



VERSILIAN STUDIOS LLC.



The Strumstick

PRODUCT MANUAL



INTRODUCTION

The McNally Strumstick is a three stringed pseudo-guitar designed by Bob McNally. Although its focus is as a beginners' instrument, it is still a usable and unique sounding instrument. The instrument comes in two main flavors, a smaller 'Super G', and a larger 'D Grand'. With both diatonic as well as chromatic instruments, there is a large variety to choose from and the instrument can be suitable even for professional musicians as a unique doubling or traveling instrument.

Applicable genres for the D Grand Strumstick range widely from folk, cinematic, and world to even pop, rock, and ambient. With a tone reminiscent of a guitar, banjo, and sitar all in one, it's a great fit for fantasy and historical music. For added fun, try running it through guitar effects! We encourage you to explore and enjoy this beautiful instrument!

DEVELOPMENT

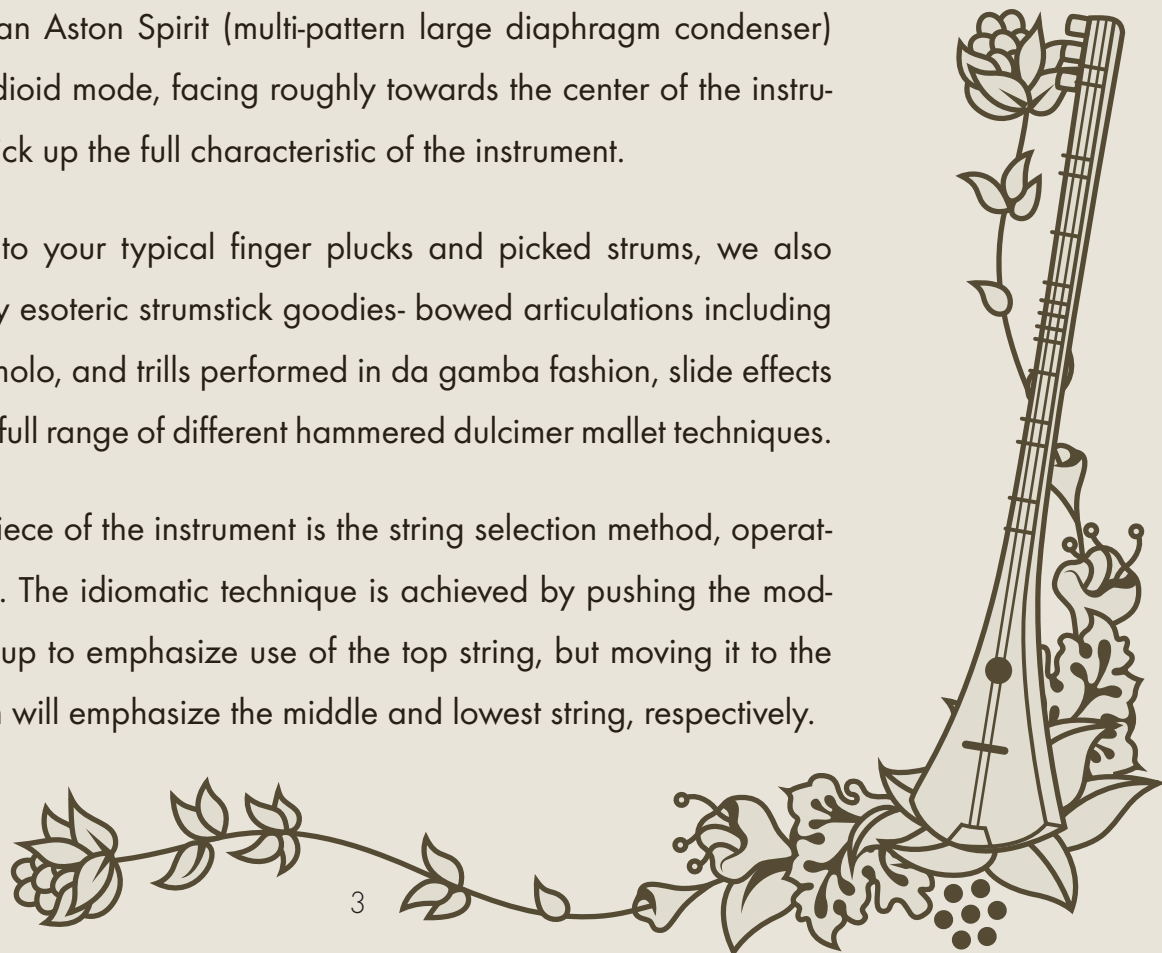
The instrument sampled was a spruce-top diatonic 'D Grand' model strumstick we found at a tag sale. The user had replaced the original strings with their own mix of banjo and guitar strings, giving it a particularly interesting sound.

