

User Guide



by Peter Gorges

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Welcome to Virtual Guitarist **AMBER**

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. **AMBER** is the second 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 AMBER was built *by* musicians *for* musicians. We at UJAM are a pretty diverse bunch – from DJ to guitarist to weekend producer to Oscar-

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awarded Hollywood composer. We build every product for ourselves, and, like you, we're all users of *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER 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 AMBER* 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
- 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 AMBER* 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
Menu Bar	Preset	Click name to open menu for browsing and loading a new <i>Virtual Guitarist AMBER</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.
Style Bar	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.
Interactive Keyboard	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 AMBER</i> what to play – featuring built-in chord detection.
Performance Section	Latch	When active, <i>Virtual Guitarist AMBER</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.

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Area	Parameter	Explanation
Guitar	POSITION	Emulates a change of the hand's strumming position. In the leftmost position you get a more full-bodied sound (neck), in the maximum position the sound becomes thinner (bridge).
	TONE	Offers a choice of overall sound characters, clockwise from "soft and full-bodied" to "neutral" to "very thin with a lot of treble".
	SOURCE	<i>Virtual Guitarist AMBER</i> offers two different signals: Microphone and Pickup. You can also combine both signals mixed together (Mix) or panned left and right (Split L/R).
	SHIMMER	This knob adds silvery high-end to the signal.
Guitar Mod	Fret Noise	Intelligently inserts fret noises when they would occur on a real guitar (depending on chord changes).
	Low Tune	Activating this button tunes the strings of the entire guitar down by two semitones.
	Doubling	Creates a drastically fuller and wider sound by adding a second guitarist and panning both signals hard left and right.
Effect Section	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.
Wheels	Pitchbend Wheel	Bends the overall pitch by ± 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 **AMBER**?

Virtual Guitarist AMBER is a software instrument doubling as a professional acoustic guitarist in a music studio, with you being in the producer chair.

Virtual Guitarist vs. A Real Guitarist

If we denied the huge differences between a software and 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 AMBER* is a great alternative to the real thing.

What is “**AMBER**” about?

Virtual Guitarist AMBER focuses on strummed chords on a premium acoustic steel string guitar, a rhythmic staple in any kind of modern music. It offers you a wide range of playing styles (*Phrases* combined into *Styles*) and sound characters from full-bodied and warm to brilliant and shiny.

There's a wide range of functions of an acoustic steel string guitar in a song. Two extreme examples:

- In folk or songwriter music, the guitar is often the foundation of the arrangement – with everything built around it. In this case, you'd prefer a warm, full sound and a straight playing style.
- In pop music, acoustic steel string is often used as a form of “harmonic percussion” or as a HiHat or Tambourine supplement”. This adds instant live-feel to arrangements. Here, the metallic strumming itself is as or even more important than the harmonic portion of the sound. In such a case, you will want a thin guitar sound because it is not carrying the chords, or may even interfere with chord instruments. You'll pick a brilliant shine and use more complex phrases.

Virtual Guitarist AMBER lets you do all this and much more in no time, with minimal effort. It combines the virtues of a professional guitar, a custom premium-quality acoustic guitar, perfectly tuned, with fresh steel strings, recorded with a professional microphone and a pickup at the same time, plus the most important sound shaping tools as used in recording studios, to design the guitar sound exactly as you need it in various contexts.

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 AMBER* 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 AMBER*, 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 AMBER* are realistic, professionally produced guitar tracks.

Trial and Authorization

We have designed the entire process of downloading, activating and authorizing *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER* – and make it your own if you like it.

