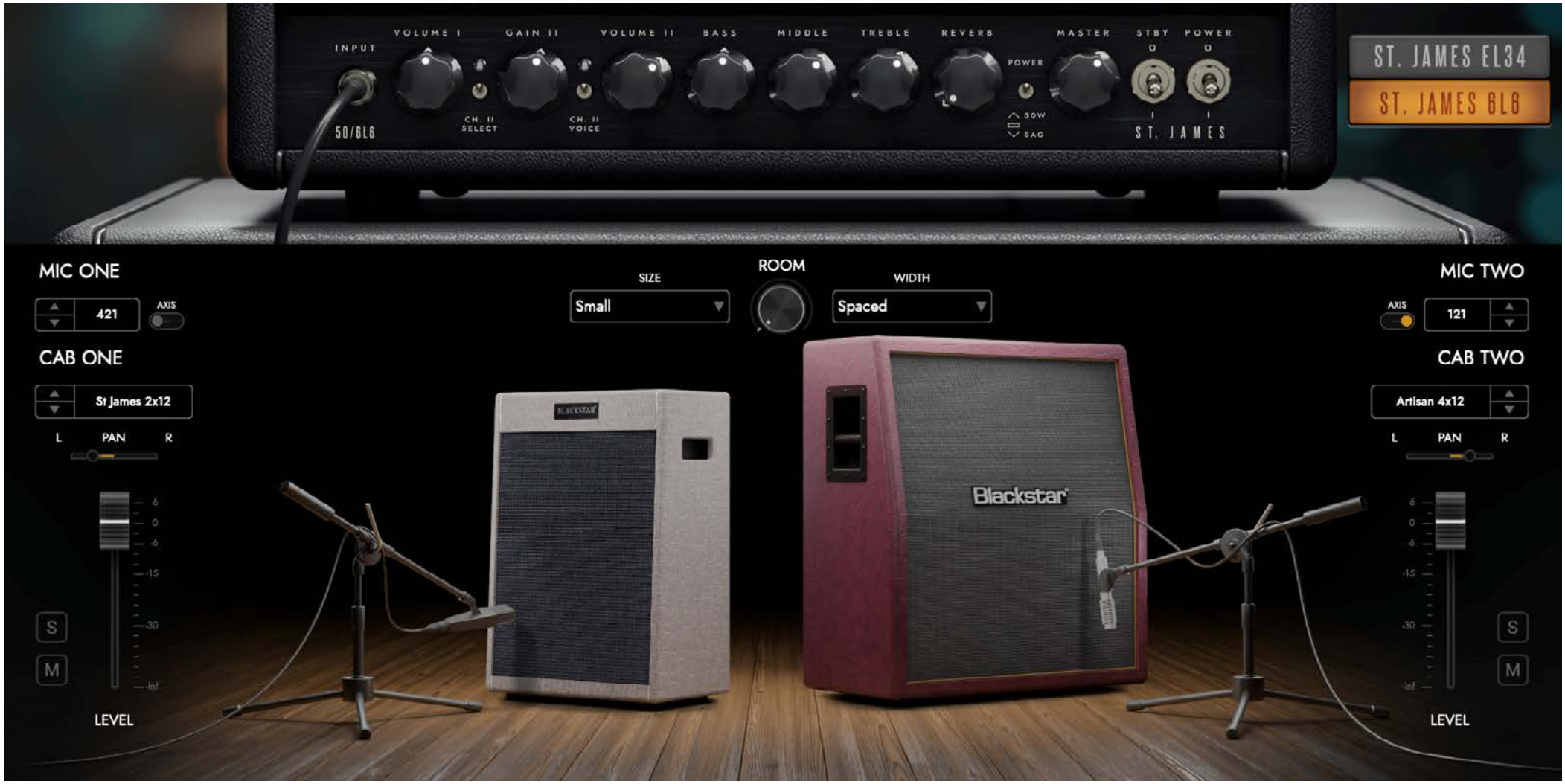
Phaser

The Phaser pedal takes inspiration from the effect unit synonymous with a guitar icon. Tweak standard Speed and Depth controls to suit your sound and expand your tone with the addition stereo Width control.

The Res. switch adjusts the resonance of the filter sweep, providing an extra level of personalisation to your tone.

NOTE: To sync the Phaser pedal to the tempo of your session, set the Sync switch to On. With Sync On, the Speed control adjusts the note division.

