

El Capistan
dTape Echo
PLUGIN

USER MANUAL

strymon®

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Introduction



The El Capistan plugin interface

Thank you for purchasing the Strymon El Capistan plugin! This software offers the same unique effects as in our El Capistan v2 dTape Echo pedal on a fully digital and intuitive platform.

From the nostalgic days of mechanical tape echo units, El Capistan plugin brings back the warmth, wow, and warble right within your own DAW projects. Now you can easily apply El Capistan to any instruments or even your entire mixes!

El Capistan plugin offers single and multi-head tape echo machine type emulations, with a plethora of controls to re-create the intricate delay repeat patterns, record speed, tape quality, and wow & flutter of coveted vintage units. Also included is an adjustable Spring reverb to further enhance the sense of space. Of course, we've included modern plugin controls as well, such as Tap and Tempo sync, instant infinite or single repeat switches, In and Out level controls, and full parameter automation for ease of use within your DAW host.

You will need to create a Strymon account to download the El Capistan plugin software and manage your software license. Please visit www.strymon.net to set up your account. This also allows us to notify you about any updates to the software as they become available.

The features and instructions described within this manual are the same for the El Capistan plugin on macOS or Windows® computers, unless otherwise noted. If you run into any trouble using the El Capistan plugin, or would like to report any issues you may encounter, please visit the [Strymon Support](#) page for FAQs and information on activation, installation, and troubleshooting.

NOTE: El Capistan plugin is available in AAX®, AU, and VST®3 plugin formats and can be operated at any standard sample rate from 44.1kHz to 192kHz, at either 16-bit or 24-bit resolution.

Installation & Activation

Minimum System Requirements

macOS

- macOS Monterey 12.7
- Intel® Core™ i5 or Apple M1
- 8GB RAM
- AAX, AU, or VST3 compatible plugin host software
- iLok account and Internet connection for activation

Windows

- Windows 10
- Intel Core i5 processor or AMD multi-core processor
- 8GB RAM minimum
- AAX or VST3 compatible plugin host software
- iLok account and Internet connection for activation

Installing El Capistan Plugin

The downloads for the El Capistan plugin can be found at the following link:

strymon.net/support/elcapistan-plugin-in

Please download the correct installer for your computer's operating system.

Install Locations

The following lists the default install locations for each El Capistan plugin format:

macOS

- AAX - Library/Application Support/Avid/Audio/plugin-ins/Strymon
- Audio Units - Library/Audio/plugin-ins/Components
- VST3 - Library/Audio/plugin-ins/VST3/Strymon

Windows

- AAX - C:\Program Files\Common Files\Avid\Audio\plug-ins\Strymon
- VST3 - C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3\Strymon

Activating El Capistan Plugin

Activating the El Capistan Plugin Free Trial

The El Capistan plugin can be evaluated with a 7-day free trial by clicking on the **Try** button from the Activation window that pops up the first time you launch the plugin within your DAW or plugin host application before activation. The trial includes a single, non-transferable activation for 7 days of full-featured use of the plugin.

When you purchase an iLok-compatible Strymon software product, the first step is determined by where you purchased the software.

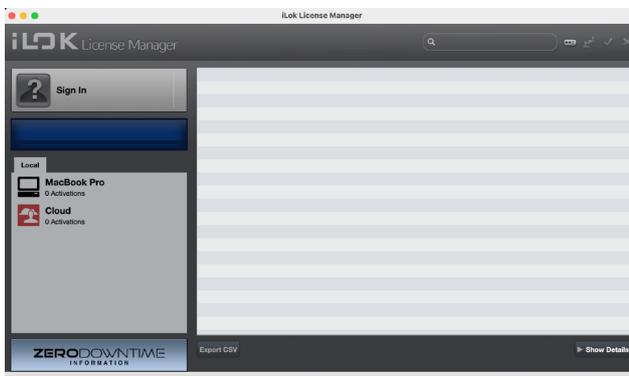
If you purchased the software from the Strymon online store, you can skip to the following **iLok Activation Process** section.