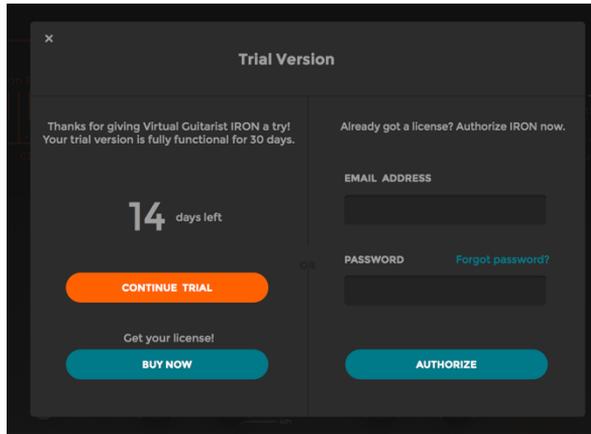
Trying, Buying, Authorizing

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

When opening *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER* license after or during the trial period,
- allows you to enter your credentials and authorize *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* once you've purchased it.

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Trial Screen of AMBER's sister instrument Virtual Guitarist IRON

Where to put the Content

The actual guitar goodness of *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* – the audio content – is packed into a so-called blob file named VG-AMBER.blob which is about 2.8 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 main system drive:

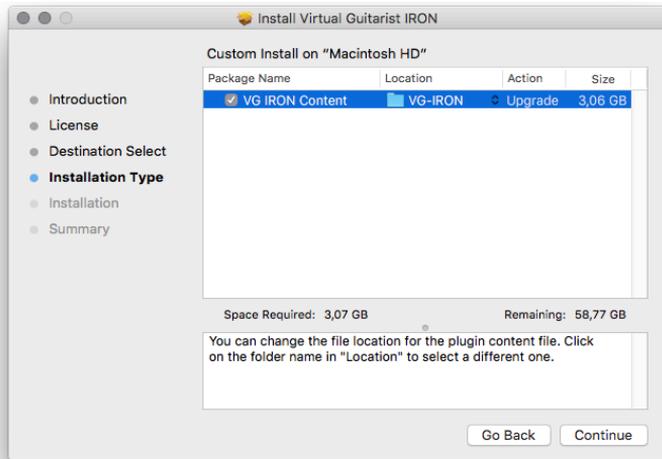
OS X	/Library/Application Support/UJAM/VG-AMBER
Windows	C:-\ProgramData/UJAM/AMBER/

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 AMBER Content” to select it – as shown in the image below – and follow the instructions in the installer.

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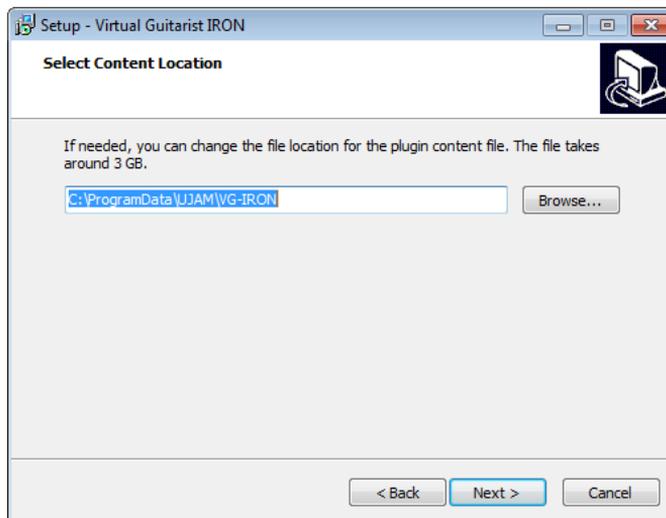


OS X Installer – Change Content Location (shown for VG IRON here)

Installing to a different drive on Windows

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

In 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-AMBER.blob* file:

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

Controller hardware for Virtual Guitarist AMBER

Virtual Guitarist AMBER requires MIDI note input for playing and recording musical performances, and optionally Pitchbend, Modulation and Sustain Pedal data for added realtime 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 realtime.