CabRig Page


INPUT
VOLUME I
GAIN II
VOLUME II
BASS
MIDDLE
TREBLE
REVERB
MASTER
STBY
POWER
50/6L6
CH. II SELECT
CH. II VOICE
POWER
50W
SAG
ST. JAMES
ST. JAMES EL34
ST. JAMES 6L6
MIC ONE
421
AXIS
CAB ONE
St James 2x12
L PAN R
SIZE
Small
ROOM
WIDTH
Spaced
MIC TWO
AXIS
121
CAB TWO
Artisan 4x12
L PAN R
S
M
LEVEL
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S
M
LEVEL

CabRig Page

Microphones

Click on the Mic One or Mic Two box to open the microphone selection panel. Mic up your virtual cabinet with a choice of 6 industry standard microphones.

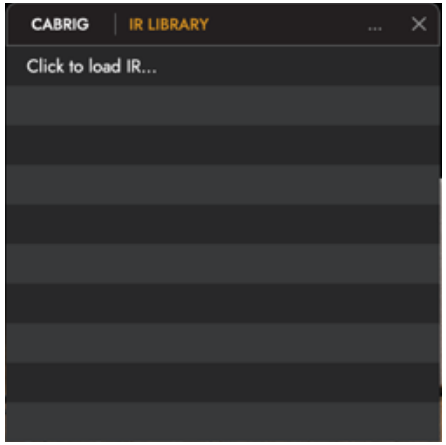
Toggle the axis of your microphone choice for a different tonal flavour. In general, OFF AXIS will darken your tone and shift the mid-range character.

Cabinets

Click on the Cab One or Cab Two box to open the speaker cabinet selection panel. Choose from 9 iconic Blackstar speaker cabinets and combos.

Custom IR Files

You can load your own IR files. Click on the Cab One or Cab Two box to open the speaker cabinet selection panel, then select the IR LIBRARY tab. You can also clear the IR LIBRARY or load IR files in the "…" menu.



Thanks to Blackstar's intelligent behind-the-scenes processing, each IR is automatically phase-aligned and optimized for smooth, hassle-free integration—no hassle, just tone.

Room

Select the size of the virtual room using the Size drop-down and the level of the room mics by adjusting the Room knob.

Adjust the stereo width of your room choice using the Width drop-down. These are emulations of three different micing techniques.

Mix Controls

Balance the levels of your cabs using the Channel Faders and craft your stereo image using the pan sliders. Use the solo buttons to isolate Cab One or Cab Two, or the mute buttons to silence them.

When an IR file is loaded, you can use the Phase button to flip the phase of the signal if desired.

Post FX Page


INPUT
VOLUME I
GAIN II
VOLUME II
BASS
MIDDLE
TREBLE
REVERB
MASTER
STBY
POWER
50/6L6
CH. II SELECT
CH. II VOICE
50W
SAG
ST. JAMES
ST. JAMES EL34
ST. JAMES 6L6
SPEED
DEPTH
SYNC
WIDTH
MANUAL
OFF
ON
HIGH
LOW
FLANGER
DEPT.10
TYPE
STANDARD
HARMONIC
TREMOLO
TIME
FEEDBACK
MIX
TONE
SATURATION
NORMAL
WIDE
PING PONG
DELAY
TAP
SIZE
HALL
PLATE
WIDE
REVERB

Post FX Page

The Post FX are placed after the virtual microphone has captured the sound from the speaker cabinet in the CabRig module. Therefore, these effects can be viewed as typical outboard effects sends rather than effects pedals in the FX loop of an amplifier. This allows for stereo effects to be applied to your sound regardless of your cab and mic panning configuration in the CabRig module.

Flanger

The Flanger pedal is a refined version of a staple four knob flanger unit, offering outrageous sweeps to subtle movement.

Speed and Depth controls affect the base Flanger sound alongside a Manual switch for toggling the range of the sweep itself. The Width control alters the stereo image.

NOTE: To sync the Flanger pedal to the tempo of your session, set the Sync switch to On. With Sync On, the Speed control adjusts the note division.

Tremolo

The two Tremolo types cover all bases of wobbly goodness:

- Standard: Classic valve bias style tremolo.
- Harmonic: Modulation based on frequency creates a subtle but addictive atmosphere to your tone.

