

# User Guide



VIRTUAL GUITARIST®

# SPARKLE

*by Peter Gorges*

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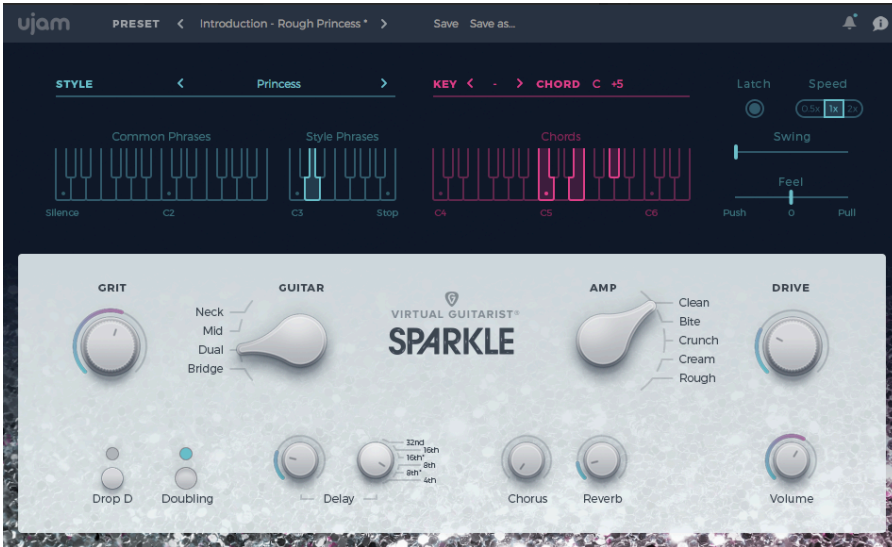
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## Welcome to Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE

We hope you will enjoy this powerful addition to your musical palette, and we thank you for becoming a part of the UJAM community of music creators!



## About the Virtual Guitarist Series

The original Virtual Guitarist series was a best-selling virtual instrument developed by Wizoo and distributed by Steinberg. The last version, Virtual Guitarist 2, was discontinued in 2007.

Since then, people have been asking for a Virtual Guitarist 3.

In 2013, the core team behind the original Virtual Guitarist gathered again, and launched *Virtual Guitarist IRON* – specialized on Power Chords – in December 2015. After *AMBER*, which specializes in strummed acoustic guitar, *SPARKLE* is the third instrument of the series, which is not just an evolution of the original, but a whole new generation of Virtual Guitarists.

With an all-new concept and technology Virtual Guitarist instruments now offer vastly expanded realism, musical and sonic capabilities with the same ease and speed of use the legacy instruments were so famous for.

## You and Us

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* was built *by* musicians *for* musicians. We at UJAM are a pretty diverse bunch – from DJ to guitarist to weekend producer to Oscar-awarded Hollywood composer. We build every product for ourselves, and, like you, we're all users of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* too.

That means that before we even start developing, a lot of thought and discussion goes into finding out what you, the user, will expect from the product, what problem it solves, which controls we can remove to make the product more inviting and simpler, which hurdles we can move out of the way between you and a perfect track.

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* is optimized for one clear, powerful purpose: To produce great-sounding guitar tracks without distracting you from the complex endeavor that producing a song is.

We hope that *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* transpires that philosophy in everything you do with it.

Naturally, we're always open to new ideas and critique, and you are always encouraged and welcome to talk to us:

- Send us an email: [support@virtualguitarist.com](mailto:support@virtualguitarist.com)
- Visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/vrtlguitarist>
- Catch us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/vrtlguitarist/>

## Looking for Quick Help?

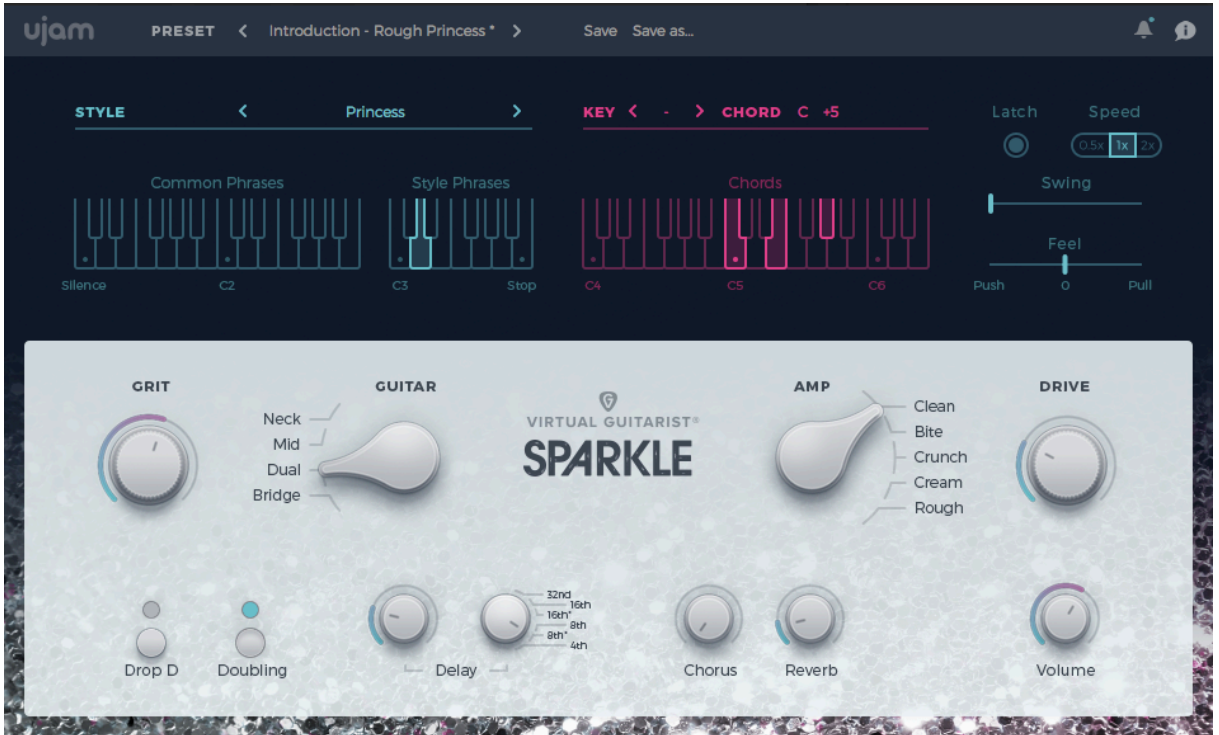
If you're just looking to figure out something quick, there are three ways to get there:

- The *Interactive Overview* is a screenshot of the user interface. Clicking on a control there takes you straight to its explanation.
- The *Quick Reference* has super-short explanations for every control.
- The *Walkthrough* is a guided tour where you'll try every control on the *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* screen once – the quickest hands-on experience possible.