If you purchased the software from one of our software partner dealers, you must redeem the redemption code you received from that purchase at the following link to receive your activation code. Once you have received the activation code from our site, you can begin the activation process below.

[Redeem Redemption Code](#)

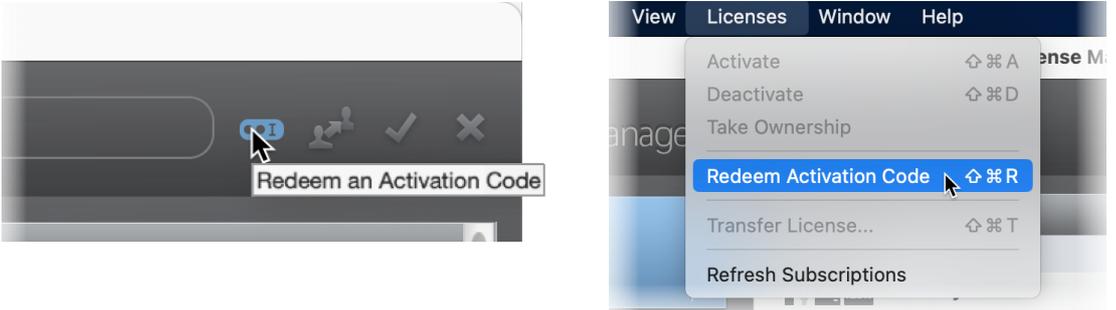
iLok Activation Process

- 1 **Create an iLok account** at ilok.com. An iLok account is required to complete the activation process. You can skip this step if you already have an iLok account.
- 2 **Download and install** the iLok License Manager software from the ilok.com website onto your computer. If you already have the iLok License Manager software installed, it is recommended to check for updates from the application's menu and install the newest version.
- 3 **Open the iLok License Manager** software and click the Sign In button to log into your iLok account.



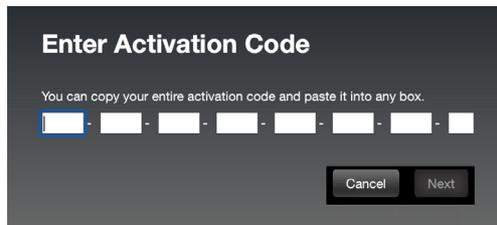
The iLok License Manager main window

- 4 Redeem your software license by clicking on the **Redeem an Activation Code** button at the top right of the iLok License Manager window, or choose **Redeem Activation Code** from the Licenses menu.



iLok License Manager - selecting Redeem Activation Code

In the **Enter Activation Code** window that appears, enter the activation code that you received from your plugin purchase and click **Next**.*



***NOTE:** If you purchased the El Capistan plugin from one of our software dealer partners rather than directly from the Strymon.com online store, you must first [redeem the code you received from them here](#) to receive the iLok activation code.

- 5 Once you have redeemed your software license, select the El Capistan plugin license from the list of licenses under your username and click **Activate**.

You'll be prompted to choose the location for your activated licence:

 To an iLok USB dongle (make sure to have it connected to the computer before selecting to activate the license)...

 To your computer...

 Or, to the iLok Cloud.

Click **Activate** again.

- 6 After you have activated the software license, you can exit the iLok License Manager and insert a El Capistan plugin instance within your DAW or plugin host project. If activated to an iLok USB dongle, you must connect the USB device to the computer to authorize the use of the El Capistan plugin.

Returns

We cannot accept returns of any purchase containing an iLok License authorization because the iLok license keys are managed by a 3rd party. If you have experienced a billing or activation issue related to an iLok License purchase, please reach out to [Strymon Support](#) for assistance.

Transfers

Purchased iLok Licenses may be “moved” between two iLok devices that are registered to your iLok.com account. Purchased iLok Licenses may also be transferred from your iLok account to another iLok account. Move and Transfer instructions are provided on [iLok.com](#). There may be a nominal fee assessed by iLok.com. Trial and other free iLok Licenses may not be moved or transferred.