Sampling was done over a six hour period (with breaks for the sake of the fingers) in a studio environment. A total of 20 unique articulations were recorded on the full diatonic range of each string at 2-8 RR for all non-fx techniques and up to three velocity layers. Releases were also sampled, to allow the strings to be damped properly.

The recordings are centered around the main pair, a set of Rode NT5's set up in a NOS array approximately 18" from the instrument facing towards the center. At 6", an Aston Spirit (multi-pattern large diaphragm condenser) was placed in cardioid mode, facing roughly towards the center of the instrument, in order to pick up the full characteristic of the instrument.

In addition to your typical finger plucks and picked strums, we also included some truly esoteric strumstick goodies- bowed articulations including standard arco, tremolo, and trills performed in da gamba fashion, slide effects and chords, and a full range of different hammered dulcimer mallet techniques.

The centerpiece of the instrument is the string selection method, operated with modwheel. The idiomatic technique is achieved by pushing the modwheel all the way up to emphasize use of the top string, but moving it to the middle and bottom will emphasize the middle and lowest string, respectively.

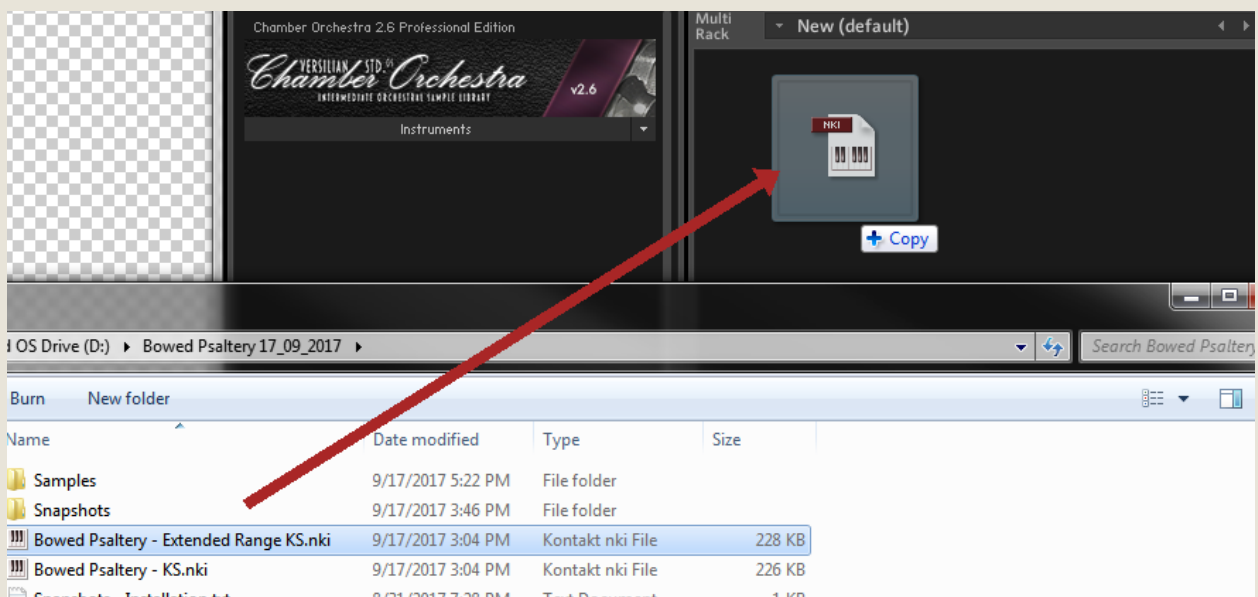


INSTALLATION

Begin installation by downloading the library after completing checkout. This will result in a single .zip file containing the entire library. Extract the contents of this .zip and you will see a folder called “The Strumstick”.

Place this folder wherever you would like the library to be accessed from in the future – this could be on an external hard drive, an internal SSD, or your main hard drive.

To use the library, drag and drop any of the .nki (Kontakt instruments) into an instance of Kontakt (either standalone or plug-in), as shown below.



SNAPSHOTS

Within the “The Strumstick” folder you will also find a folder labeled “Snapshots.” The contents of folder belong in your user files for Kontakt, and will provide you with some unique preset settings. Typically these are found in <User>/Documents/ Native Instruments/User Content/Kontakt.

