NIGHTSKY

time-warped reverberator PLUGIN

USER MANUAL

strymon®

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Introduction

The NightSky plugin interface

Thank you for purchasing the Strymon NightSky plugin! The NightSky plugin is a reverberant synthesis workstation and hands-on experimental sound design platform. NightSky allows real-time, continuous control of reverb pitch/processing rate/core size and harmonic structure, and its tone shaping options include a synth-like resonant filter with multiple modulation waveshapes.

This software offers the same unique reverb effects as the NightSky Reverberator pedal on a fully digital and intuitive platform. (Note that the NightSky pedal's sequencing features are not included in the NightSky plugin.) Now you can easily apply NightSky to any types of audio tracks within your DAW software!

You will need to create a Strymon account to download the NightSky 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 NightSky plugin on macOS or Windows® computers, unless otherwise noted. If you run into any trouble using the NightSky 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: NightSky 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 Sonoma 14.8
- 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 11
- 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 NightSky Plugin

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

strymon.net/support/nightsky-plug-in

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

Install Locations

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

macOS

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

Windows

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

Activating NightSky Plugin

Activating the NightSky Plugin Free Trial
The NightSky 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 prior to 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.

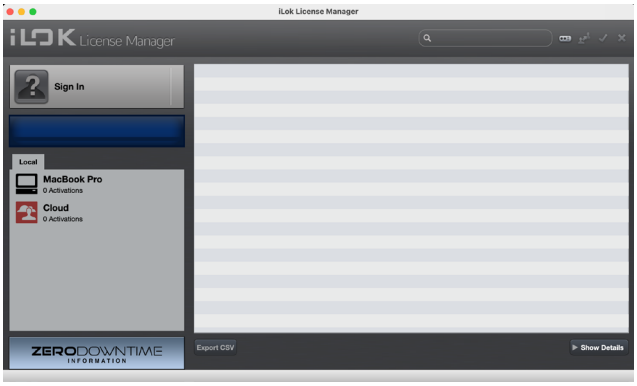
If you purchased the software from the Strymon online store, you can skip to the following **iLok Activation Process** section.

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

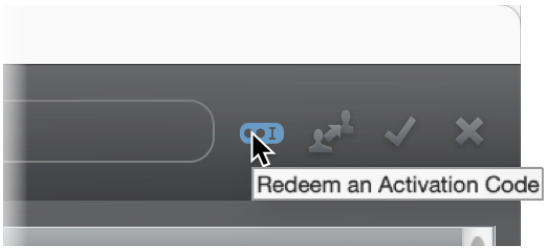
iLok Activation Process

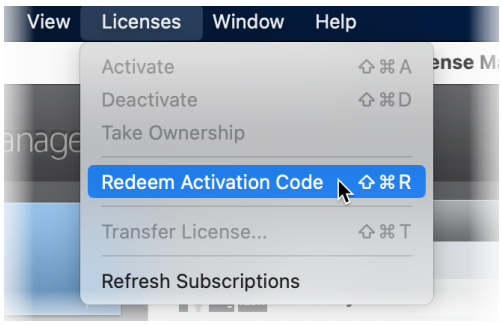
1. **Create an iLok account** at ilok.com. An iLok account is required to complete the activation process. You can skip this step if you already have an iLok account.
2. **Download and install** the iLok License Manager software from the ilok.com website onto your computer. If you already have the iLok 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

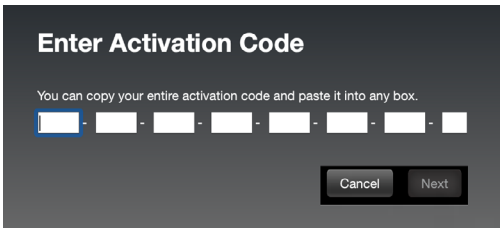
4 **Redeem** your software license by clicking on the **Redeem an Activation Code** button at the top right of the iLok License Manager window, or choose **Redeem Activation Code** from the Licenses menu.





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 NightSky 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 NightSky 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 NightSky 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 NightSky 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 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.

NightSky Plugin Overview

The NightSky plugin utilizes a straight-forward user interface, offering a top toolbar of controls and a main window. The main window provides several sections, each offering sets of reverb parameters: **DECAY, CORE,TONE, MOD, SHIMMER, GLIMMER,** and **DRIVE**. Individual **REVERB MIX** and **DRY MIX** are offered or full control over the wet/dry levels, and **Infinite/Freeze HOLD** options are also available for sustained reverb effects. Please refer to the following sections for all parameter descriptions.