El Capistan Plugin Overview

Much like the El Capistan v2 pedal, the El Capistan plugin utilizes a simple user interface, consisting of a top toolbar of controls and a main plugin window including buttons for selecting the **MACHINE TYPE**, **TEMPO**, and knobs for parameter control. The upper display changes to reflect your **MACHINE TYPE** selection, offering unique **Moving** and **Fixed** head options for manipulating the repeat time, spacing, patterns, and more.



The El Capistan plugin interface

Mono and Stereo Operation

In DAW host applications that offer the option, El Capistan plugin can be inserted as a mono, mono-stereo, or stereo plugin instance. When the El Capistan mono instance is in use, its left & right outputs are summed to mono.

Presets

We've provided a set of El Capistan Factory Presets to get you started. These can be loaded and used as they are, or edited to your liking and then saved or copied for use in all your DAW host's projects.

The loading and saving of all El Capistan presets is managed within your DAW host application. Each DAW host application presents this Preset Menu and its Preset Load and Save commands slightly differently, as shown in the following examples. Please check your DAW host application's documentation for details.

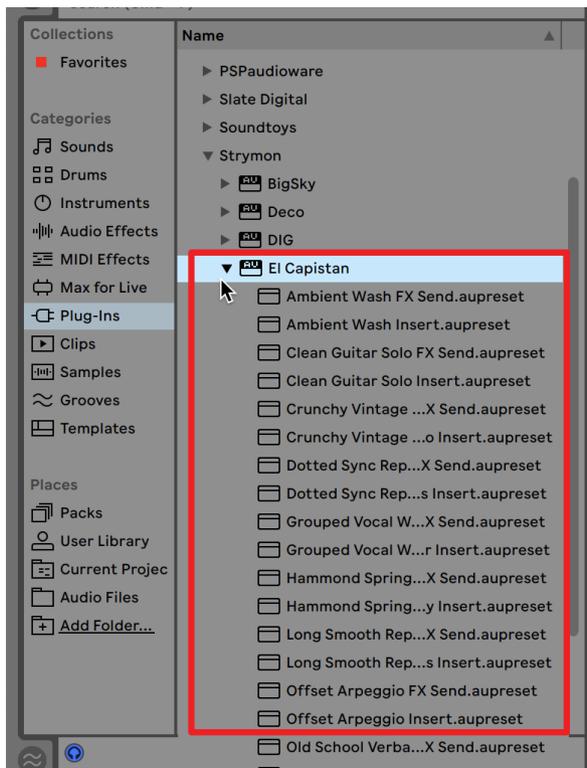
NOTE: As indicated by their titles, Factory Presets are provided in two versions:

FX Send - with the Dry signal set to 0, for use on an Aux/Bus. In Some DAW hosts, these presets will appear within a separate "FX Send" preset sub-menu.

Insert - with the Wet/Dry mix balanced, for use on an audio track.

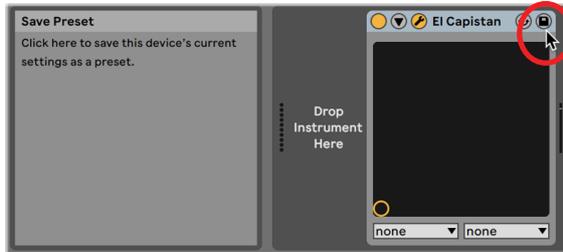
Presets - Ableton® Live

In Ableton Live, you'll find El Capistan's factory presets within the Browser window's Plug-Ins Category list. Double-click on a preset here to launch a new El Capistan instance with the preset loaded. Or, you can drag one of the presets onto an existing El Capistan plugin instance within the Device View at the bottom of Live's screen.