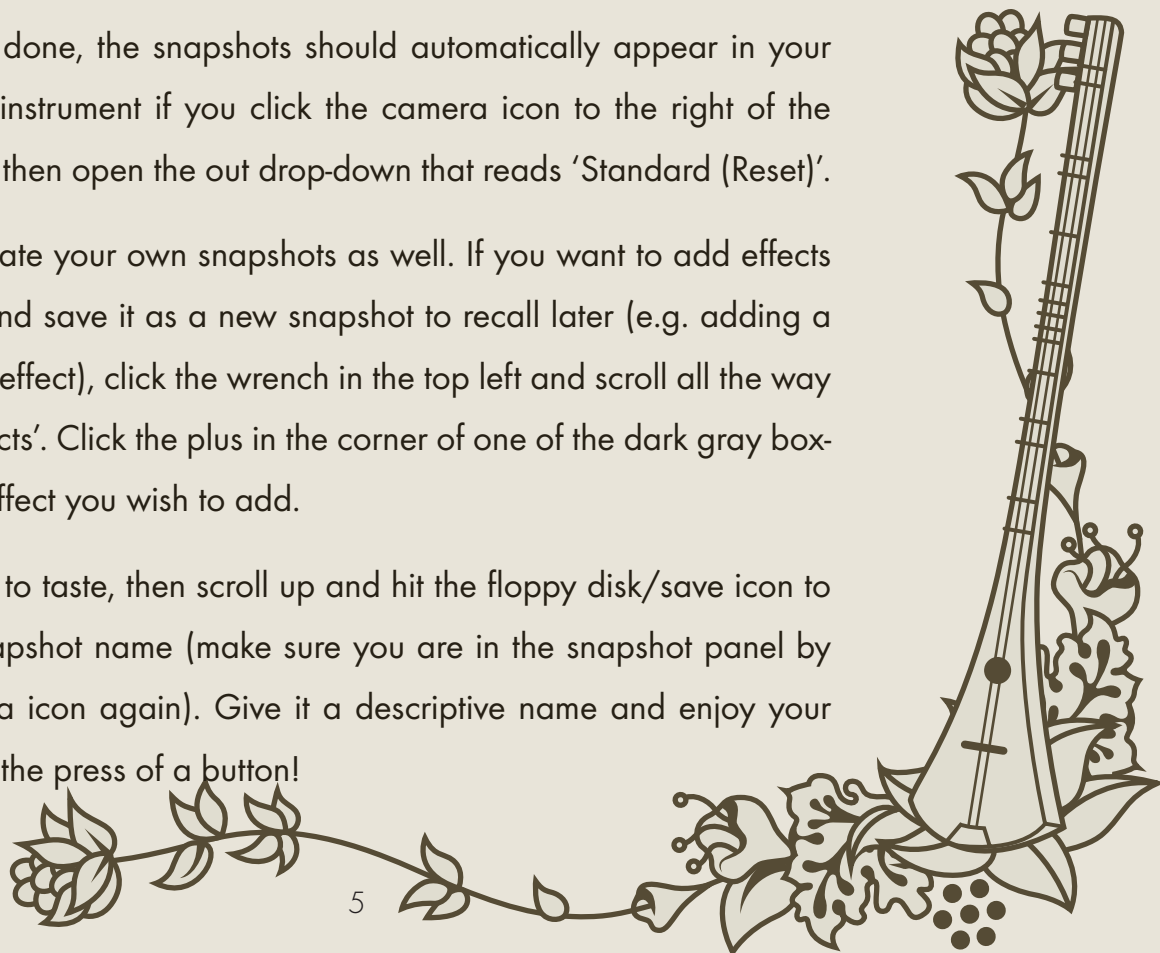
However, if you want to check this to be sure, you can click the wrench in the top left corner of the instrument, then click “Instrument Options”, then “Snapshots”. Next to the directory listed press “Show” and it will open up the location where the snapshots should go.

Copy over the four folders *within* the ‘Snapshots’ folder named “Strumstick - Extended Techniques KS” through “Strumstick - Picked KS” directly into the ‘Kontakt’ folder you now have open.

After this is done, the snapshots should automatically appear in your open copy of the instrument if you click the camera icon to the right of the product name and then open the out drop-down that reads ‘Standard (Reset)’.

You can create your own snapshots as well. If you want to add effects to the instrument and save it as a new snapshot to recall later (e.g. adding a delay or distortion effect), click the wrench in the top left and scroll all the way down to ‘InsertEffects’. Click the plus in the corner of one of the dark gray boxes and select the effect you wish to add.

Configure it to taste, then scroll up and hit the floppy disk/save icon to the right of the snapshot name (make sure you are in the snapshot panel by clicking the camera icon again). Give it a descriptive name and enjoy your handiwork later at the press of a button!