*If you're looking for in-depth explanations of all functions and controls, head straight for the Reference Guide further down.*

## Interactive Overview

Clicking on any control on the image below will take you to the reference explanation of this particular feature.



## Quick Reference

Area	Parameter	Explanation
<b>Menu Bar</b>	PRESET	Click name to open menu for browsing and loading a new <i>Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE</i> preset
	Save	When editing a user preset, click to save your preset, replacing the previous version.
	Save as	Click to save your preset under a different name and – optionally – assign a category.
	Bell icon	Will illuminate for notifications such as product updates.
	Speech bubble	About Page – information about licensing status, portal to other services such as website, this manual or product support.
<b>Style Bar</b>	STYLE	Loads a Style (collection of 11 phrases, accessible via the Style Phrases section of the keyboard).
	KEY	Allows you to set a fixed key, limiting the selection of possible chords to that scale.
	CHORD	Displays the chord currently selected by MIDI notes or by clicking a key in the Chords range.
<b>Interactive Keyboard</b>	Common Phrases	Keys in this area select generically useful phrases that can be combined with Style Phrases.
	Style Phrases	Keys in this area select phrases of the currently selected Style.
	Chords	Keys in this area will tell <i>Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE</i> what to play – featuring built-in chord detection.
<b>Performance Section</b>	Latch	When active, <i>Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE</i> will keep playing independently of keys held, until you deactivate Latch or press the Stop Key.
	Speed	Lets you switch the playback tempo to half, normal or double time.
	Swing	Controls syncopation (often also called Shuffle). Slide to the right to syncopate off-beats.
	Feel	Controls timing. Set to left of center for a “pushing” feel, to the right for a laid-back (“dragging”) feel.

## Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE

Area	Parameter	Explanation
<b>Guitar &amp; Amp</b>	GRIT	Adds a gritty – overdriven, high-mid boost – component to the guitar signal.
	GUITAR	Selects a pickup or combination of pickups.
	AMP	<i>Chooses a guitar amp/speaker combination.</i>
	DRIVE	Dials in amp overdrive for a crunchier sound.
<b>Guitar Mod</b>	Drop D	Tunes the strings of the entire guitar down by two semitones.
	Doubling	Creates a drastically fuller and wider sound by virtual double-tracking.
<b>Effect Section</b>	Delay Mix	Dials in a delay effect.
	Delay Type	Selects one of 6 guitar-optimized delay types, ordered by note resolution (delay repetition length).
	Chorus	Adds a guitar-optimized Chorus effect that goes from slight animation to a 12-string (without octaves) effect. Turn clockwise to increase rate and depth.
	Reverb	Dials in the ambience of a guitar recording room in a professional recording studio.
	Volume	Controls the master output volume.
<b>Wheels</b>	Pitchbend Wheel	Bends the overall pitch by $\pm 2$ semitones.
	Modulation Wheel	Gradually adds palm-muting as you turn up the wheel. The maximum position will produce toneless dead note strumming.



## What Is Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE?

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* is a software instrument doubling as a professional session guitarist, playing electric rhythm guitar on a top-notch instrument, hooked up to hand-selected vintage amps and cabinets, and performing exactly as you wish, while giving you full control over musical performance and mix.

### Virtual Guitarist vs. A Real Guitarist

If we denied the huge differences between a software and a guitarist, you shouldn't trust us.

If you have all the money, time and patience in the world plus a recording studio and a professional guitarist available, we would always recommend: Go for it!

But for most people, most of the time, that's not the case:

- Maybe you have no access to a (professional) guitarist.
- Maybe you like to work out ideas totally by yourself, taking the time, playing with ideas.
- Maybe you're a guitarist but want to quickly lay down a track without the hassle of tuning your guitar and setting up a recording session.
- Maybe you want to use MIDI-controlled guitar tracks as source material for electronic manipulation.

In these and many others scenarios, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* is a great alternative to the real thing.

### What Is “SPARKLE” About?

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* focuses on clean to crunchy electric guitar strumming (chord, octaves, single notes), a rhythmic staple in any kind of music spanning a range of over 50 years from the 60s to today.

It offers you a wide range of playing styles and sound characters from clean and funky to fat and crunchy.

On top of just chords, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* also offers single-note and octave variations of many styles – even slides – for a maximum of musical variation.

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* lets you produce professional guitar tracks in no time, with minimal effort. It combines the virtues of a professional guitarist, a custom premium-quality electric guitar, perfectly tuned, with fresh strings, selected vintage amp/cabinet combinations, and the most important sound shaping tools as used in recording studios, to design the guitar sound exactly as you need it right now.

## Why So Few Controls?

We are all musicians and we know that the time for learning a user interface is better spent making music.

Therefore, the user interface of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* is designed for maximum ease of use and minimum distraction.

It is also fail-proof in that no matter how you set up the controls of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*, the result will never be musically or technically wrong – without sacrificing your creative freedom.

You can trust in the fact that tracks produced with *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* are realistic, professionally produced guitar tracks.

## Trial and Authorization

We have designed the entire process of downloading, activating and authorizing *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* with a strong focus on simplicity. It's important to us to make it as easy as possible for you to get your hands on *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* – and make it your own if you like it.

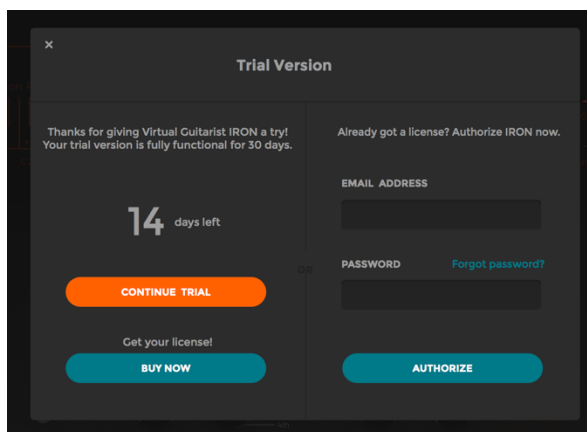
### Trying, Buying, Authorizing

We only want you to spend money if you're absolutely happy with *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*. Therefore, we grant you a 30-day trial period, during which the plugin will run without any limitation.