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

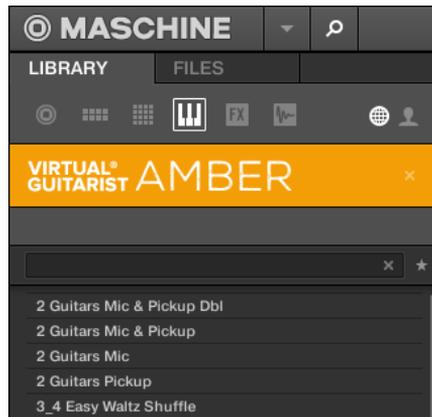
For getting to know Virtual Guitarist AMBER and for testing purposes, you can also use the Interactive Keyboard in the top half of the Virtual Guitarist AMBER window. This works best with the Latch function enabled.

Native Instruments KONTROL integration

Virtual Guitarist AMBER 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 AMBER* will offer added functionality:

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



Virtual Guitarist AMBER 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 AMBER*, as that may be all you need for now.

The top half of the *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER* 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 realtime. 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 AMBER*.

**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 AMBER*. After this you will have a good basic understanding of the instrument and how to use it.

We assume you have Virtual Guitarist AMBER 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 AMBER* window.

The Interactive Keyboard also doubles as a display for the MIDI notes Virtual Guitarist AMBER 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. Play C-E-G-B for example to play a Cmaj7 chord, or C-F-G for a Csus4. *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* will display the current chord in the **CHORD** display above the keyboard.
- Set the *Key* value in the *Style Bar* to D to force *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* to play only chords in the D scale. Set different keys 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 AMBER* window you can load presets. A preset is always a complete setting of *Virtual Guitarist AMBER*, 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 AMBER*. Optionally, try different *Style Phrases* by additionally selecting keys in the C#1-Bb3 range.

Tell your player what to play

- Activate the *Latch* button right next to the *Style Bar*. Now *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER* 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 AMBER* to half- 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 AMBER* window. Here you set up your guitar, its sound character and effects.

- Set your player to *LATCH* and keep playing while you tweak controls
- First, play with the *TONE* rotary switch. Notice how it changes the character of the guitar sound and compare your impression with the knob labels.

- Now experiment with the **SOURCE** rotary switch. It offers additional variety by letting you select between the more hollow, brilliant Mic (Microphone) and the dryer, more mid-oriented Pickup sound, as well as combinations of both.
- Now turn the **SHIMMER** control clockwise, starting from the leftmost position. Notice how the sound gets more “shiny”, or “glitzy”.
- Play with different combinations of the **TONE**, **SOURCE** and **SHIMMER** controls. This way you get a good impression of the sonic range of *Virtual Guitarist AMBER*.

More sound tweaking fun

- Activate the Fret Noise button in the bottom left area of *Virtual Guitarist AMBER*. Now, when you switch between chords, you will hear characteristic fret noises that occur when fingers slide across the fretboard.
- Right next you’ll find Low Tune. 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 Low Tune 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 AMBER*.

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.

Adjust the guitar sound in realtime

You may have noticed that we haven’t looked at the **POSITION** knob yet. It’s a very special feature that lets you change the position of the strumming hand, like on a real guitar you’d move between soundhole and bridge. Turn the knob to the left and right, and notice how the character changes. The neutral position of the knob is center.

Reference Guide

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

Menu Bar

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

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- Advance to the next preset by clicking one of the arrows left and right of the **PRESET** name
- Click on the name of the current preset in the **PRESET** menu to open the **Preset Browser** (see image above).

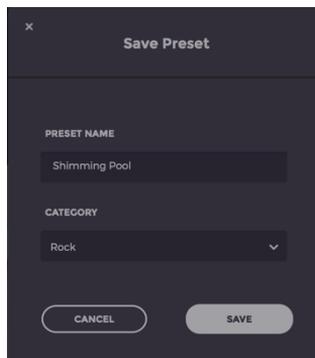
As you can see, the Preset Browser is a clean, organized list of presets, categorized by simple musical terms.

Virtual Guitarist AMBER 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 AMBER* can do!

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

Save / Save as ...

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



“Save as ...” Dialog

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

- **Save** overwrites 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 overwritten.