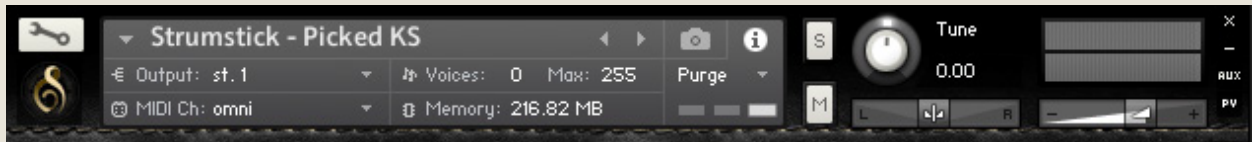




OPERATION

Once loaded in Kontakt, the GUI will become available to you. This convenient window will provide nearly everything you need to control and shape the sound of the instrument from swapping articulations to controlling the stereo image to help it fit in your mix. In this section of the manual, I'll walk you through each part of the GUI and typical settings.





Starting with the top of the instrument, we have the default Kontakt header. This area provides basic instrument settings and allows you to shrink or expand the GUI as needed.

On the left is the wrench icon, which allows access “under the hood” of the instrument. This is best for veteran Kontakt users only, but is worth exploring if you’re new to Kontakt as well.

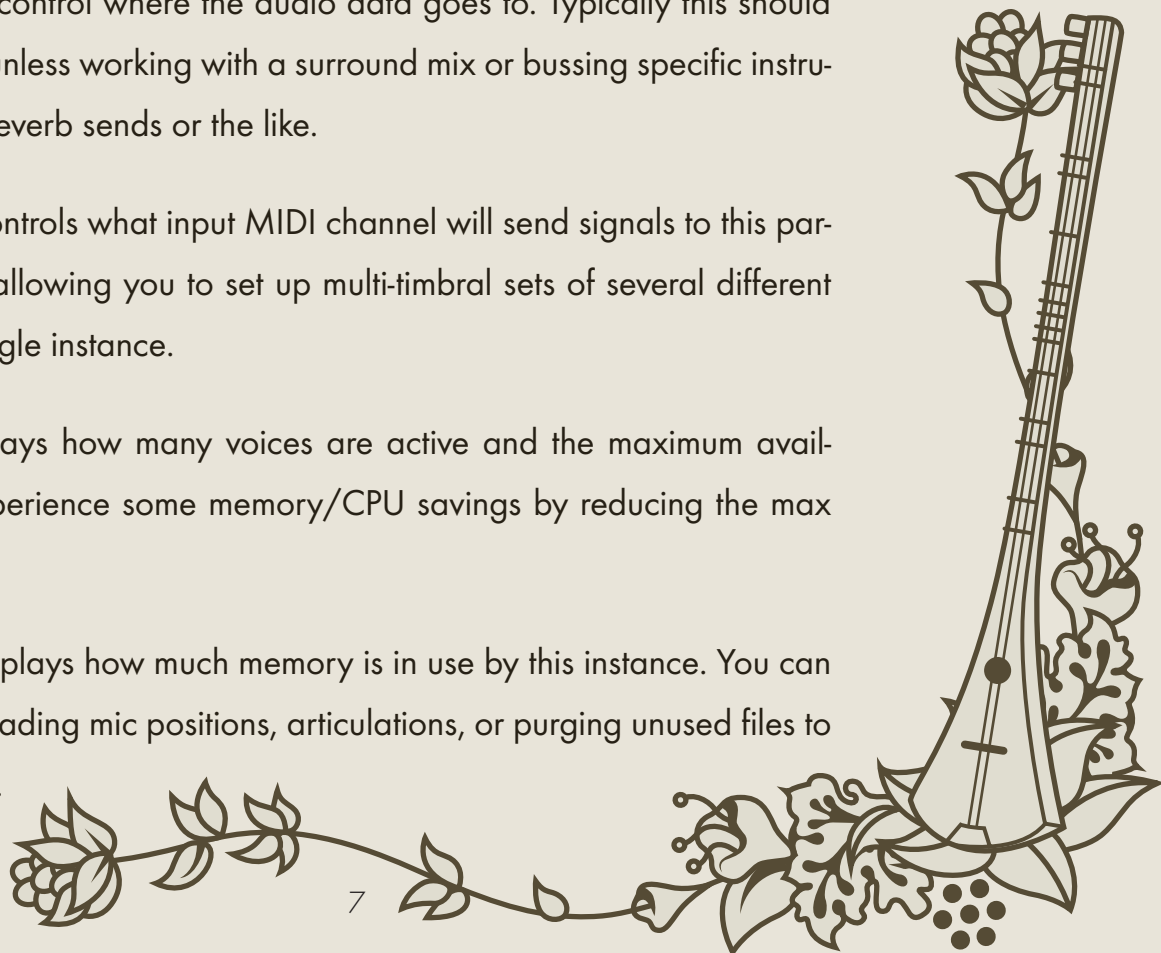
The central gray box displays general information and settings for the instrument. You can swap this display over to show the snapshots menu simply by pressing the camera icon to the right, and vice versa by pressing the information ‘i’ icon.