When opening *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* during the trial period (or when clicking the *Authorize* button in the menu bar), you will see this overlay which

- displays information about your trial status,
- provides a link to the Virtual Guitarist website where you can purchase a permanent *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* license after or during the trial period,
- allows you to enter your credentials and authorize *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* once you've purchased it.

## Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE



*Trial Screen of SPARKLE's sister instrument Virtual Guitarist IRON*

### Where to Put the Content

The actual guitar goodness of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* – the audio content – is packed into a so-called blob file named VG-SPARKLE.blob which is about 3.9 GB big.

You can keep the blob file anywhere you like (e.g. on a separate content drive). During standard installation, it will be put into the following locations on your system drive:

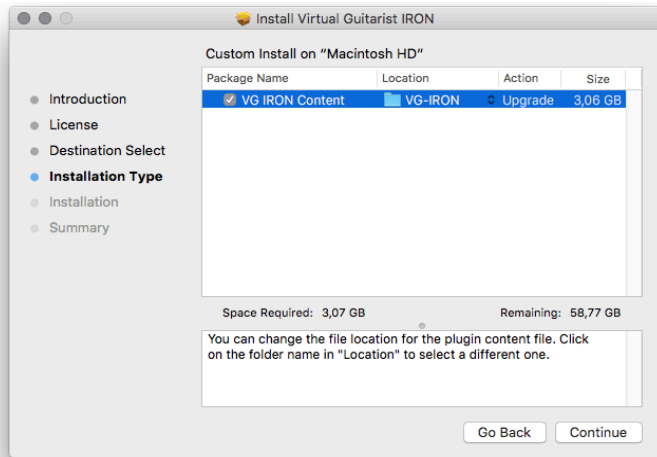
OS X	/Library/Application Support/UJAM/VG-SPARKLE
Windows	C:\ProgramData\UJAM\VG-SPARKLE <i>(assuming your system drive is C)</i>

### Installing to a different drive on OS X

If you wish to install the blob file onto a separate drive, you can set a different content installation folder in the installer.

- Open the installer and follow the procedure to step “Installation Type”
- Click “VG SPARKLE Content” to select it – as shown in the image below – and follow the instructions in the installer.

## Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE

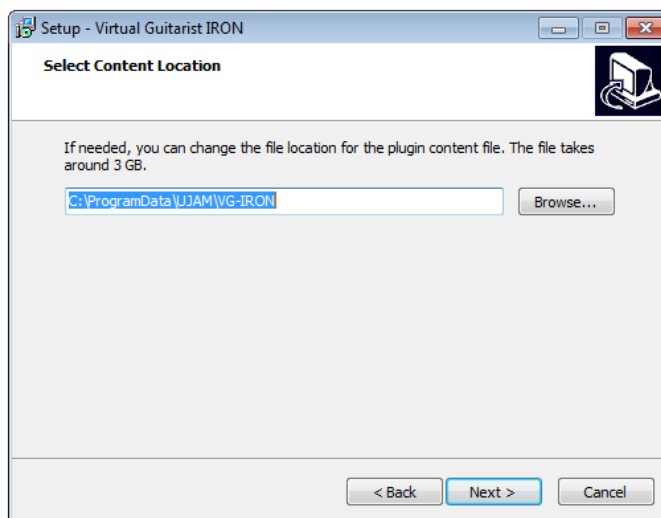


*OS X Installer – Change Content Location (shown for VG IRON here)*

### Installing to a different drive on Windows

The Windows installer will ask you if you want to install the content to a different directory.

*On Windows, you can also set a different location for the plug-in, however we recommend to leave this untouched unless you have a good reason.*



## *Windows Installer – Change Content Location*

### **Changing the content location after installation**

You can always change the content location after installation by just moving the VG-SPARKLE.blob file:

- Move your file to the desired location (different folder or different drive)
- Launch your DAW and open *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*. It will present you with a dialog asking for the file location. Simply point to the new location of the VG-SPARKLE.blob file – done.

## **Controller Hardware for Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE**

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* requires MIDI note input for playing and recording musical performances, and optionally Pitchbend, Modulation and Sustain Pedal data for added real-time variation.

If you have a MIDI controller (keyboard), this will be the easiest and most straightforward MIDI input method and it's most fun as this way you control your guitarist in real-time.

Of course you can also control *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* by using MIDI step sequencers or by entering MIDI notes manually into MIDI tracks.

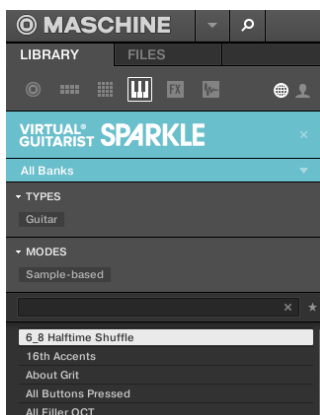
*For getting to know Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE and for testing purposes, you can also use the Interactive Keyboard in the top half of the Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE window. This works best with the Latch function enabled.*

## **Native Instruments KONTROL Integration**

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* is fully NKS-compatible for superior integration with Native Instruments KONTROL technology.

This means that when using MASCHINE or any of the KONTROL-S keyboards, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* will offer additional functionality:

- Native Map: You can edit *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*'s parameters using the controller knobs.
- Light Guide: On KONTROL-S keyboards, LEDs with color codes guide you to the Common Phrases and Style Phrases ranges as well as the Chords range.
- You can browse *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* presets in the Native Browser, including categories.



Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE in the MASCHINE Browser

These features are available in the KONTROL software as well as in all popular DAWs that feature KONTROL integration, such as Ableton Live, Steinberg Cubase/Nuendo and Apple Logic.

## Start Playing!

Before we look at things in more depth, let's first explore how to play *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*, as that may be all you need for now.

The top half of the *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* window is dedicated to the guitarist's performance – in other words: *what* is played. Here, you'll find two musical core aspects you can control: Phrasing and Notes. The Interactive Keyboard is split between a Phrase Range (left) and a Chord Range (right).