Moving, renaming and deleting presets

You can move, rename or delete Presets directly in your operating system. You will find *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* Presets in these folders:

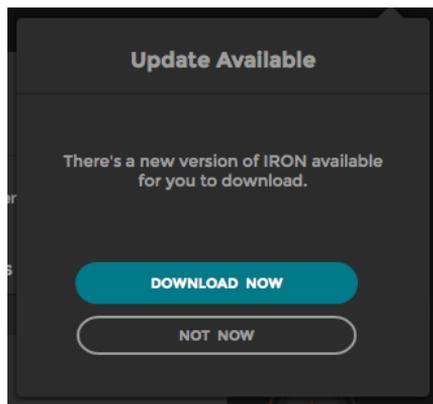
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OS X	Factory Presets	/Library/Application Support/UJAM/VG-AMBER/Presets
	User Presets	/Users/USERNAME/Library/Application Support/UJAM/VG-AMBER/Presets
Windows	Factory Presets	C:\ProgramData\UJAM\VG-AMBER\Presets
	User Presets	C:\Users\USERNAME\AppData\Roaming\UJAM\VG-AMBER\Presets

Bell icon – Notifications

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

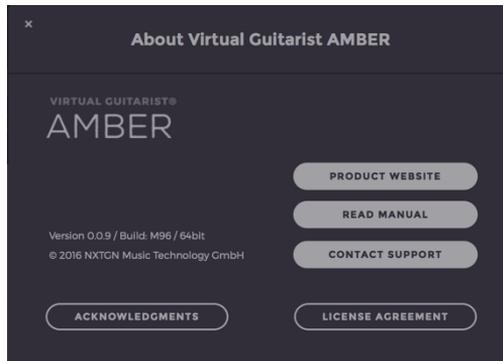
Clicking it will open a dialog that lets you choose whether you want to download the update now or later.



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 AMBER.

Speech Bubble Icon – About Page



About Page

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

- **Visit Product Website** takes you to 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 AMBER*.
- **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.



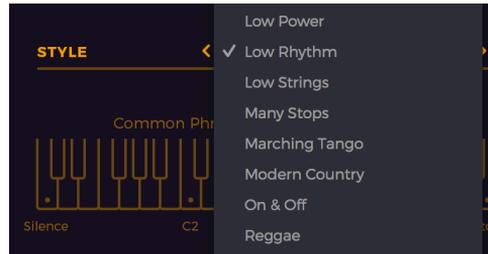
Style Bar

STYLE

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

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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.

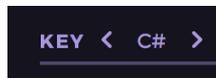


Style List

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.

KEY



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

Key played		C#		Eb			F#		G#		Bb	
	C		D		E	F		G		A		B
Chord	C	Csus4	D	Eb	E	F	Gsus4	G	Gsus4	A	Bb	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 AMBER* 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**).

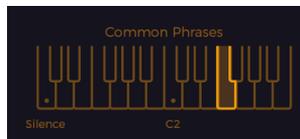
Interactive Keyboard

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.



Interactive Keyboard

Common Phrases



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

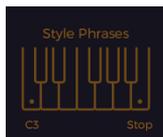
Common Phrases complement the *Style Phrases* by phrasings that are more generic and applicable to multiple contexts.

Phrases are what you make of them. Virtual Guitarist AMBER lets you switch phrases in realtime 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 Phrases 19 and 20.

Reference of Common Phrases

#	Group	Midi Note	Description	Bars
1	Sustained Chords	C#1	Sustained Chord Downstroke	4
2		D1	Sustained Chord Upstroke	4
3		D#1	Arpeggiated Chord Downstroke	4
4		E1	Arpeggiated Chord 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	Intro 1	1
22		A#2	Intro 2	1
23		B2	Intro 3	1

Style Phrases



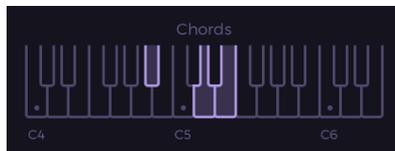
Keys in this area select phrases of the currently selected *Style*.

Phrases in the Style Range start with the lowest density/intensity on C3 and get more agitated as you move towards Bb3.