Output will control where the audio data goes to. Typically this should be left untouched unless working with a surround mix or bussing specific instruments to different reverb sends or the like.

MIDI Ch. controls what input MIDI channel will send signals to this particular instrument, allowing you to set up multi-timbral sets of several different instruments in a single instance.

Voices displays how many voices are active and the maximum available. You may experience some memory/CPU savings by reducing the max number.

Memory displays how much memory is in use by this instance. You can reduce this by unloading mic positions, articulations, or purging unused files to the right-hand side.





The central part of the GUI is dedicated to shaping the sound of the instrument.

To the left are the controls for the available mic positions. There are a volume slider (vertical), a purge/load button (to reduce the memory footprint when not in use), and a pan slider (horizontal) for each position.

The Close mic is an Aston Spirit LDC about 6" from the center of the instrument. The Main mic is a pair of Rode NT5 SDC's about 18" back in a NOS configuration.

Beneath the mic position controls are horizontal controls for stereo width and stereo pan. These use delay and other special processes to truly perceptually move the instrument around the virtual soundscape as opposed to traditional volume-based pan found in your DAW or mixer, providing a much more realistic result, especially when used in subtle combination.

To the right is the effects stack, which again have off and on toggles for loading and unloading effects. On the top is a simple low-pass/high-pass filter. You can use this to shape the instrument's sound or remove unwanted noises.

Below that is the convolution reverb, which provides an excellent and realistic hall sound. The pre-delay controls when the sound of the instrument reaches the mics after bouncing off the walls. This is similar to placing the mics farther or closer to the sound source (it takes about 2.9 ms for sound to travel one meter, or 0.9 ms for sound to travel

one foot, so place your pre-delay accordingly to fit your virtual placement.

The 'Room' is a measure of how much room sound (i.e. reverb) is mixed back into the signal. This is typically best between -15 and -5 dB. Below that and the reverb will not sound much, and higher may result in a muddy tone.

Finally, the 'R. Size' (room size) will control how large the space is. At 50%, it is analogous to a medium rehearsal space. At 100% a full concert hall, and beyond that it enters surreal levels of size.

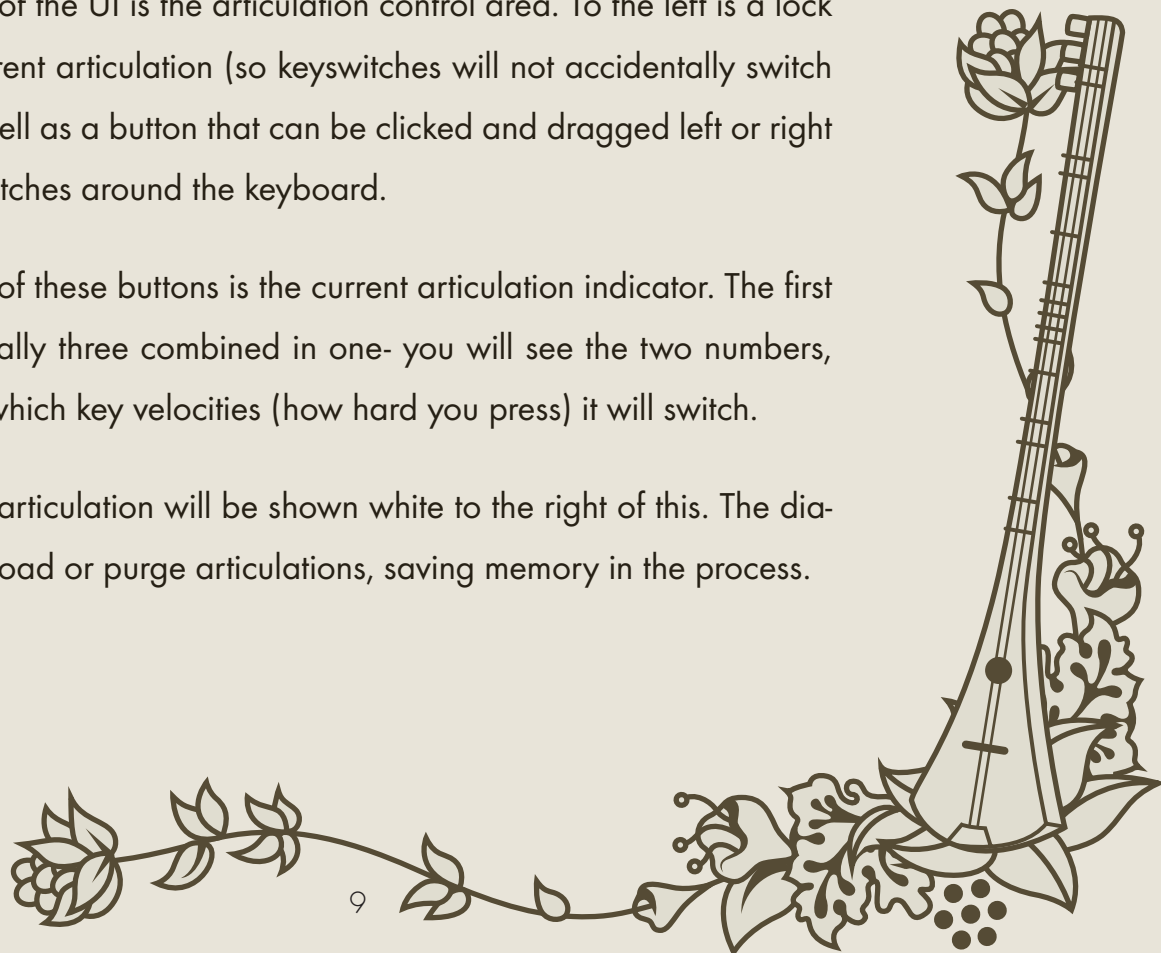
At the bottom are controls for the attack of the samples (i.e. 'fade in'), and the volume of the sampled release tails. These are both articulation-specific, meaning that when you set one, it will only set that for the particular articulation you are on, making tweaking articulation responsiveness easy and painless.