Accessing El Capistan factory presets from the Ableton Live Plug-Ins Browser

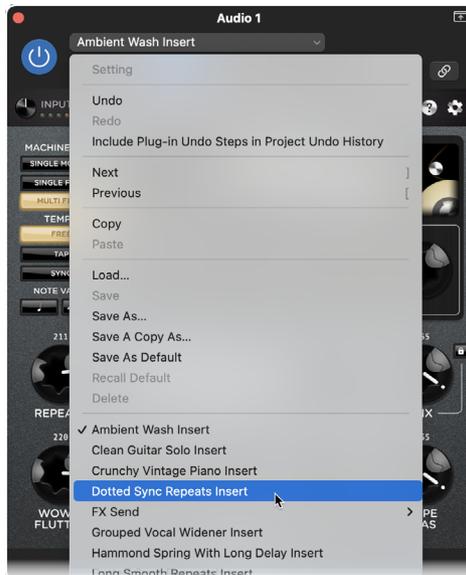
To save your own presets, click the Save button of the Live app Device View's El Capistan plugin interface. Your saved presets are accessible within Live's User Library from the Browser window.



Saving El Capistan plugin's current settings as a user preset in Ableton Live

Presets - Apple Logic

In Logic, click on the Preset menu found at the top of the plugin window of your El Capistan plugin instance and select one of the presets from the bottom of the menu.



Loading a El Capistan preset from Logic's Preset Menu

To save your own presets, use the Save options within the menu. Your custom, saved presets will appear at the bottom of the Preset menu list.

Presets - Avid® Pro Tools®

In Pro Tools, click on the Preset Library menu found at the top of the plugin window of your El Capistan plugin instance, and select one of the presets from the Factory folder.



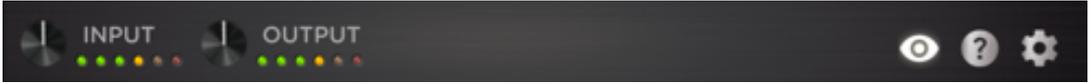
Loading a El Capistan factory preset in Pro Tools

To save your own custom presets, use the Save Settings options within the Preset Settings menu. Your saved presets will appear within the Preset Library menu.



Saving a custom El Capistan preset in Pro Tools

The Plugin Toolbar Controls



The El Capistan plugin Toolbar

All the toolbar controls' settings are applied globally per each instance of the El Capistan plugin (not saved per preset).



INPUT - Turn the knob to adjust input level to the plugin. The LED meter lights **GREEN** to **YELLOW** when the input level signal is within a normal range. The **RED** LED lights when an overload condition occurs, in which case you should use the knob to reduce your input level. The Input knob provides +/-36dB of gain.



OUTPUT - Turn the knob to adjust the output level of the plugin. The output meter to the right of the control lights **GREEN** to **YELLOW** when the plugin's output signal is in a normal range, and **RED** when an overload condition occurs. The Output knob provides +/-36dB of gain.

TIP: To quickly reset the Input or Output Level knobs (or any other El Capistan plugin knobs and switches) to their default (0dB) value, Option + click (macOS), Alt + click (Windows), or double-click (macOS and Windows) directly on the control.



NUMERIC VALUE VISIBILITY - Click the "eye" 3-way switch to show or hide the rotary controls' parameter values.

NOTE: This toolbar setting changes the numeric values' display behavior only for the current instance of the plugin. You can apply the behavior globally, for all plugin instances, within the Settings tab—see [page 14.](#))



Always - Values are shown above controls (the initial default setting, the toolbar button appears illuminated).



Auto - Click again to momentarily show values only when the mouse cursor hovers over or adjusts the control (the toolbar button appears dimmed).

