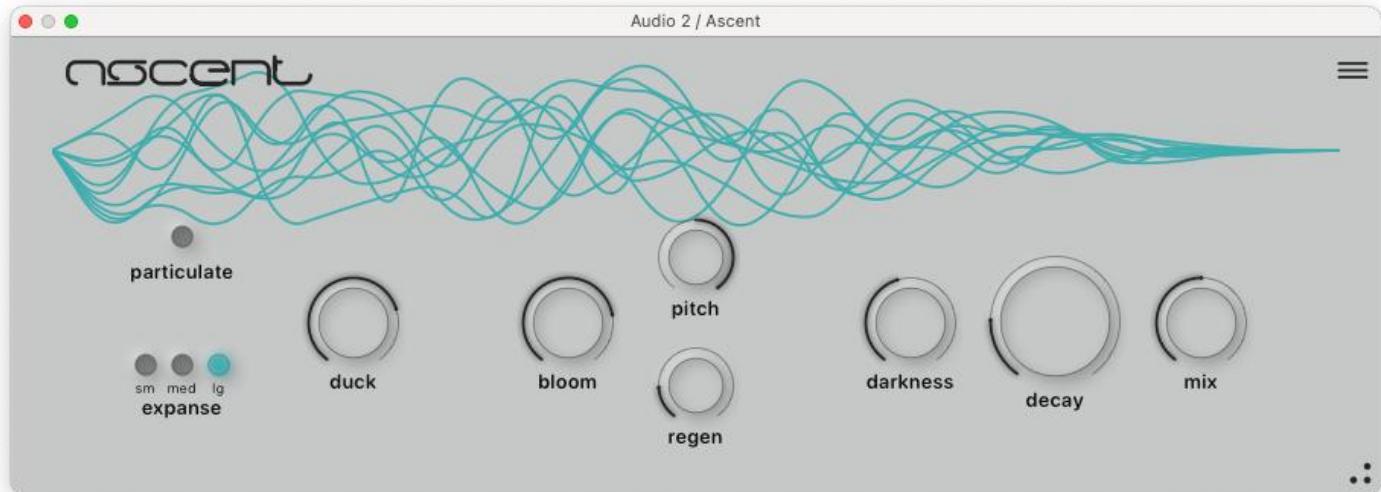


Ascent User's Guide

Audio Damage, Inc.

Release 1.0



4 November 2025

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Credits

Software Design and Construction, Documentation

Chris Randall
Adam Schabtach

Field Testing

Stephen Boyd
Chris Hahn
Steve Hamann
David Henkel
Christian Puffer
Kent Williams

Made Possible By

Elle
Tracie

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System Requirements

The following table summarizes the operating system requirements and formats provided for Ascent. Ascent is a 64-bit plugin.

Operating System	Minimum Version	Formats
macOS	10.13	AAX, AudioUnit, CLAP, VST3; Intel and Apple Silicon
Windows	10.0	AAX, CLAP, VST3
Ubuntu	18.0	CLAP, LV2, VST3
iOS (separate purchase)	iOS 12	AUv3

Demonstration Version

We encourage you to download and try the demonstration version of Ascent before purchasing it. The demo version of Ascent is the same as the regular version, but has the following limitations:

- Presets cannot be saved, nor can parameter values or other settings. This includes the information usually stored by your host DAW. If you save a DAW session with an instance of the demo version of Ascent, Ascent will revert to its default state when you reload the session.
- Ascent will cease to emit audio altogether 20 minutes after you add it to your DAW session. You can remove it and add it again, but it will revert to its default state.

If you purchase Ascent after using the demonstration version, simply run the installer provided to you after your purchase to replace the demo version with the full version.

Introduction

With Ascent, Audio Damage explores and expands the popular “shimmer” or “shimmer reverb” effect. Credited to the studio explorations of Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois in the early 1980s, the shimmer effect involves a feedback loop of a reverb processor and a pitch shifter set for a one-octave upward shift. The continuous recirculation of the upward-shifted, reverberant sound generates sustained tones that seem to rise endlessly in pitch.

Ascent extends this effect by using two reverbs: a large hall reverb for long, smooth washes, and a bespoke reverb with two sets of pitch shifters. One set shifts the pitch of the reverb’s tail as usual for a shimmer effect. The second set can be applied to the delay lines present in the beginning of the reverb processor used to create what are referred to as the early reflections of the reverb effect. Since these pitch shifters seem to pull apart the sound into small pieces of different pitches, we call it the particle reverb. The output of the particle reverb passes into the hall reverb, resulting in extremely lush sounds.