The bottom of the UI is the articulation control area. To the left is a lock for locking the current articulation (so keyswitches will not accidentally switch articulations), as well as a button that can be clicked and dragged left or right to move the keyswitches around the keyboard.

To the right of these buttons is the current articulation indicator. The first articulation is actually three combined in one- you will see the two numbers, which indicate at which key velocities (how hard you press) it will switch.

The current articulation will be shown white to the right of this. The diamonds below will load or purge articulations, saving memory in the process.







PATCHES & ARTICULATIONS

Within the instruments folder, you will find several .nki files. Each file allows access to a different set of samples or sound generated from those samples.

 [Strumstick - Extended Techniques KS.nki](#)

 [Strumstick - Fingered KS.nki](#)

 [Strumstick - Picked KS.nki](#)

Extended Techniques KS provides access to unconventional techniques not typically performed on strumstick including bowed, slide tremolo, and hammered.

Fingered KS provides access to finger-style articulations.

Picked KS provides access to articulations played with a guitar pick.

Within these patches you will find the following articulations:

Fingered (normal) - Open/Stopped

Fingered Slide Up/Down (diatonic D stretched to fill in gaps)

Fingered Chords Up/Down Modwheel - modwheel controls direction

Fingered Chords Up/Down RR Alternating - auto alternates direction

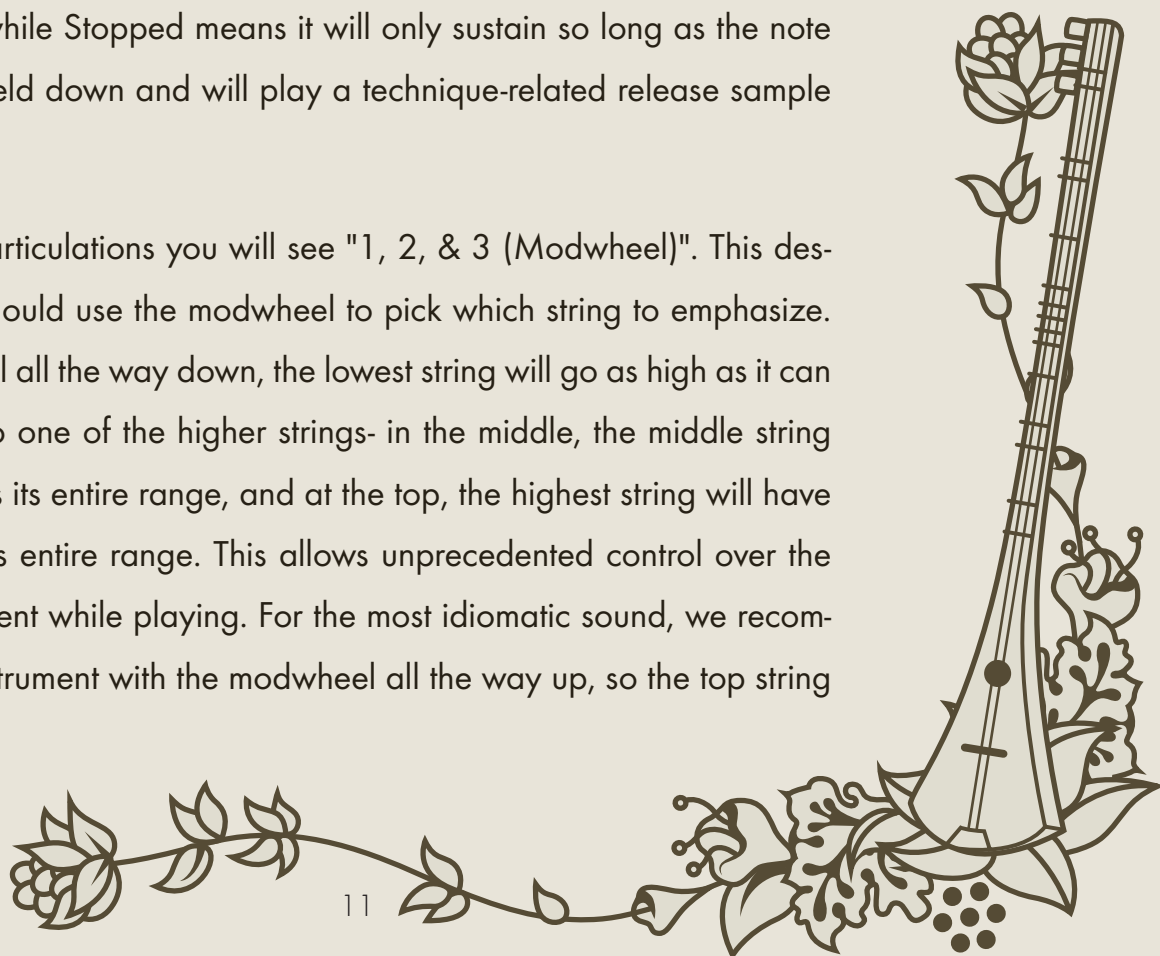
Picked (normal) - Open/Stopped

Picked Vib[rato] - Open/Stopped

Picked Slide Up/Down (diatonic D stretched to fill in gaps)
Picked Chords Up/Down RR Alternating - auto alternates direction
Picked Slide Chords Up/Down - slide style on chords
Bowed - String 1 (lowest string only)
Bowed - String 3 (highest string only)
Bowed - Drones (across all three strings at once, open 5th drone)
Bowed - Tremolo
Bowed - Trill (lowest string only)
Crazy Tremolo - slide style chord tremolo
Fret Tremolo - frets tapped with marker to create tremolo effect
Hammered - Normal (hammered dulcimer mallet back)
Hammered - Soft (hammered dulcimer mallet front)
Hammered - Flam (mallet allowed to bounce freely)