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 AMBER 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.

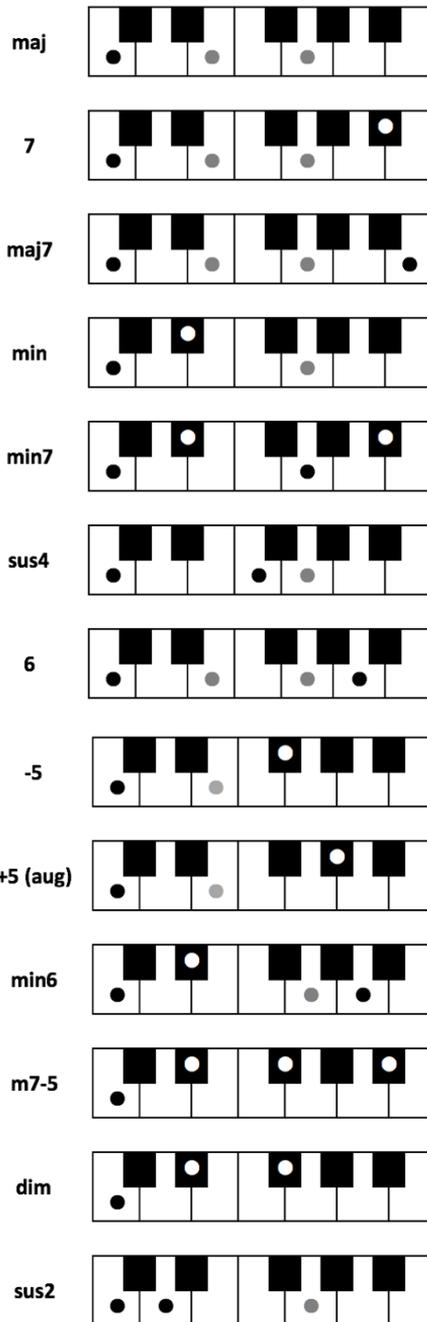
Fingering scheme

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

Here's how to read it:

- A black dot on the stylized keyboard means "required", a grey dot means "optional" (for example, if you use the MIDI file of a synth pad to control *Virtual Guitarist AMBER*)
- Chord displayed: The resulting musical chord as displayed by *Virtual Guitarist AMBER*

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Performance Controls

Performance controls let you adjust the musical performance of *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER* will keep playing until you press the Stop key.

When *Latch* is off, *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER*'s tempo relative to the song tempo.

This way you can extend the style range to 4th- or 32nd-note-based, or have *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER* will automatically switch the Swing resolution to 8th or 16th note depending on the selected *Style*.

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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 AMBER* to a shuffled or triplet-based song.

Not all phrases contain 8th or 16th 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 AMBER* 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 AMBER*, pan both extremely left and right, set different **TONE** and **SOURCE** settings and set the **FEEL** slightly differently.*

GUITAR section



GUITAR Section

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

POSITION



The *POSITION* knob emulates moving the strumming hand between neck and bridge.

The center position represents the recording position – the hand strumming over the soundhole – and is therefore neutral.

Turn the knob to the left (moving the virtual hand towards the neck) for a more full-bodied, hollow sound.

Turn the knob clockwise (towards the bridge) for a thinner sound with more attack.

TONE



Acoustic Steel String Guitar, the instrument that Virtual Guitarist AMBER adds to your arsenal, gets used in a variety of applications – from being the main backing track (songwriter, folk) to just adding a bit of “harmonic glitz” on top of the percussion instruments. For each of these situations, you need a different character or *TONE*. This 5-way switch lets you change the tone of the guitar sound basically from “a lot of low end” to “a lot of high end”.

Seriously, more details here:

Name	Character	Use ...
Warm	Bassy tone with softened high end	... to beef up an arrangement in the low/mid range. Works best with slow, not too animated material.