The basic principle is simple:

- When you press keys from C4\* upwards, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* will start playing a phrase with the chord determined by the notes you play. When you release the key(s), playback will stop.
- MIDI notes below C4 don't represent musical keys but switches varying the phrasing of your player in real-time. This is a powerful way of making your performance interesting and dynamic.
- By turning up the Modulation wheel, you can morph from normal to shorter to dead notes – another powerful way of varying phrases.

If you know these things and can switch presets, you know all you need to start producing with *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*.

\*C4 is one octave above middle C. The MIDI note number is 72. Some DAWs refer to it as C5.

## Walkthrough

*Note: Keywords printed **italic** refer to parameter or section names you will also find elsewhere in this manual.*

If you're pressed for time or if you already know the basic concepts behind Virtual Guitarists, then this Walkthrough may be all you need for now, and you can come back later to look up deeper explanations as you need them.

We will take a quick tour across all controls of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*. After this you will have a good basic understanding of the instrument and how to use it.

*We assume you have Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE opened in your DAW. Ideally you have a MIDI controller connected, otherwise use the Interactive Keyboard.*

### Make a Sound and Learn about Chords and Key

- Play C4 or a higher note. Your guitarist will start playing. It will display the current chord in the **CHORD** display which is part of the **Style Bar** above the **Interactive Keyboard** in the upper half of the *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* window.

*The Interactive Keyboard also doubles as a display for the MIDI notes Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE is receiving. The keyboard is divided and properly labeled with the functions of the corresponding note ranges.*

- By playing more than one note, you can play more complex chords. *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* recognizes 2-note intervals and 3-4 note chords. Play C-G-B for example to play a Cmaj7 chord, or C-F for a Csus4. The current chord is always visible in the **CHORD** display above the keyboard.
- Set the **KEY** value in the **Style Bar** to D to force *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* to play only chords in the D scale. Set different keys while playing the same notes. This will change the chords played – watch the **CHORD** display too.

### Try the Presets

- At the top of the *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* window you can load presets. A preset is always a complete setting of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*, i.e. it will change the performance as well as the guitar and effects. At this point, just go through different presets to get an impression of the musical and sonic palette of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*. Optionally, try different **Style Phrases** by additionally selecting keys in the C#1 – B b 3 range.

## Tell Your Player What to Play

- Activate the *Latch* button right next to the *Style Bar*. Now *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* will keep playing even if you don't hold a note. Let it keep playing.
- Now play a note in the correspondingly labeled *Style Phrases* range of the keyboard, C3 – B3. Go from C3 upwards and see how the phrasing gets more intense. These are the phrases you can exchange by loading different *Styles*. Let's do just that now:
- Load different *Styles* using the *STYLE* menu to the left-hand side of the *Style Bar*. You will notice that your guitarist masters a vast range of playing techniques and musical genres.
- Now try keys in the C#1 – B2 range, labeled *Common Phrases*. These phrases will always be there no matter which *Style* you've loaded, and can be freely combined with the *Style Phrases*.
- Interrupt your player temporarily by holding the *Silence key* (C1). It will continue when you play another note. Now stop your player by pressing or clicking the *Stop key* (B3).

*You can use the Silence key in Latch Off mode too to mute your phrase but keep it running. This is different from lifting the key and playing it again as that will restart the phrase.*

## More Performance Tweaking Fun

- Keep *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* playing and slowly turn up the *Swing* control right next to the *Interactive Keyboard*. As you will notice, this will delay the off-beats until the phrasing resembles a ternary feel that is common in Swing music (hence the name), often also called Shuffle or Groove depending on your DAW.
- The Speed switch lets you set *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* to half time or double time.
- Now experiment with the *Feel* slider right next to the *Swing* control. It makes subtle changes to the timing, creating a rushed or relaxed feel. Play a drum loop along for better comparison.

## Find Your Guitar Sound

Let's look at the bottom half of the *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* window. Here you set up guitar and amp, sound character and effects.

- Set your player to *Latch* and keep playing while you tweak controls.
- First, play with the *GRIT* rotary switch. Notice how it changes the character of the guitar sound, adding just what the name says.



- Now experiment with the *GUITAR* rotary switch. It offers additional variety by letting you select between different guitar pickups/combinations, from the full-bodied Neck to the more present Bridge.
- The *AMP* knob lets you choose five different combinations of guitar amps and speakers, each with its distinct sound character, and with increasing “crunch” from top to bottom.
- The *DRIVE* knob finally lets you overdrive the amp for a crunchier sound.
- Play with different combinations of the *GRIT, GUITAR, AMP and DRIVE* controls. This way you get a good impression of the sonic range of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*.

## More Sound Tweaking Fun

- Activate the *Drop D* button at the lower left. It tunes the strings of the guitar (not your actual notes played) down by two semitones. If you play the note D4 and push the *Drop D* button, you’ll notice it extends the note range to the lower D.
- Keep playing and push the *Doubling* button. This adds a second guitar player and places both at the outer positions of the stereo image for a dramatically more vivid and powerful sound. This works particularly well in scenarios where you use a lot of high frequencies from *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*.

## Playing With the Built-In Effects

We strongly encourage you to use your go-to audio processing tools when perfecting your guitar tracks. However, in order to save you time and create a more interesting range of instantly accessible presets, we have included the three most important effects right on board: delay, chorus and reverb.

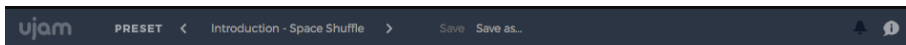
- Turn up the left *Delay* knob to dial in an echo effect. To match the delay to your song, use the right knob to select the note resolution that works best for your song’s timing and feel.
- Turn up the *Chorus* knob to add sweet animation and depth to the sound.
- The *Reverb* adds the ambience of a studio recording room to the guitar sound. If you’re not using external plug-ins, you should always dial in a little reverb, otherwise the guitar sound might be too dry and artificial.

# Reference Guide

In the following part of this user guide, every feature of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* will be explained in depth.