You will also observe that there are "Open" and "Stopped" versions of many articulations. Open means it will sustain automatically and will not play release samples, while Stopped means it will only sustain so long as the note (or sus pedal) is held down and will play a technique-related release sample when let go.

After most articulations you will see "1, 2, & 3 (Modwheel)". This designates that you should use the modwheel to pick which string to emphasize. With the modwheel all the way down, the lowest string will go as high as it can before switching to one of the higher strings- in the middle, the middle string will be used across its entire range, and at the top, the highest string will have emphasis across its entire range. This allows unprecedented control over the tone of the instrument while playing. For the most idiomatic sound, we recommend using the instrument with the modwheel all the way up, so the top string is used most.





TROUBLESHOOTING

If you are experiencing issues with the library, there are a few steps you can try to resolve the issues before contacting us. Below is a list of common possible problems and 'home remedies' that will work to fix them.

1. Samples missing dialogue.

If you see this window, it means that the samples were moved or are missing from their original location. If you can find the samples, move them into the 'The Strumstick' folder. If you still get the dialogue, do a batch re-save. Select the floppy disk icon at the top of the Kontakt window towards the right and select 'Batch Re-save'. Navigate to the 'The Strumstick' folder and select it. When the dialogue pops up, click 'Search for folder' and select the samples folder. After the batch re-save is complete, you should not experience any further samples missing dialogues.

2. Instrument uses up too much memory or CPU.

Use the diamonds beneath the articulations to purge any you doubt you will typically need, and turn off any effects you don't use (filter/reverb). You can also do this with mic positions, disabling any you don't typically use. Save this patch (under the floppy

disk/save icon at the top of the Kontakt window itself) so that way it will load this way by default. Note that snapshots include which articulations and mic positions are selected and enabled/disabled, so factory snapshots should be avoided.