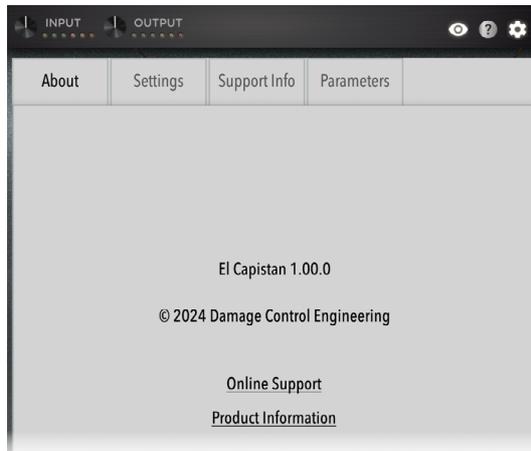


Off - Click once again to always hide the values (the toolbar button appears crossed out and dimmed).

HELP WINDOW - Click to display a handy, on-screen Help Window. When enabled, a description is displayed for any plugin control as you hover your mouse cursor over it. Click the Help toolbar button again to disable the on-screen Help.

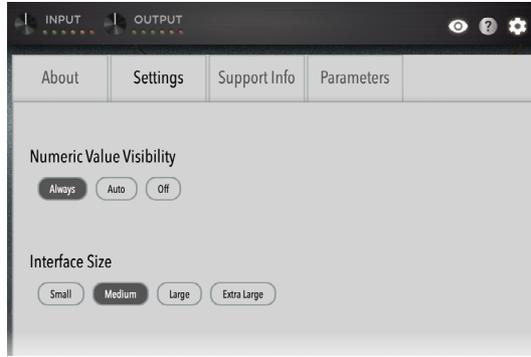


ABOUT/SETTINGS/SUPPORT INFO- Click to launch the plugin's About, Settings, and Support Info window.



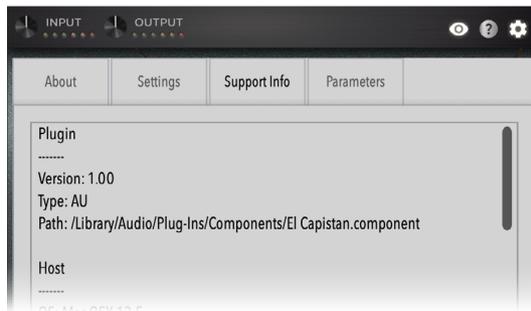
The About tab

- **The About tab** shows the current El Capistan plugin version and links to the Strymon website's Online Support and El Capistan Product Information.



The Settings tab

- **The Settings tab** offers several global options for the plugin.
 - **Numeric Value Visibility** - This is a global option for the behavior of the values that can be displayed above the knobs in the plugin window. (You can use the  button on the plugin toolbar to configure this behavior individually for each plugin instance.)
 - **Interface Size** - Choose the plugin window size that best fits your screen and workflow.



The Support Info tab

- **The Support Info tab** displays details about the El Capistan plugin, your DAW host and computer system, and current project and plugin parameter settings. If you are encountering issues using El Capistan or your DAW host, use the **Copy to Clipboard** button to copy all the info from this tab and paste into a text document, which can be useful to send to Customer Support for evaluation.

Click the Settings toolbar button again to return to the plugin interface.

The Effect Parameters

The El Capistan interface’s main window offers simple and intuitive controls for its tape machine types, head configurations, tempo, and parameters.



The El Capistan plugin user interface

TIPS: To enter precise knob settings, click on any knob’s numerical value, type in your desired value (0-255), and hit the Return/Enter key. Numerical tempo values can also be entered this way within the Head Configuration display.

You can reset any knob control to its initial default value by using Option + click (macOS), Alt + click (Windows), or double-click (macOS and Windows) directly on the knob.

You can globally customize the size of the El Capistan plugin interface within the plugin’s Settings tab—see [page 14](#).

MACHINE TYPE SELECTION

Choose between single or multi head tape machine styles. The head options for the selected machine type are offered within the display to the right, allowing you to manually adjust the delay time and repeat patterns.

NOTE: If the **TEMPO - TAP** or **SYNC** option is enabled, adjusting the plugin's **TIME** knob will automatically set the tempo to **FREE**, allowing you to adjust the delay time manually. Also, see [“Tempo Controls” on page 19.](#)

The **MACHINE TYPE** selection, **Head**, and **Time** settings are saved per preset.