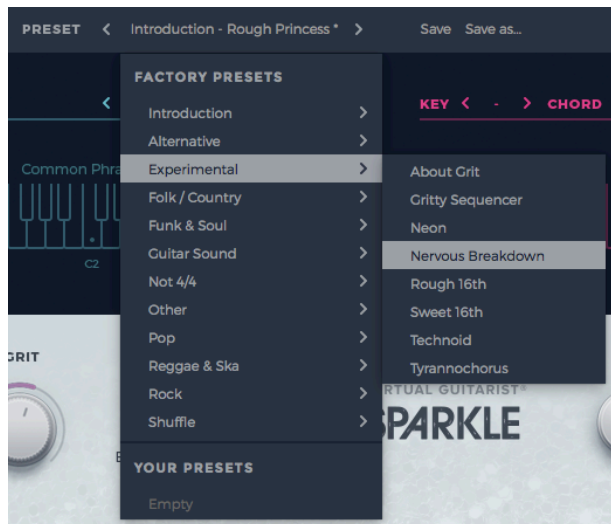
## Menu Bar

The top bar of the *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* interface lets you load and save presets. It also contains important management functions from checking your trial status to contacting support.



*Menu Bar*

## Loading Presets



*Preset Browser*

A preset in *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* is a complete setting of the entire plug-in including *Style* selection and all control values. Here's how you can switch presets:

- Advance to the next preset by clicking one of the arrows left and right of the *PRESET* name.

## Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE

- Click on the name of the current preset in the *PRESET* menu to open the *Preset Browser* (see image above).

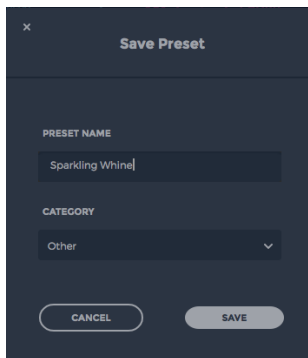
As you can see, the *Preset Browser* is a clean, organized list of presets, categorized by simple musical terms.

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* ships with over 50 Factory Presets. Take your time exploring them, as this is the quickest way of getting an overview of what *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* can do!

*If you have freshly installed Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE, there will only be Factory Presets. User Presets will appear once you have saved your first own preset.*

### Save and Save as ...

You can of course save your own *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* presets. You can name them and assign a category too.



*“Save as ...” Dialog*

The difference between the *Save* and *Save as ...* buttons:

- *Save* replaces the preset with the changes you just made.
- *Save as ...* lets you assign a name and a category, so does not replace the current preset.

*Factory Presets can only be saved using Save as ..., they cannot be replaced.*

### Moving, renaming and deleting presets

You can move, rename or delete Presets directly in your operating system. You will find *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* Presets in these folders (replace “USERNAME” by your actual username):

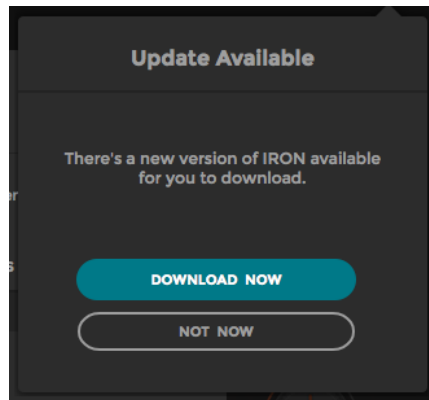
## Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE

<b>OS X</b>	Factory Presets	/Library/Application Support/UJAM/VG-SPARKLE/Presets
	User Presets	/Users/USERNAME/Library/Application Support/UJAM/VG-SPARKLE/Presets
<b>Windows</b>	Factory Presets	C:\ProgramData\UJAM\VG-SPARKLE\Presets
	User Presets	C:\Users\USERNAME\AppData\Roaming\UJAM\VG-SPARKLE\Presets
	<i>(assuming your system drive is C)</i>	

### Bell Icon – Notifications

When you launch *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*, it will automatically check for updates. If an update is available, the bell icon will be illuminated.

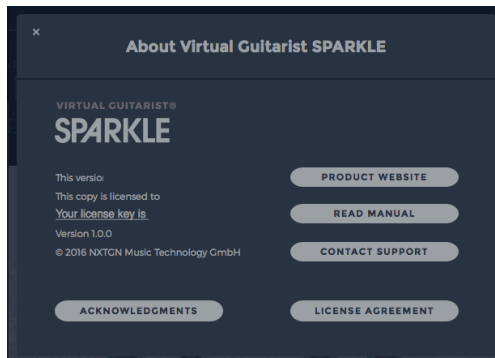
Clicking it will open a dialog that lets you choose whether you want to download the update now or later.



*Update Dialog (from sister instrument VG IRON)*

*We built this mechanism to save you the pain of manually checking for updates in order to keep up with the latest improvements of Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE.*

## Speech Bubble Icon – About Page



*About Page*

The **About Page** is the place for information about your version and licensing status of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*. It is also a portal to other services:

- **Product Website** takes you to [www.virtualguitarist.com](http://www.virtualguitarist.com) with regularly updated news, videos, tutorials and other helpful stuff.
- **Read Manual** opens this document.
- **Contact Support** lets you report problems and ask questions.
- **Acknowledgments** – the people behind *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*.
- **License Agreement** – legalese stuff for gourmets.

## Style Bar

In the Style Bar, you choose a **STYLE** (selection of phrases) and a **KEY**. It also contains the **CHORD** display.



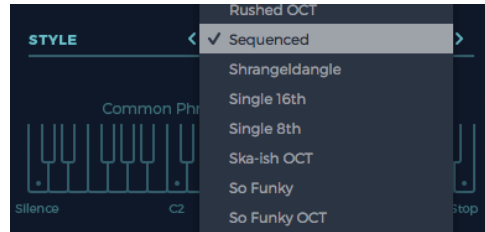
*Style Bar*

## STYLE

A **STYLE** in *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* is the counterpart to a particular phrasing style that you ask your guitarist to play. Styles are the “rhythmic vocabulary” of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*, which is why we have included over 50 of them.

## Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE

You can select styles by either clicking the small arrows to skip to the previous/next style, or by clicking the name of the current *Style* to bring up the full list.



### Style List

Every *Style* is a set of eleven phrases that you can access via the *Style Phrases* area of the Interactive or MIDI keyboard.

*In most Styles, Phrases are ordered by intensity/density from left to right.*

### OCT Styles

Many styles exist in an additional variation marked by the name extension “OCT”, an abbreviation that stands for “Octave” here. In these styles, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE doesn’t play chords, but single-note octaves.*

In these Styles, no matter which chord or interval you play, Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE will always play the root key only.

### Single Note Styles

The two styles “Single 16<sup>th</sup>” and “Single 8<sup>th</sup>” provide a useful collection of phrases played only with single notes. Like with the OCT styles, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* will always play the root key only.