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Full	Pronounced mid range, low and high end slightly softened	... for adding harmonic content to a mix without adding too much high end (strumming).
Flat	Untreated signal, straight from the microphone/pickup	... for a straight acoustic guitar character, or if you plan to do all sonic treatment in the mixer or using studio processors.
Bright	Pronounced high mids and treble, low end rolled off	... for a guitar track that blends well with other harmonic/chord tracks, without interfering with the lower mids. Allows you to bring down the level and still keep the strumming “recognizable”.
Crisp	High frequencies of the strum noise almost isolated, no bass or mids	... add high end animation to any mix, without interfering with other chord sounds. Works particularly well with Doubling activated.

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

SOURCE



The source material of Virtual Guitarist AMBER has been recorded with both a microphone and a pickup mounted on the guitar. The SOURCE selector lets you choose between four different selections of those two signals:

- **Mic** – a vintage large-membrane studio condenser microphone positioned about 1 ft from the neck/bridge intersection. The Mic signal features strong bass and treble and is the typical sound character and preferred choice in most cases.
- **Pickup** – a pickup mounted on the guitar. The pickup sounds drier, more compact and direct. It is more mid-oriented and lacks the low end and high sparkle of the Mic signal.

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- **Mix** – Best of both worlds, a mono mix of *Mic* and *Pickup*, therefore thicker than the *Mic* signal alone with more low end and sparkle than the *Pickup* signal.
- **Split L/R** – this outputs the Mic signal on the left channel and the Pickup signal on the right channel. You can use this to route and treat each signal individually in your DAWs mixer, or to create a stereo effect without using *Doubling* or a second instance.

SHIMMER



The *SHIMMER* knob adds silvery high-end to the signal, making the guitar shimmer or sparkle even more. This is particularly useful when you use *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* as support for Hi-Hat and other high-frequency rhythmic instruments, as is often the case in pop/rock productions.

Guitar Modes

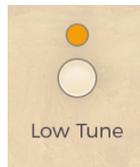
The three knobs underneath the *POSITION* control allow you to add typical Fret Noise, to re-tune or to duplicate the guitar.

Fret Noise



When changing from one chord to another, the fingers sliding on the fretboard create characteristic noises that add to the authentic character of an acoustic guitar. *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* has an algorithm that produces these noises dynamically exactly where they would occur on a real guitar. You can switch them off (sometimes producers just don't want them, and cut them out even from real recordings) by deactivating this button.

Low Tune



Activating this button emulates a guitar where the strings of the entire guitar are tuned down by two semitones, but the player still plays the same chords. This generally leads to a darker sound character and also extends the low range down from E to D. Basically what this means:

- You can play chords down to the low D.
- The guitar will generally sound fuller/lower as lower versions/inversions of the wanted chord are now available.

Doubling



Activating this button has the same effect as if two guitarist played your track at the same time, with minimal variations.

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 2 or 3 doubled guitar tracks playing at the same time.

Two handy tips:

- To create the impression of two guitarists playing even differently, instead of using Doubling set up two instances of *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* with different settings of POSITION, TONE and SHIMMER, put them on 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 AMBER 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 AMBER into external plugins or outboard gear if you need more advanced tweaking options.

Delay



Delay Section

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

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

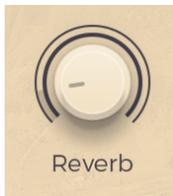
Chorus



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 AMBER'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 AMBER*. Levels inside *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* are usually auto-adjusted, so you will never have to level-compensate for Doubling or adding Shimmer, but you may want to

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use this control to adjust the gain of *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* before sending it into subsequent audio processors or effect devices.

MIDI Learn

Using MIDI Learn, you can assign *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER* to open the MIDI Learn context menu of your DAW.



MIDI Learn Menu in Logic

Automation

All controls in *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* 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 AMBER parameters for automation, please refer to your DAWs user guide.

MIDI Controllers

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

Pitchbend

The *Pitchbend* controller (usually a wheel) lets you vary the pitch of *Virtual Guitarist AMBER* by ± 2 semitones.

Modulation

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

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. We will help you out quick!