SINGLE MOVING

Offers a machine with a single record head and a single playback head.



The Single Moving echo machine type is selected

- **TIME** - Turn to manually change the record head's distance from the playback head to adjust the delay time. Lower settings provide faster repeats and higher settings provide slower repeats.

TIP: Alternatively, you can click and drag the record head to set the Single Moving delay **TIME**.

- **NORMAL** and **FAST SPEED** switches - Select **NORMAL** for 1x the **TIME** value, or select **FAST** to double the **TIME** value. Note that you can use these switches to change the speed regardless if the **TEMPO - FREE, TAP, or SYNC** mode is selected.

SINGLE FIXED

Offers a multi-head machine type with the option to choose any one of the three fixed-position playback heads for repeats. In **SINGLE FIXED** mode, the **TIME** knob adjusts the speed of the tape across the heads.



The Single Fixed echo machine type is selected

- **TIME** - Turn to manually vary the tape speed to adjust the delay time.
- **HEADS Selector** - Choose **Head 1**, **2**, or **3** for the desired note division of the **TIME** value:
 - **Head 1** - short delay with 1/16th note
 - **Head 2** - medium delay with dotted 1/8th
 - **Head 3** - long delay with 1/4 note

TIP: Alternatively, you can click directly on the individual head 1, 2, or 3 within the machine display to select it.

MULTI FIXED

Offers a multi-head machine type, allowing you to choose different combinations of the three playback heads for different **TIME** divisions and repeat patterns. In **MULTI FIXED** mode, the **TIME** knob adjusts the speed of the tape across the heads.



The Multi Fixed echo machine type is selected

- **TIME** - Turn to manually vary the tape speed to adjust the delay time.
- **HEADS Selector** - Choose a combination of active playback heads for the desired pattern of note division repeats:
 - Heads 1 + 2
 - Heads 2 + 3
 - Heads 1 + 3
 - Heads 1 + 2 + 3

TIPS: Alternatively, you can click directly on the individual heads 1, 2, and 3 within the machine display to select the offered Heads combinations. For details on Strymon’s dTape™ technology and the workings of tape delay machines, please check out the [dTape Technology White Paper](#).

TEMPO CONTROLS

These buttons allow you to select the main time source for which the El Capistan delay repeats will follow. Note that your selected **MACHINE TYPE** and **Heads** settings will produce different note divisions of the current tempo—see the preceding sections for details.



The Tempo controls

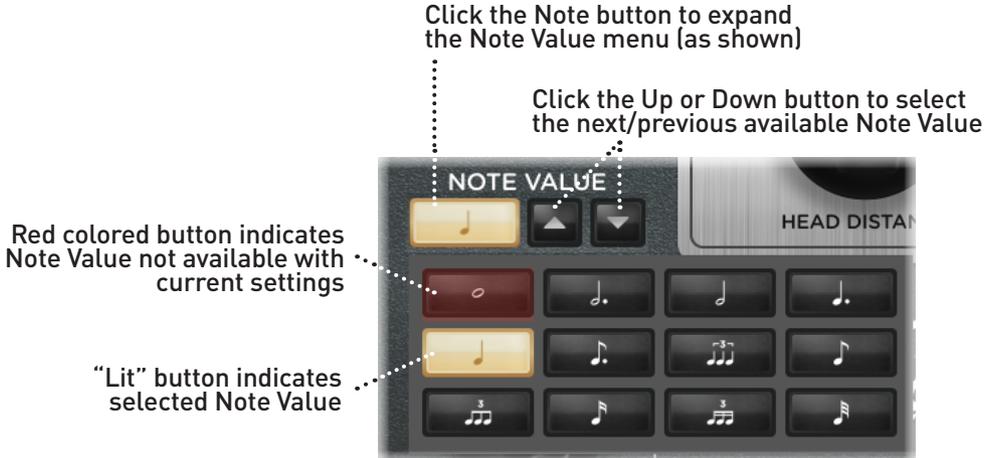
FREE - Configured the plugin for manual adjustment of the main Tempo via the current Machine Type’s **TIME** knob.