## KEY



This parameter lets you define a Key (scale). With a pre-selected Key, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* offers a reduced chord selection consisting only of chords that work well in this key.

Key played		C#		E♭			F#		G#		B♭	
	C		D		E	F		G		A		B
Chord	C	Csus4	D	E♭	E	F	Gsus4	G	Gsus4	A	B♭	B

*Exemplary chord mapping for the key of C*

Setting a Key is useful if you want a simplified method of playing chords or if you're controlling *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* from a non-keyboard controller and have only so and so many pads or buttons assignable.

## CHORD

*CHORD* is not a parameter but a display. It shows the chord corresponding to the keys you play (see also **Fingering Scheme on page 27**).

## Interactive Keyboard

The interactive keyboard is both a display of received MIDI notes and an actually functional on-screen keyboard. The left side of the keyboard doesn't make any sound by itself. Here, you control the performance of the guitarist by switching between 34 different phrases. 11 of these phrases are set by the style, the rest are always available.

*Note: The on-screen keyboard does not get recorded by your DAW. Use a MIDI keyboard or – if available – the DAW's own on-screen keyboard for this purpose.*



*Interactive Keyboard*

## Common Phrases



The lower left of the MIDI keyboard (C #1 – B2) is reserved for a collection of so-called *Common Phrasings*. These phrasings are “hard-wired” and won’t change with the *STYLE* selection.

*Common Phrasings* complement the *Style Phrasings* by phrasings that are more generic and applicable to multiple contexts.

*Phrasings are what you make of them. Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE lets you switch phrasings in real-time without interrupting the performance. That’s a great way to create dynamic and interesting phrasings of your own. For example, lead from a bridge to a chorus with the build-up Phrasings 19 and 20.*



Reference of Common Phrases

#	Group	MIDI Note	Description	Bars
1	Sustained	C #1	Sustained Chord Downstroke	4
2		D1	Sustained Chord Upstroke	4
3		D #1	Single Note Downstroke	4
4		E1	Single Note Upstroke	4
5	1/2 & 1/4	F1	Half Note Chords	2
6	Sustained	F #1	Quarter Note Chords	2
7	Legato Rhythm	G1	Rhythm 3-5 Sustained	2
8		G #1	Rhythm 1 2+ 3	2
9		A1	Rhythm 1 2 2+ 3	2
10		A #1	Easy Rhythm	2
11		B1	Easy Rhythm 8th	2
12		C2	Easy Rhythm Syncopated	2
13		C #2	Easy Rhythm 16th	2
14	Rhythm with Stops	D2	Rhythm with Stops	2
15		D #2	Songwriter Rhythm with Stops	2
16		E2	Rhythm with Backbeat Stops	2
17	Accents	F2	Offbeat 2 & 4	2
18		F #2	Stopped 4th	2
19	Build-Ups	G2	Build-Up 8th	1
20		G #2	Build-Up 8th Chord Opening	2
21	Intros	A2	Single Note Intro /Fall	1
22		A #2	Chord Intro 1	1
23		B2	Chord Intro 2	1

Style Phrases



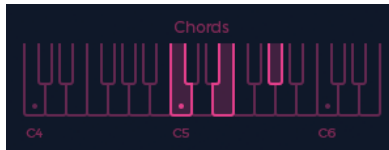
Keys in this area select phrases of the currently selected *Style*.

Phrases in the *Style* range start with the lowest density/intensity on C3 and get more agitated as you move towards B ♭ 3.

You could generally work your way through a song going from left (intro, verse) to right (chorus), but of course this greatly depends on the style and your song. Just know you always have 11 different rhythms plus the *Common Phrases* at your immediate disposal.

*The highest key of the Style Range – B3 – is the Stop key. In Latch mode, pressing this key will stop playback (whereas the Silent key (C1) will keep playback going, just with an empty phrase.*

## Chord Range



Keys in the Chord range function almost like a regular musical keyboard: You start and stop the guitarist's performance and you determine the chords played. It's like playing keyboard, except that instead of playing notes you select the chord the guitarist will perform as a phrase.

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* features a built-in chord recognition that makes it very easy to play even complex chord progressions. You can play major chords with just one finger and other chords using two or three. The following paragraph will tell you exactly which chords are supported and how to play them.

## Fingering Scheme

The chord recognition scheme of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* is pretty straightforward and intuitive – it basically plays the chord you play, or the next possible chord if that's not available. But there's something more to it which we'll look at in this section.

Actually, there are two ways to tell *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* which chord to play – actually playing that chord (or a subset of it), or playing an interval.

### Chords

The schematic on the next page shows you which chords you can play with *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*.

Here's how to read it:

- A black dot on the stylized keyboard means “required”,

## Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE

- a grey dot means “optional” – for example, if you use the MIDI file of a synth pad to control *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*, MIDI chords including these additional keys will still play the right chord.

### Intervals

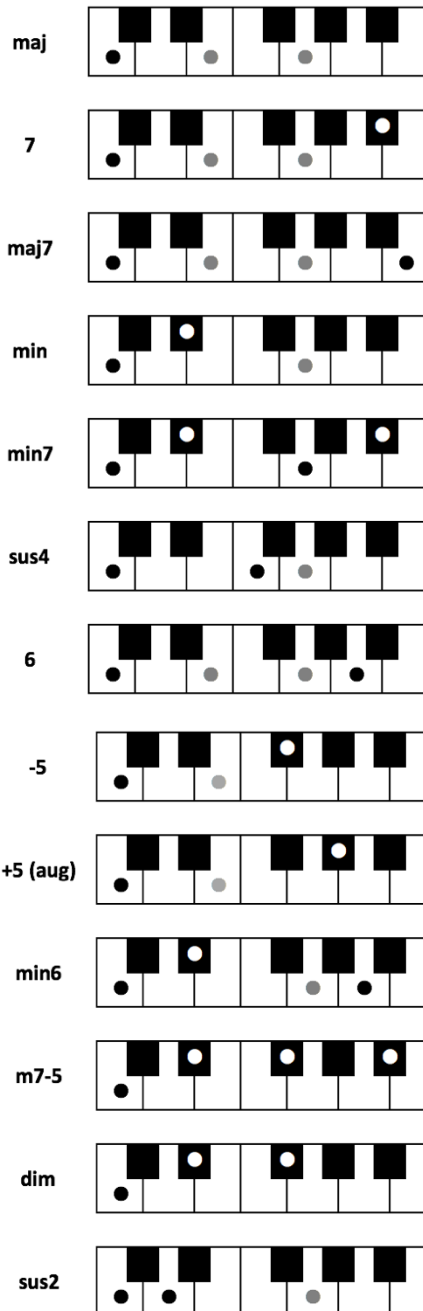
*Optionally, Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE also lets you play intervals and interprets matching chords.*

*For example, when you play C and D at the same time, Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE will interpret this as a sus2 chord.*

This is particularly useful if you use Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE in tandem with Virtual Guitarist IRON.