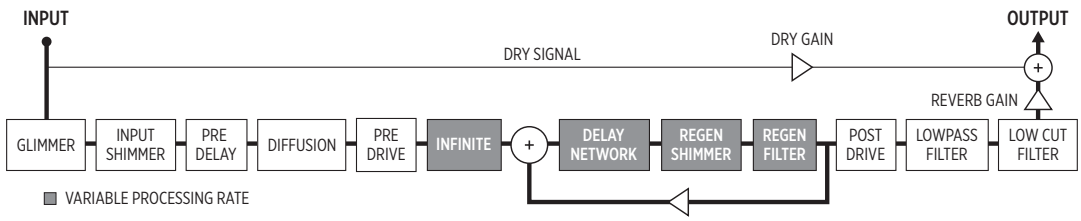
The NightSky plugin interface

Mono and Stereo Operation

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

Signal Flow Diagram

The diagram below illustrates the complete audio routing through the NightSky plugin. Keep in mind that **DRIVE**, **FILTER**, and **SHIMMER** can be located in only one of the shown locations.



Presets

We've provided a set of NightSky 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 NightSky 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.

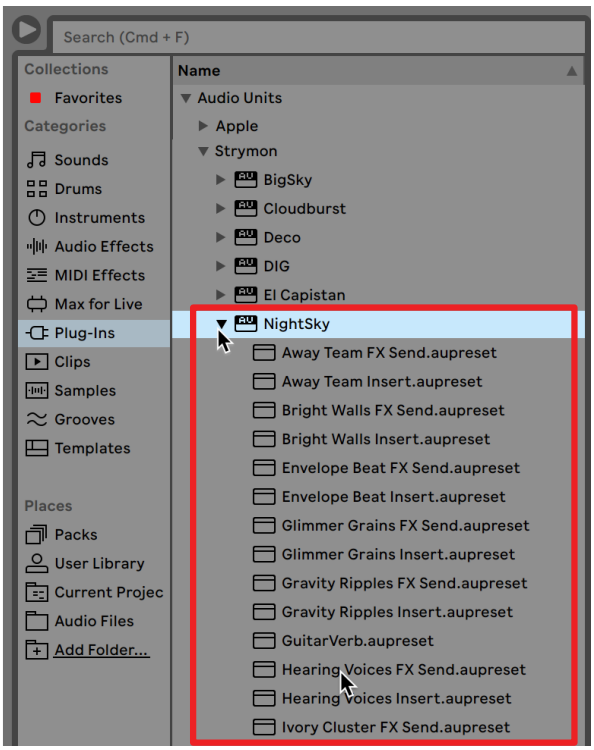
NOTE: As indicated by their titles, Factory Presets are provided in two versions, as indicated by the presets' names:

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

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

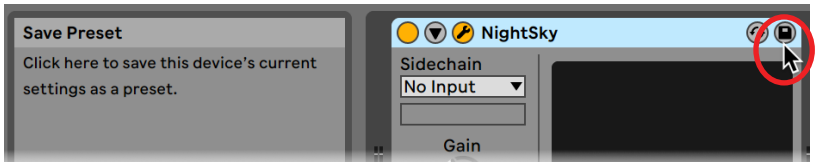
Presets - Ableton® Live

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



Accessing NightSky factory presets from the Ableton Live Plug-Ins Browser

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



Saving NightSky 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 NightSky plugin instance and select one of the presets from the bottom of the menu.

Loading a NightSky preset from Logic's Preset Menu

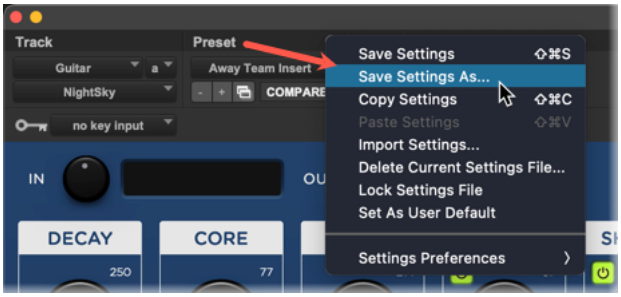
To save your own presets, use the Save options within the menu. Your saved presets will appear at the bottom of the Preset menu list.