Affect the Speed and Depth of the Tremolo pedal using the relevant controls and spread your sound into auto-pan territory with the Width knob.

NOTE: To sync the Tremolo pedal to the tempo of your session, set the Sync switch to On. With Sync On, the Speed control adjusts the note division.

Delay

The Time, Feedback and Mix controls adjust the standard aspects of the Delay pedal. With the Tone control set to half way, the Delay will be “linear” – where the repeats of the Delay are unfiltered. Setting the Tone control below halfway will produce “analogue” delay sounds and above halfway will produce “tape” delay sounds.

The Saturation control affects the signal level in the Delay engine, resulting in overdriven repeats at higher settings. This control will react differently depending on the input level into the Delay pedal.

NOTE: With the Mix control at maximum, the sound from the Delay pedal will only contain the Delay repeats. The dry, unprocessed signal will be muted.

NOTE: To sync the Delay pedal to the tempo of your session, set the Sync switch to On. With Sync On, the Speed control adjusts the note division.

Reverb

Two contrasting reverb types are selectable on the Reverb pedal:

- Hall: Dense and warm with a complex tail.
- Plate: Smooth, airy and versatile.

Further affect the sound of the Reverb pedal using the Size control to adjust the length of the reverb decay. Refine the blend of wet and dry signal of the Reverb using the Mix control. Use the Wide switch to add stereo width.

NOTE: With the Mix control at maximum, the sound from the Reverb pedal will only contain the wet Reverb. The dry, unprocessed signal will be muted.

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EQ Page

EQ Page

The EQ module is based on a renowned analogue rack unit famed for its natural sound and effectiveness in elevating electric guitar recordings. It features adjustable high and low cuts as well as four semi-parametric EQ bands.

Cuts

Fine tune the corner frequency of the Low Cut and Hi Cut using the control knobs and bypass each cut individually using the On/Off buttons.

NOTE: The Hi Cut control works in reverse to the Low Cut control. For the Hi Cut control, all the way clockwise results in no cut and fully anti-clockwise results in maximum cut.

Semi-Parametric Bands

Each of the Low, Low Mid, Hi Mid and Hi bands feature a four-way selector knob used to change the affected frequency range of the respective band. The fader beneath the four-way selector knob affects the amount of cut or boost applied to that band, from -15dB to +15dB. Each band can by activated and deactivated individually using the On/Off buttons underneath the faders.

Tuner

Overview

Clicking on the tuning fork icon in the Footer Bar will open the Tuner window. To close the Tuner window click on the tuning fork icon again, the 'X' button in the top left or anywhere on the background behind the Tuner window.

The Tuner is fully chromatic and features a tuning gauge, note display, tuning reference and mute toggle. The Tuner is capable of accurately tuning guitars in standard tuning as well as extended range.

Tuner Gauge and Note Display

When playing a note, the Tuner automatically detects the target note and displays this on the note display. The target note detection is affected by the tuning reference (see section on tuning reference for more information).

The gauge displays whether the note being played is flat (to the left of centre) or sharp (to the right of centre) compared to the detected target note and selected tuning reference. The gauge displays across a range of +/- 50 cents, with the centre being the correct tuning for the detected target note.

To tune, adjust the tuning of your instrument to move the amber LED strips on the tuning gauge towards the centre. When the tuning of your instrument is close to the target note, the centre LED strip will be lit in green. When the tuning of your instrument is stable and within +/- 1 cent of the detected target note, the centre LED strip will flash to indicate that the note being played is in tune.

If the detected target not is not the note you want to tune your instrument to, tune your instrument up or down until the furthest reaches (left or right) of the tuner gauge LED strips are reached. Continue tuning until the LED strips disappear and light up on the opposite side of the gauge. The note display will update to indicate the new detected target note.

Tuning Reference and Mute Toggle

The tuning reference is displayed underneath the note display and shows the tuning reference in Hz. The default and most common tuning reference is 440Hz.

To adjust the tuning reference, click on the tuning reference value and type in a new tuning reference, for example 432Hz. Press enter or click outside of the text box to confirm the new tuning reference. Adjusting the tuning reference to 432Hz will tune the note 'A4' 8Hz lower in pitch than the default of 440Hz.

NOTE: The range of the tuning reference that can be set is 420Hz to 460Hz. Entering a value outside of this range will snap to the nearest permitted value.