Semitones	Interval	Chord recognized
2	2 <sup>nd</sup>	sus2
3	min 3 <sup>rd</sup>	min
5	4 <sup>th</sup>	sus4
6	dim 5 <sup>th</sup>	dim
8	aug 5 <sup>th</sup>	+5
9	maj 6 <sup>th</sup>	6
10	min 7 <sup>th</sup>	7
11	maj 7 <sup>th</sup>	maj7

Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE



## Performance Controls

Performance controls let you adjust the musical performance of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* to your song's feel and tempo.



*Performance Controls*

### Latch

When *Latch* is activated, once you press a key in the Chord range, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* will keep playing until you press the *Stop* key.

When *Latch* is off, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* only plays as long as you hold at least one key in the Chord range. *Latch* is convenient when testing or setting up sounds, and is more practical if you build a track by manually entering notes into your MIDI track.

*You can use an optional sustain pedal as a temporary Latch. Lifting the sustain pedal unlatches any notes that are no longer held, even if the Latch switch is still on.*

### Speed

The *Speed* switch lets you halve (0.5x) or double (2x) *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*'s tempo relative to the song tempo.

This way you can extend the style range to 4<sup>th</sup>- or 32<sup>nd</sup>-note-based, or have *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* styles play at normal grooves even if you use extremely low or high song tempi.

### Swing

This function, often also called "Shuffle", delays the off-beats. *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* will automatically switch the *Swing* resolution to 8<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> note depending on the selected *Style*.

## Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE

*At maximum position, the off-beat will have the same timing as the last note of a triplet.*

Use this control to match the timing of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* to a shuffled or triplet-based song.

*Not all phrases contain 8<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> note off-beats. In these cases, the Swing control has no effect.*

### Feel

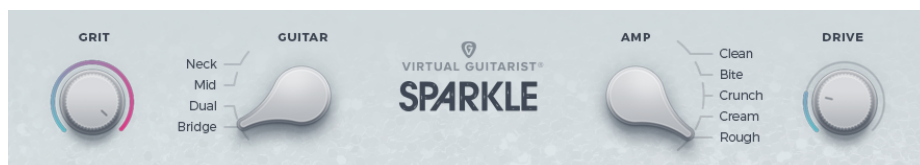
You can tweak the feel of your guitarist's performance either towards relaxed or rushed using this control:

- As you move the slider to the left, the player will play off-beats slightly earlier, leading to a rushed or driving feel.
- In the opposite direction, off-beats will be slightly delayed, creating a laid-back or relaxed feel.

*Feel has a stronger effect when listened to against other tracks. If you're not sure what it does, try playing a drum loop along with *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* and tweak the control. You will notice that the off-beats will play earlier or later than the off-beat drums (usually hi-hats or snares) as you turn the control.*

*To create advanced doubling, create two instances of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*, pan both extremely left and right, set different GUITAR and AMP settings and set the FEEL slightly differently.*

## GUITAR & AMP Section



*GUITAR & AMP Section*

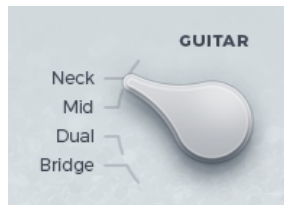
This area is where you tweak the sound of your guitar. *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* offers a large range of sounds from warm, soft and round to brilliant and sparkling.

## GRIT



Named for exactly what it does, this knob lets you dial in an overdriven component with a high-mid boost, creating a beefier sound that cuts through in a mix without you having to overdrive the entire signal. *GRIT* works well with all *GUITAR*, *AMP* and *DRIVE* settings.

## GUITAR



Name	Character	Use ...
Neck	The pickup with the thickest, roundest sound. Nice low end and warmth.	... for mixes where the guitar has a bit of space and doesn't have to stick through lots of other mid-range rhythmic tracks.
Mid	In the middle between Neck and Bridge – just enough bite and warmth.	... pretty much everywhere where you need a guitar that's not too dominant on either side of the frequency range.
Dual	Glassy, with attenuation in the high mids ("scooped"), therefore not too sharp.	... wherever you need a silky, glassy sound, for example in disco and all funky styles, particularly clean to lightly crunched.
Bridge	Cuts right through, accented mids with not too much bass.	... when you need the guitar to be clearly audible to dominant, particularly with higher Crunch levels.

Those descriptions provide just guidelines and technical info. We encourage you to always try out all switch positions for any given track.

## AMP



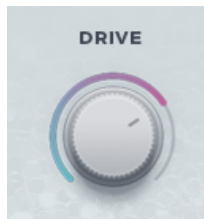
This knob lets you select from five carefully selected and set up combinations of typical guitar amps and speakers, providing a large range of rhythm guitar sounds at the turn of a single control:

Knob position	Character	Use ...
Clean	D.I. signal without any amp character. As you turn up <i>DRIVE</i> , more of the signal gets routed into a speaker cabinet.	... simply when you want a clean signal, or when you want to send the <i>Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE</i> signal into an external amp.
Bite	We won't mention the F-word, but it's a typical combo amp with a 1×12 speaker cabinet built in the U.S. – lots of bite and presence.	... for a wide range of applications from clean to crunch, when you want the guitar to cut through.
Crisp	The British say “crisps” when they mean hearty and crunchy potato chips, and that's what this British Class-A valve amp is all about.	... whenever you're after well-defined guitar sound with just enough roughness that still covers a wide frequency range.
Cream	A creamier variation of Crisp in that it gives up a bit of presence in return for added warmth and roundness, partly provided by a larger speaker cabinet.	... when you're not as much after presence and bite than after beef and a saturated character with average crunch.
Rough	The proverbial British rock amp with a very unique character in the clean-to-crunch range, with a typical British	... for that crunchy roughness that only a big stack delivers, serving a wide range of styles



	roughness. We won't say the M-word, still.	
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## DRIVE



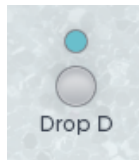
This knob adjusts the overdrive level and therefore the amount of distortion of the guitar signal. The effect is very different depending on the *AMP* setup you've chosen.