Presets - Avid® Pro Tools®

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

Loading a NightSky factory preset in Pro Tools

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



Saving a custom NightSky preset in Pro Tools

The Plugin Toolbar Controls

The NightSky plugin Toolbar

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

IN - Turn the knob to adjust the input signal level entering 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.

OUT - Turn the knob to adjust the overall 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. Note that setting the **GAIN** knob to higher values can cause output clipping. Use this **OUT** knob to reduce the plugin output as needed.

NOTE: When the host app's audio track on which the plugin is inserted is a stereo output track, the In and Out meters display both left and right audio channels, as shown above. When the host audio track utilizes a mono input or output, the meters display one audio channel.

SIDECHAIN - Nightsky plugin offers external control of its **MOD** section via a selectable sidechain input. When one of the **sidechain** options are selected for the **MOD - Shape** setting, the sidechain meter appears to the right of the **OUT** meter. This measures the selected sidechain source's input level for reference.

Selection of the sidechain source is managed in your DAW host application's plugin settings. If no sidechain source is selected, this meter shows no input, and the MOD parameter will not be triggered. See page 21 for details.

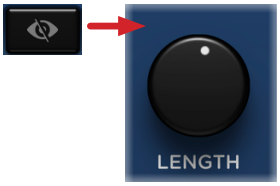
TIP: To quickly reset the Input or Output knob (or any other NightSky plugin knobs or switches) to their default (0dB) value, Option + click (macOS), Alt + click (Windows), or double-click (macOS and Windows) directly on the control.

NUMERIC VALUE VISIBILITY - Click the "eye" 3-way switch to show or hide the knobs' 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 15.)

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).

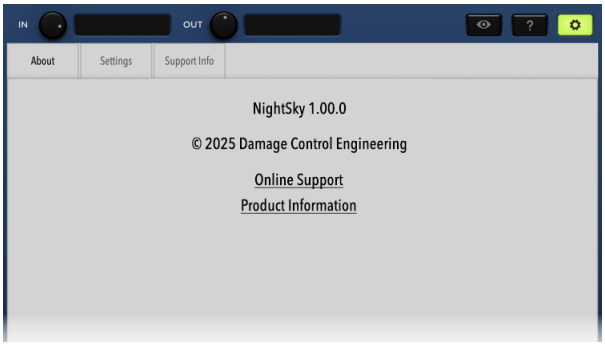


Off - Click once again to hide values (the toolbar button appears crossed out and dimmed).

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.

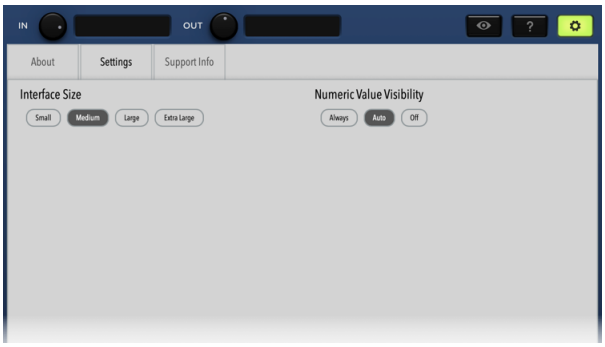
The Help Window is displayed for the Interval parameter

SETTINGS - Click to launch the plugin's About, Settings, and Support Info tabbed screens.



The About tab

- **The About tab** shows the current NightSky plugin version and links to the Strymon website's Online Support and NightSky 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. (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 NightSky plugin version, your DAW host, computer system, and current project and plugin parameter settings. If you are encountering issues using NightSky 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 button  again to return to the plugin interface.

The Effect Parameters

The NightSky plugin window provides its parameters within seven vertically grouped sections. Please refer to the following categories for each sections' parameter descriptions.

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.

Reset any knob control to its initial default value by using Option + click (macOS) or Alt + click (Windows) directly on the knob.

Globally customize the size of the NightSky plugin interface within the plugin's Settings tab. See page 15.

DECAY

Selects the reverb tail and pre-delay duration with additional of texture options.

LENGTH

Adjusts the reverb decay time from less than one second to nearly infinite sustain. At higher **LENGTH** settings, decay time may be impacted by the **TONE** settings.

TEXTURE

Select one of three different reverb textures.

sparse: Granular-sounding reverb that can create interesting effects with staccato inputs, or produce a clean reverb with sustained inputs.

dense: Plate-like reverb with a fast response and dense reflections that can venture into ambient territory at high decay times.

diffuse: Slow-building, atmospheric wash that excels at ambient, swell, and even reverse-like textures.