By default, opening the Tuner will mute the output of the plugin. However, if you want to hear the output of the plugin whilst tuning your instrument, simply click the 'M' mute button (located next to the tuning reference and under the note display) to toggle the mute off. To mute the output, press the mute button again.

MIDI (Standalone Only)

Overview
The St. James standalone version features MIDI support. You can use your favourite MIDI devices to change presets, or to custom map plugin parameters for easy control.

Setup
Connect a MIDI device to your computer, click the Settings icon at the top right of the Header Bar, click Audio Settings, then select your device from the Active MIDI Inputs section. You can select multiple devices at once.

Mapping and MIDI Learn
There are two ways to enter MIDI Learn:

- Click the MIDI port icon found at the top right of the Header Bar, select Enter MIDI Learn
- Right-click the parameter or preset you want to control, select Enter MIDI Learn (this will preselect the parameter or preset)

Here are some starting examples of how to map parameters or presets:

Mapping Drive Pedal footswitch
- Click the MIDI port icon, Enter MIDI Learn
- Click on the Drive Pedal footswitch to select it for MIDI Learn
- Press the controller on your MIDI device
- Click the MIDI port icon, Exit MIDI Learn

Mapping Amp Gain
- Right-click the Amp Gain knob, Enter MIDI Learn
- Move the controller on your MIDI device
- Exit MIDI Learn from the right-click menu

Mapping Delay Pedal Mix and Reverb Pedal Mix to one controller
- Right-click the Delay Pedal Mix knob, Enter MIDI Learn
- Move the controller on your MIDI device
- Click the Reverb Pedal Mix knob
- Move the same controller on your MIDI device
- Exit MIDI Learn from the right-click menu

Mapping the current Preset
- Click the MIDI port icon, Enter MIDI Learn
- Click the Preset box to select it for MIDI Learn
- Press the controller on your MIDI device
- Click the MIDI port icon, Exit MIDI Learn

Mapping other Presets
- Open the Preset Menu
- Right-click the Preset you want to map
- Enable MIDI Learn
- Press the controller on your MIDI device

MIDI Mappings Window
To open the MIDI Mappings window, click on the MIDI icon menu. All mapped events can be found here. You can further add, remove, or customise mappings.

Resetting Mappings
Resetting all existing MIDI Mappings can be done easily by clicking the MIDI port icon and selecting Reset MIDI Mapping.

BPM/Tempo (Standalone Only)

Overview

On the St. James standalone version, you can set a custom BPM (Beats Per Minute) value. The BPM value is saved when you save a Preset. BPM values will affect any pedals that have a Sync switch enabled.

There are two ways to enter MIDI Learn:

- In the Audio Settings menu
- On a pedal by enabling the Sync switch and right-clicking the Speed/Time knob

Setting BPM - Audio Settings

To access the BPM settings, click the Settings icon at the top right of the Header Bar, then click Audio Settings. To change the BPM you can either type in a value (40–300), click the +/-, or click Tap to tap the new tempo.

Setting BPM – Pedals

On any pedals with a Sync switch, first make sure Sync is enabled. You can quickly access the BPM by right-clicking the Speed/Time knob.

Changing the BPM this way will change the Internal BPM and affect all pedals with an enabled Sync switch.

Support

FAQs

For detailed answers on FAQs and other support, please visit: https://blackstarplugins.com/support/

macOS Requirements

For all of the below requirements, iLok License Manager and an internet connection are required to activate your plugin license.

Minimum

- Intel Core i3 Processor (i3-4130 / i5-2500 or higher)
- 8 GB of RAM
- Mac OSX 10.15 (Catalina)
- 700 MB of drive storage

Recommended

- Intel Core i5 Processor (i5-6600 or higher), also runs native on M Series Apple Silicon.
- 8 GB of RAM or more
- Mac OSX 11 (Big Sur)
- 700 MB of drive storage

Windows Requirements

For all of the below requirements, iLok License Manager and an internet connection are required to activate your plugin license.

Minimum

- AMD Quad -Core Processor (R3 2200G or higher) / Intel Core i3 Processor (i3-4130 / i5-2500 or higher)
- 8 GB of RAM
- Windows 8
- 350 MB of drive storage

Recommended

- AMD Ryzen 5 Processor (R5 1600 or higher) / Intel Core i5 Processor (i5-6600 or higher)
- 8 GB of RAM or more
- Windows 10
- 350 MB of drive storage

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