TAP - Allows you to “tap” the desired tempo on the button using your mouse. Note divisions can also be selected using the **NOTE VALUE** options when in the **TAP** mode—see the following section.

SYNC - Sets the plugin to follow your DAW host project’s tempo, allowing your delay repeats to stay in sync with your music’s tempo. Synced note divisions can also be selected using the **NOTE VALUE** options when in the **TAP** mode—see the following section.



NOTE VALUE - This set of controls is available when the **Tempo - TAP** or **SYNC** mode is enabled, allowing you to set your delay time repeats to be a specific note division of the main Tempo value.



The Note Value menu is expanded, showing available note division options

Note Value Options - Within the expanded menu, as shown above, are note value buttons: whole, dotted half, half, dotted quarter, quarter (the default), dotted eighth, eighth triplet, eighth, sixteenth triplet, sixteenth, thirty-second triplet, and thirty-second note.

The number of selectable Note Value options can differ, depending on the current Tempo value and/or Tape Machine type. For example, if the current Tempo is very fast, it may not be able to be divided to by the shortest note values. Or, when using a Fixed Head machine type, some note values may not be available due to the existing Head type's own divisions. Non-selectable Note Value buttons appear as red.

REPEATS

The **REPEATS** knob and **Infinite** and **Single** switches offer quick and easy control over the number of delay repeats.



- **REPEATS Knob** - Turn to adjust the number of delay repeats that are heard, from one repeat at minimum, to infinite repeats at maximum.

- **INFINITE REPEATS Switch** - Click this latching switch to engage Infinite Repeats, for runaway, self-oscillating repeats. Disengage to return control of the repeats back to the knob.
- **SINGLE REPEAT Switch** - Click and hold this momentary switch to set to the minimum, single repeat setting. Note that this can be engaged whether the Infinite switch is engaged or not.

NOTE: The **SINGLE REPEAT** switch is not an automatable parameter, but you can automate either the **INFINITE REPEATS** switch (on/off) or the **REPEATS** knob within your DAW host app.



SPRING - Turn clockwise to add some retro Spring reverb to the signal.* Note that the **SPRING** knob controls the reverb mix independently of the delay's **MIX** knob, so you can add just the right amount of each. At minimum, the reverb is off.



MIX - Sets the level balance of the dry input and wet El Capistan delay signals.* At minimum, only the dry signal is heard, and at maximum only the wet signal is heard. A 50/50 mix is heard at the knob's 3 o'clock position.

***NOTE:** The **SPRING** and **MIX** knobs include a **MIX LOCK** button  which, when enabled (lit), will "lock" both knobs' current settings so that they remain unaffected by plugin preset changes and detached from host automation. Enabling the **MIX LOCK** can be especially useful when the plugin is inserted on a Send or Aux track, where you likely want to keep the mix at 100% wet, allowing you to load presets without having to constantly reconfigure the **SPRING** and **MIX** values.



WOW & FLUTTER - Controls the amount of mechanically related tape speed fluctuations. This also results in natural tape-style modulation. Turn the knob to minimum for a perfectly tuned, cleaned, and serviced tape machine.

Turn the knob fully clockwise to hear the sound of a tape machine in need of service. In between the extreme settings, a natural modulation is achieved.



TAPE CRINKLE - Adjusts the amount and severity of tape irregularities, including friction, creases, splices, and contaminants. Tape Crinkle characteristics track accordingly to tape speed. Set to minimum for a fresh, clean tape. Set to maximum for a tape that has been

mangled and chewed for years.



LOW END CONTOUR - Controls the low frequency shaping of the echo repeats. Set to minimum for extended low frequency bandwidth. Set to maximum for extremely high-passed, magnetic drum style repeats.