Naturally, bottom positions of the switch will work better with higher *DRIVE* settings, whereas the top ones are better suited for creating clean guitar characters.

## Guitar Modes

The two buttons in the lower left allow you to re-tune or duplicate the guitar.

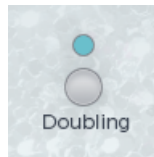
### Drop D



This switch lets you activate what guitarists know as Drop (or Drop D) tuning. In *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* all strings get tuned down by 2 semitones, the lowest string plays D.

Therefore, when Drop D is activated (pitch is unaffected, of course), *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* sounds a little thicker and warmer in general.

## Doubling



Activating this button has the same effect as double-tracking your guitar.

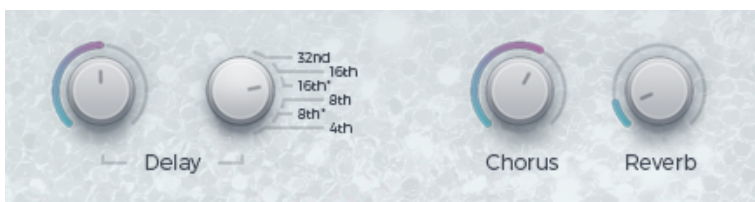
Technically, *Doubling* adds a second guitarist and places both at the outer positions of the stereo spectrum.

*We recommend to use Doubling with care – it's great to give more weight to tracks that are a key foundation of your song. On the other hand, a mix gets mushy pretty quick if you have two or three doubled guitar tracks playing at the same time.*

Two handy tips:

- To create the impression of two guitarists playing even more differently, instead of using *Doubling* try setting up two instances of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* with different settings of *GRIT*, *GUITAR*, *AMP* and *DRIVE*, put them at the ends of the panoramic spectrum and pick different phrases for both.
- Add a second instance with a sharper sound to a doubled full-bodied setting and place it in the middle, and you have a very effective way of controlling the presence of that guitar track in the mix by adjusting the single track against the doubled one.

## Effect Section



*Effect Section*

*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* features three guitar-typical on-board effects. They provide for a greater sonic palette and allow you to create presets that sound perfect “out of the box” – because often you need that little reverb or delay for a particular sound.

*The onboard effects are not meant to replace dedicated plug-in or outboard effect processors, and we encourage you to route Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE into external plugins or outboard gear if you need more advanced tweaking options.*

## Delay



*Delay Section*

The Delay effect in *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* offers five different, guitar-optimized stereo delay presets from 32<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> note resolution, as well as a mix control (left knob).

*From Slapback echoes (32<sup>th</sup> setting) to rhythmic duplication using the longer resolutions – subtle delay adds width and ambience to Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE without adding too much wash to the mix.*

## Chorus



Adds a guitar-optimized Chorus effect. As you turn the knob, the chorus will go from a subtle slow flanging to a fast, deep, almost twelve-string effect.

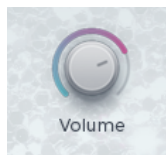
*Try the Chorus particularly for adding a bit of detuning and depth. Be careful not to overdo it – there's just a fine line between a nicely animated guitar rhythm and a sticky mush of 80s kitsch.*

## Reverb



*Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE's* reverb is a quick way to add the atmosphere of a large recording room in a professional studio, particularly suited for the percussive character and rich harmonics of an acoustic steel string guitar.

## Master Volume

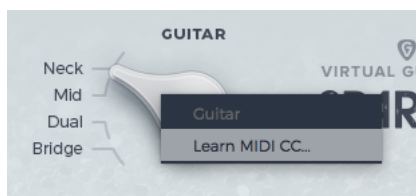


The Volume knob adjusts the master output volume of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*. Levels inside *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* are usually auto-adjusted, so you will never have to level-compensate for *Doubling* or adding *GRIT*, but you may want to use this control to adjust the gain of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* before sending it into subsequent audio processors or effect devices.

## MIDI Learn

Using MIDI Learn, you can assign *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* controls to controls on your hardware keyboard that send MIDI controller data. To assign a control, you usually right-click or ctrl-click a control in *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* to open the MIDI Learn context menu of your DAW.

## Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE



*MIDI Learn Menu in Logic Pro*

## Automation

All controls in *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* can be automated. In combination with the phrase select keys this is actually a very powerful way of creating more dynamic performances. For example, automate *POSITION* and *DRIVE* with faders to create dynamic transitions, or switch-automate *AMP* or *Doubling* to drastically change the sound between song parts.

*For instructions on how to activate Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE parameters for automation, please refer to your DAW's user guide.*

## MIDI Controllers

Unless you add more using MIDI Learn, *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* supports the following MIDI controllers:

### Pitchbend

The *Pitchbend* controller (usually a wheel) lets you vary the pitch of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE* by  $\pm 2$  semitones.

### Modulation

Palm Muting is a powerful method for live-controlling the phrasing of *Virtual Guitarist SPARKLE*.

*The Modulation controller (usually a wheel) controls the Palm Muting that your guitarist applies to the performance.*

In the Modulation controller's default position, no Palm Muting is applied. The further you turn it up, the shorter the notes will become. The maximum position produces so-called "dead notes".

*You can add Palm Muting after the fact by recording a separate Modulation curve on top of your notes.*

## **Aftertouch**

Aftertouch has the same function as Modulation (see previous paragraph) – i.e. pressing the key harder gradually mutes strokes.

## **Expression**

The Expression controller is applied individually to each strum in a phrase, so the volume of the previous step that is still playing is not affected. This can be useful for fine-tuning performances.

*Note that velocity is not used to control volume, as it is difficult to play all notes of a chord with consistent velocity.*

## **Sustain Pedal**

The sustain pedal replicates the *Latch* control, so you can use it as an additional way of varying phrases in real-time. Pressing the sustain pedal activates latching of chord notes. Releasing the sustain pedal releases any latched chord notes even if the *Latch* button is on.

## FAQ

### **Where can I get help?**

We keep a help desk with a knowledgebase and known issues here:

<https://ujam.zendesk.com>

### **I still have questions! Where can I send them?**

Please send your questions to [support@virtualguitarist.com](mailto:support@virtualguitarist.com). We will help you out quickly!