PRE-DELAY

Adjusts the time between the dry signal and the onset of the reverb.

INFINITE/FREEZE HOLD

The INFINITE and FREEZE options

Select either the **INFINITE** or **FREEZE** mode of operation for the **HOLD** button.

- Select **INFINITE** to set your reverb to continue infinitely, with each new note you play adding to the reverb signal.
- Select **FREEZE** to set as reverb freeze, delivering infinite sustain, and allowing for new notes on top of the sustain without adding to the reverb.

HOLD

Click this button to capture and hold the current audio input to the reverb.

CORE

Selects the reverb architecture and offers varied pitch characteristics.

SIZE/PITCH

Increases the size of the reverb core to create a larger "space" for reflections as the knob is turned clockwise.*

QUANTIZE

Sets the response and range of the **SIZE/PITCH** knob. Select one of three options.

smooth: SIZE/PITCH varies smoothly and continuously over a 2.5 octave pitch range.

half step: SIZE/PITCH is quantized into half-step intervals over a two octave range.

scale: SIZE/PITCH is quantized into selectable scales over a two octave range.

Quantize Mode Pitch Range

For **smooth** mode:

- 12 o'clock = middle of range
- Minimum = 1.25 octaves up
- Maximum = 1.25 octaves down

For **half-step** and **scale** modes:

- 12 o'clock = middle of range
- Minimum = 1 octave up
- Maximum = 1 octave down

SCALE

Select one of eleven scales that determine the quantization intervals of the **SIZE/PITCH** knob when **QUANTIZE** is set to **scale** mode.

1 = minor pentatonic
2 = major pentatonic
3 = major
4 = dorian
5 = minor blues
6 = harmonic minor
7 = whole tone
8 = diminished
9 = phrygian
10 = lydian
11 = quartals

GLIDE

Turn clockwise to add portamento to smooth the changes when SIZE/PITCH is adjusted, either manually or via parameter automation.

***NOTE:** When there is audio in the reverb buffer or held by engaging **HOLD**, adjusting **SIZE/PITCH** will change the pitch of the reverberated audio. Also, see page 18 for **INFINITE/FREEZE HOLD**.

TONE

Provides filtering equalization to the high and low frequency portions of the reverb.

LOW CUT

Removes low end content both at the output and in the regenerating core portion of the reverb as the knob is turned clockwise.

HIGH CUT

Removes high frequency content from the reverb as the knob is turned clockwise. Location and characteristics determined by the **FILTER** section.

FILTER

Configures the response of the **HIGH CUT** knob. Select one of two options.

regen: Removes high frequencies from the regenerating core, creating a reverb that becomes darker as it decays.

low pass: Applies a synth-style peaking, high frequency roll-off to the reverb output, selectively shaping the frequency content. The low pass filter's resonance can be controlled via the **RESONANCE** knob.

RESONANCE

Adjusts the filter Q, or sharpness of the resonant frequency. Higher values result in a peaking response. Lower values create a gradual roll-off.

MOD

Applies modulation to a selectable target parameter according to the selected waveform.

ON/OFF

Click ⏻ to toggle the **MODULATION** On or Off.

SPEED

Adjusts the rate of modulation from 0.06Hz (16 second sweep) to 12Hz (0.08 second sweep).

DEPTH

With the exception of the **envelope** and **sidechain SHAPE** options, this knob adjusts the amount of modulation. See the following **SHAPE** parameter for details.

TARGET

Selects the process to which the modulation is applied. Select one of three options.

verb: Modulates the delay lines within the reverb core.

pitch: Modulates the **SIZE/PITCH** control position.

filter: Modulates the **HIGH CUT** tone control position.

SHAPE

Selects the shape of the modulating waveform. Select one of ten options.

triangle: The modulation wave rises and falls evenly.

square: The modulation wave jumps between two fixed values.

ramp: The modulation wave rises gradually and falls abruptly.

saw: The modulation wave falls gradually and rises abruptly.

random: The modulation wave jumps between random values.

envelope +/-: The modulation responds to audio input dynamics with its sensitivity set by the **DEPTH** knob as the knob is turned clockwise.

- With **envelope +**, the envelope starts at a lower value and goes to a higher value with an input signal (positive modulation).
- With **envelope -**, the envelope starts at a higher value and goes to a lower value with an input signal (negative modulation).

sidechain +/-/lfo: The modulation responds to sidechain input dynamics with its sensitivity set by the **DEPTH** knob, as the knob is turned clockwise. (See the next section for details about using the sidechain options.)