3. Instrument is only available in "DEMO" mode.

This is caused by trying to run the instruments in Kontakt Player. Unfortunately there's nothing we can do about this- making libraries for Kontakt Player requires a licensing agreement with Native Instruments, which is simply not economical for small products like this.

However, Kontakt is on sale often around December/January for \$200 USD, and honestly that's not a bad price to pay for the "gateway drug" to literally thousands of free and commercial sample libraries. Regardless, we would be happy to offer you a refund if you are experiencing this issue and aren't interested in upgrading to the full Kontakt.

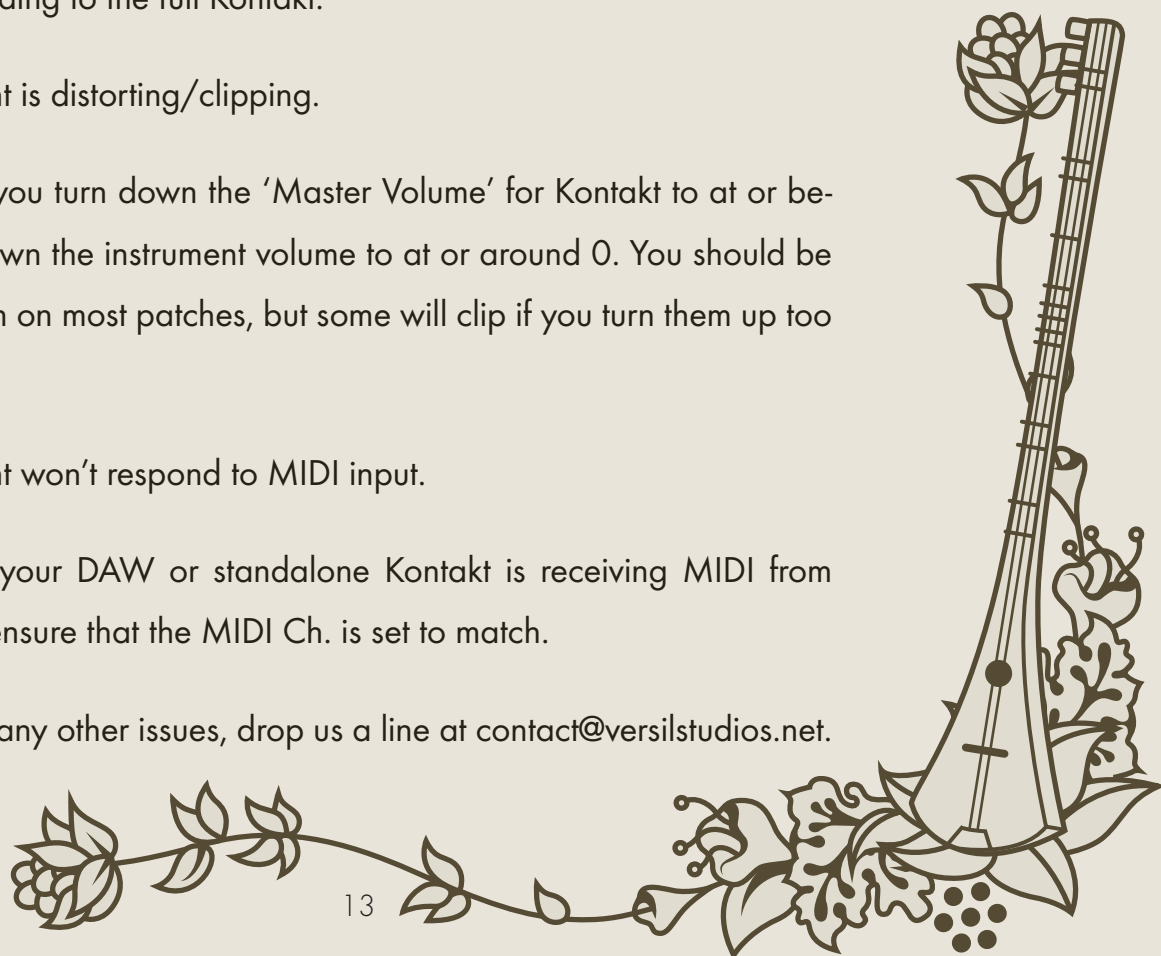
4. Instrument is distorting/clipping.

Make sure you turn down the 'Master Volume' for Kontakt to at or below 0, and turn down the instrument volume to at or around 0. You should be fine with some gain on most patches, but some will clip if you turn them up too much.

5. Instrument won't respond to MIDI input.

Make sure your DAW or standalone Kontakt is receiving MIDI from your device, then ensure that the MIDI Ch. is set to match.

If you have any other issues, drop us a line at contact@versilstudios.net.





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