To help fit Ascent’s ample lushness into your mixes, we’ve added an internal ducking compressor which can reduce the pitch-shift/reverb effects in the presence of the input signal, allowing the effect to swell after you play. Not only does Ascent shimmer, it also rises, falls, and breaths in response to you playing.

While creating Ascent we started thinking of it as an Instant Good Button for synths. We hope that you enjoy using it as much as we do.

Installation

Ascent uses our custom plugin manager application for installation. Launch it as usual on your operating system of choice and you’ll be presented with a window like this:



Near the top of the window, beneath the large word ASCENT, you'll see the version number of the software carried by the installer. This is distinct from the version of the plugin manager itself, which is shown in the upper right and usually not of much interest.

Under the heading FORMATS are large buttons corresponding to the plugin formats which can be installed: AAX, AU, CLAP, LV2 and/or VST3, depending on the operating system. If the plugin is already present on your system in one or more formats (i.e. if you're upgrading from a previous version), the corresponding button is drawn in blue. When possible, the version number of the existing plugin is also shown.

Click a button to select the format for installation. A yellow outline appears around the button to indicate that its format will be installed. In the above screenshot, VST3 and CLAP are installed, AAX is not installed, and VST3 is selected for installation. The older instance of the VST3 plugin will be overwritten by the version contained in the plugin manager. Clicking a button a second time removes the yellow outline, and the corresponding format will not be installed. Clicking the SELECT ALL button selects all available formats for installation.

No changes to your system's storage device take place until you click the INSTALL button near the lower-right corner of the window. Click that button and you'll receive visual confirmation that the formats you've selected have been installed. (Yes, it happens quickly.) On Windows and Linux, if you hold down the Shift key on your keyboard, the INSTALL button's label switches to UNINSTALL, and clicking it will remove the selected formats from your system¹. Once you're installed and/or removed the formats you need, simply close the application in the usual manner for your operating system. You're done. There is no license code or other authorization necessary; we'd rather assume we can trust you than burden you with an onerous DRM system.

You'll find some handy buttons under the EXTRAS heading, all of which are pretty self-explanatory:

EULA – presents the End-User License Agreement for our products. By clicking the INSTALL button you're implicitly agreeing to these terms, but we expect that you'll find them reasonable should you take the time to read them.

MANUAL – opens the current version of this user manual, in PDF form, in your web browser.

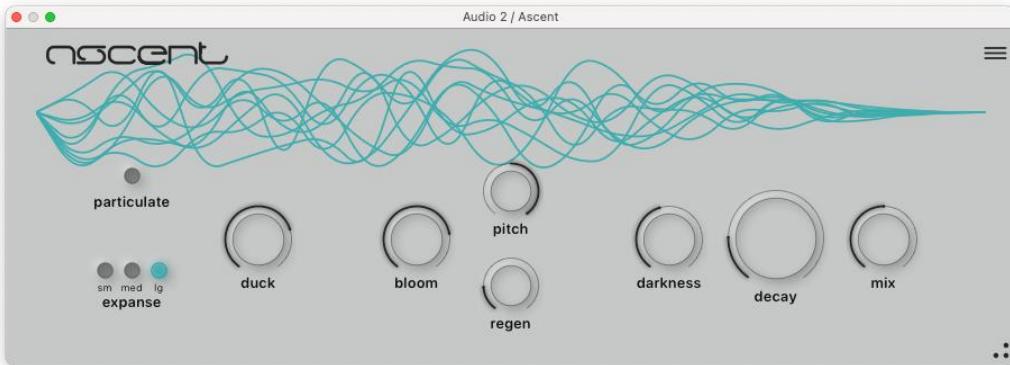
WEBSITE – opens the product's web page in your browser.

SUPPORT – displays information for contacting us, either via our Discord presence or through email.

¹ Blame Apple, not us, for the lack of this feature on macOS. On macOS just manually delete the plugin(s) from your plugin folder(s).

Operation

Ascent is very much a "turn the knobs until it sounds good" plugin. There is some interaction between some of the controls and there are no rules about how creative effects should be applied. However, to aid you in your experimentation, we'll describe each of the controls, moving from left to right.



Particulate - turning on the Particulate switch adds random pitch shifting to the initial delay lines in the particle reverb. These pitch shifters are distinct from the shifters used on the reverb tail, but their effect is proportionate to the Pitch knob.

Expanse - this three-position switch controls the apparent size of the reverberant space simulated by Ascent. Since Ascent is for special effects rather than accurate reverberation simulation, the choices Small, Medium, and Large are relative and do not correspond to any specific measurements.