- With **sidechain +**, the envelope starts at a lower value and goes to a higher value with a sidechain input signal (positive modulation).
- With **sidechain -**, the envelope starts at a higher value and goes to a lower value with a sidechain input signal (negative modulation).
- With **sidechain lfo**, the envelope follows the waveform received from the sidechain input signal.

Using The MOD Sidechain Options

DAW host applications typically provide a menu or control within the header of the plugin window to select a "sidechain" audio source. The source can be another audio track, aux track, or bus, which allows the plugin's sidechain parameters to be dynamically controlled by its level in real-time. For example, a kick drum can work well as a sidechain source since is dynamic and rhythmic. For the NightSky plugin, this allows its modulation to be controlled by the selected sidechain audio's level, as described for each of the **Shape** - **sidechain +**, **-**, and **lfo** options above.

DAW Host Sidechain Configuration

The typical steps for configuring a sidechain input for NightSky plugin within a DAW host app are as follows. Please also refer to your app's documentation for details.

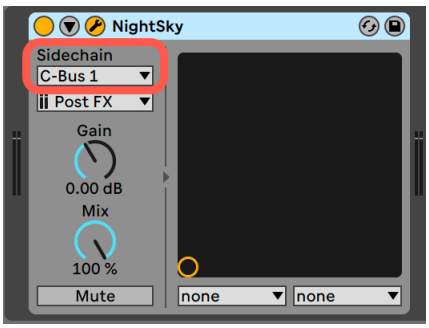
1. Insert an instance of NightSky on the desired track in your DAW project. In the **MOD** section's **Shape** parameter list, select one of the **sidechain** options.

Selecting a MOD - Shape - sidechain option

2. Determine the audio track you want to use as the source for triggering NightSky plugin's modulation, such as a kick drum track. Typically, you'll want to create a send from this source kick drum track to an unused bus in your project, such as Bus 1.

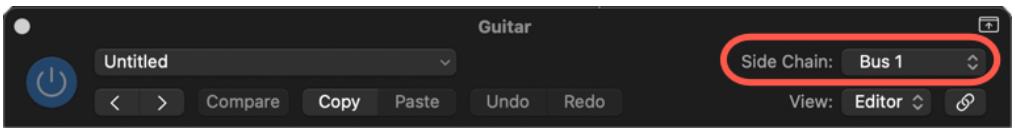
3. On the target track where the NightSky plugin is inserted, open the plugin window and click on its "Sidechain" menu to select the Bus to which the kick drum's send is routed. This allows NightSky to receive the kick drum audio as its sidechain source. The name of this menu differs among DAW host apps, as shown below.

Ableton Live:



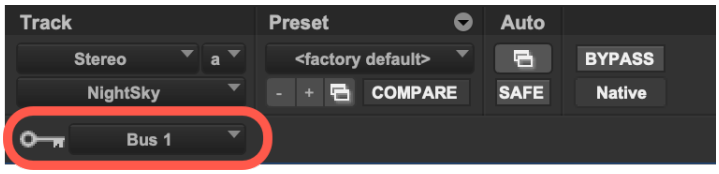
Ableton Live - NightSky plugin interface,
with its "Sidechain" menu set to use Bus 1

Logic Pro:



Logic Pro - NightSky plugin window header,
with its "Side Chain" menu set to use Bus 1

Pro Tools:



Pro Tools - NightSky plugin window header,
with its "Key Input" menu is set to use Bus 1 as the sidechain audio source

4 Adjust the send level from the (kick drum - Bus 1) trigger track as desired to control the intensity of the sidechain effect heard for the NightSky plugin. With a **sidechain** option selected for Nightsky's **MOD - Shape** setting, you'll see the **SIDECHAIN meter** appear at the top the plugin, which measures the input level of your selected source for reference.

NightSky plugin's SIDECHAIN input meter

SHIMMER

Adds pitch, harmonics, and distortion to the reverberated signal.

SHIMMER ON/OFF

Click ⏻ to toggle **SHIMMER** On or Off.

AMOUNT

Sets the amount of the shimmer effect, increasing as the knob is turned clockwise.

TYPE

Select either **input** or **regenerative** type shimmer.

input: Shimmer effect is applied to the input of the reverb core and does not regenerate.