TAPE AGE - Controls the bandwidth of the tape, just as it would change over time in a physical tape delay machine. As regular tapes wear out, their bandwidth becomes limited. The **TAPE AGE** control recreates this wear effect. Set to minimum for a fresh, full-bandwidth tape. As the knob is turned clockwise, the tape will get progressively darker.



TAPE BIAS - Adjusts the bias of the tape machine, from under to over-biased. Higher bias levels result in reduced echo volume and limited headroom with dirty sounding repeats. Lower bias settings result in the cleanest echoes with the most headroom.

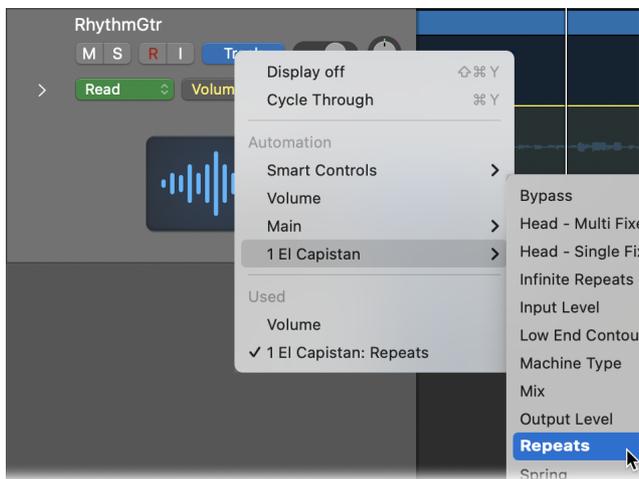
Parameter Automation

Parameter automation is a feature that most DAW applications provide as a manner to change one or more of a plugin's available parameters, either by recording the changes made to these parameters in real-time, or by using an editable track envelope to "draw" changes. These parameter automations can be played back, affecting your project mix. Automating El Capistan parameters can be a great way to add some unique textures or extreme effects to your track!



The El Capistan plugin's Repeats parameter is automated within a Logic Pro audio track

The list of automatable parameters is available in the host application's parameter automation menu, which is typically found with the track where you've inserted the plugin, or in a menu within the plugin window header itself. Every DAW host software offers automation controls in its own unique way, so please refer to the user manual of the DAW host for information and instructions.



Selecting an El Capistan plugin automation parameter within a Logic Pro audio track

NOTE: The REPEATS - SINGLE REPEAT switch is not available as an automatable parameters, but you can automate the REPEATS knob and set it to minimum for a single repeat (or to any other knob value for up to infinite repeats).

Features

- Hand crafted dTape algorithms for meticulous and nuanced recreations of tape echo systems
- Three tape machines in one: Single Moving (sliding record head) Single Fixed (one fixed playback head), and Multi Fixed (multiple playback heads)
- Head and Note Value division options for each tape machine for extremely flexible echo options
- Independent Spring reverb
- Tape Age, Tape Crinkle, Bias, and Wow & Flutter controls to provide everything from pristine tape repeats to worn and wobbly artifacts
- Low End Contour to shape the repeats' low frequencies to fit the mix
- Tempo Sync, Tap, and Free modes for full control of delay times
- Adjustable Repeats, latching Infinite Repeats switch, and momentary Single Repeats switch for simple and instant manipulation of delay repeats
- Fully adjustable plugin Input and Output levels with metering and clip indication
- Support for DAW host automation of plugin parameters
- A set of factory presets included
- Resizable plugin user interface with selectable window sizes
- Integrated help tip pop-ups on demand
- AU (macOS) and AAX & VST3 (macOS and Windows) plugin formats for support with all major DAW host applications
- DAW host support for mono, mono-stereo, and stereo plugin instances and standard sample rates from 44.1 kHz to 192 kHz, at 16-bit or 24-bit resolution
- 32-bit floating point processing

Troubleshooting

How to Obtain Service Under this Warranty

El Capistan plugin is very simple to operate, but if you have any problems, help is available here:

<https://www.strymon.net/support/elcapistan-plug-in/>

TRADEMARKS:

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