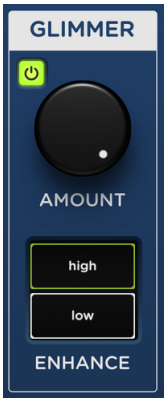
regen: Shimmer effect is applied within the reverb core and the effect is regenerative, resulting in continuously ascending or descending pitches as the reverb decays.

INTERVAL

Selects the pitch interval of the shimmer effect. Two octaves of total range from **-1 octave** to **+1 octave**, as well as **-detune** and **+detune**.

GLIMMER

Creates a harmonically enhanced spectrum from the reverb output.



ON/OFF

Click ⏻ to toggle **GLIMMER** On or Off.

AMOUNT

Adjusts the sensitivity of the glimmer effect to the input signal.

ENHANCE

Dynamically enhances aspects of the input signal's harmonic spectrum. Select the **high** or **low** option.

high: Higher frequency harmonics are accentuated, creating a washy, dreamy top end.

low: Lower frequency harmonics are enhanced, creating mysterious and synth-like textures.

DRIVE

Adds saturated overdriven harmonics to the reverb.

ON/OFF

Click to toggle the **DRIVE** On or Off.

GAIN

Adjusts the sensitivity of the drive effect.

POSITION

Adds saturated overdriven harmonics with a soft clipping characteristic to the reverb. Select the pre or post option.

pre: Applies drive to the signal before the reverb core.

post: Applies drive after the reverb core, allowing the reverb tail to dynamically go into and out of saturation as the reverb decays.

MIX

Sets the output levels of the dry and reverberated signals.

The REVERB and DRY MIX knobs

MIX LOCK

Each **MIX** knob offers a lock button which, when enabled (lit), locks the knob's current setting so that it remains unaffected by plugin preset changes and is detached from your host application's parameter automation.

REVERB MIX

Sets the output level of the reverberated signal.

DRY MIX

Sets the output level of the dry signal:

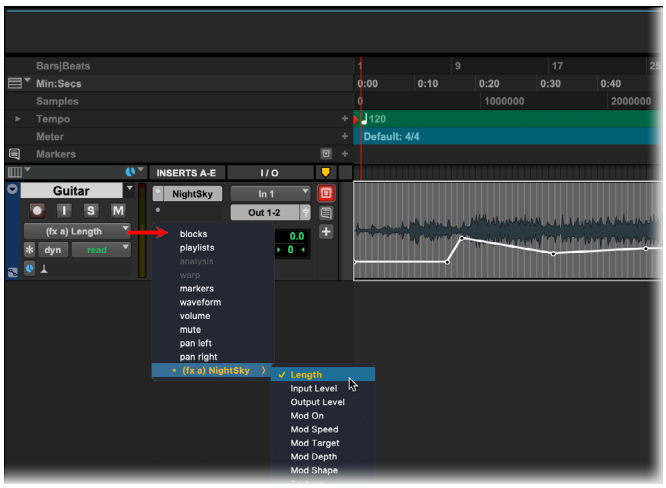
- No dry signal at minimum
- Unity gain at 12 o'clock
- +3dB boost of the dry signal at maximum

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 NightSky parameters can be a great way to add some unique textures or extreme effects to your track!

The NightSky plugin's Decay Length parameter is automated within a Pro Tools 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 handles automation in their own unique way, so please refer to the user manual of the DAW host for information and instructions.



Selecting a NightSky plugin automation parameter within a Pro Tools audio track

Features

- Three selectable reverb types offer a wide variety of ambient textures
- **DECAY** section offers different textures, with adjustable decay lengths and pre-delay
- **CORE** section with size and pitch options to increase or decrease the space and pitch-shifting of the reflections
- **TONE** section to sculpt the high and low EQ of the reverb, and a selectable filter and resonance for additional reverb voicing
- **MOD** section with various waveforms to modulate the reverb or tone filters
- Sidechain input for external control of the **MOD** section
- **SHIMMER** section for adding pitch shifting of up to +/- 1 octave of the reverb
- **GLIMMER** dynamically enhances harmonics for synth-like textures
- Pre or Post **DRIVE** to add saturated overdriven harmonics to the reverb
- **INFINITE/FREEZE** hold for infinite sustain of reverb effect
- Independent **REVERB** and **DRY** level controls
- 4-pole 24dB/octave variable resonance low pass filter for synth-like filter sweeps

Troubleshooting

How to Obtain Service Under this Warranty

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

strymon.net/support/nightsky-plug-in