Duck - turning up the Duck knob reduces the level of the reverb sound in proportion to the level of the input signal. In other words, if you turn this knob up, you won't hear Ascent while you're playing your instrument, but you'll hear it after you stop playing. This can be useful to help balance Ascent's sound with your original sound, and/or to create interesting swelling effects.

Bloom - the Bloom knob adjusts several internal parameters in Ascent, but its most important role is adjusting the input for the main reverb. The main reverb receives its signal from the plugin's input and/or the output of the particle reverb. If the Bloom control is fully anti-clockwise, the main reverb receives only the input signal. If Bloom is fully clockwise, the main reverb receives only the output of the particle reverb. In-between settings give the main reverb a proportional blend of both. The numeric value reflects the amount of the particle reverb signal as a percentage.

Pitch - the Pitch knob varies the apparent pitch of the sound recirculating in the particle reverb. It works in units of semitones, ranging from -12 (an octave down) to +12 (an octave up). At its center position the pitch isn't changed. The classic shimmer effect uses a pitch shift of +12 but other intervals are also interesting. It also affects a second pitch-shifting operation when the Particle switch is engaged, as described above.

Regen - short for Regeneration, this knob feeds the output of the particle reverb's pitch-shifted signal back into its input. For settings of Pitch other than zero, this feedback patch creates ascending or descending pitch effects as the sound recirculates through the reverb and pitch shifters.

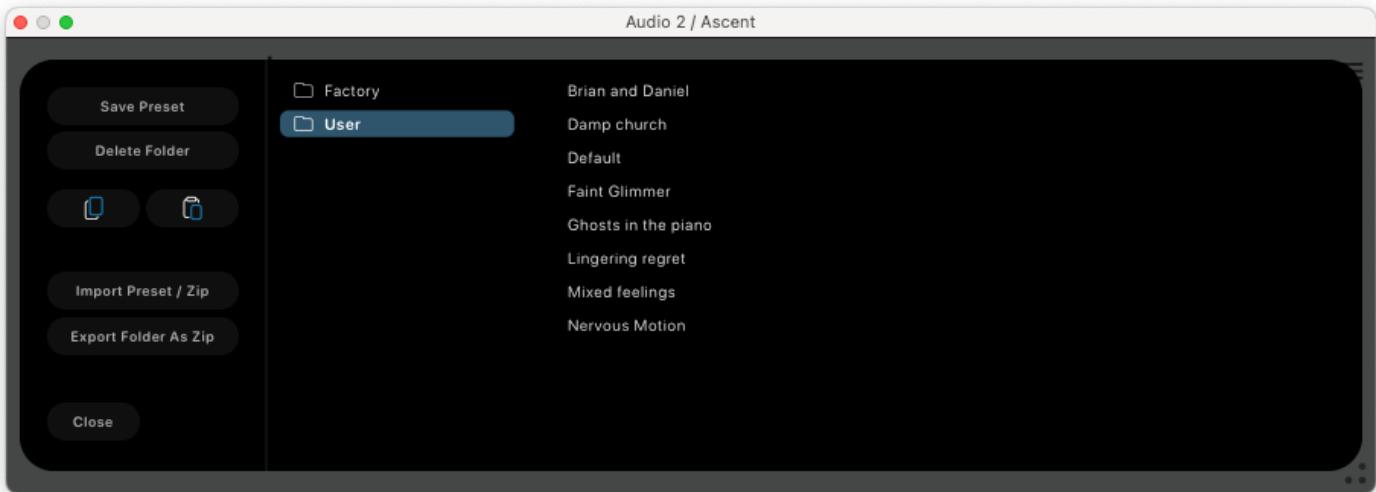
Darkness - turning up the Darkness knob lowers the frequency of several gentle, low-pass filters placed at strategic locations within Ascent's signal paths. This reduces the high frequencies in the plugin's output. The Darkness knob can be useful for making Ascent blend better with your source material, or if you just need a subdued sound.

Decay - adjusts how long it takes for the reverb to fade to silence. The Decay knob affects both the particle reverb and the main reverb. The numeric values displayed are arbitrary.

Mix - this knob simply varies the relative amounts of the dry (unprocessed) signal and the reverb signal in the plugin's output. The numeric value reflects the amount of the processed signal as a percentage. Turn the Mix knob fully anti-clockwise and you'll hear only the input signal; turn it fully clockwise and you'll hear only the processed signal. If you're using Ascent as an insert plugin on a channel, you'll probably want to use a setting somewhere in between. If you're using it on a send/return effects channel, set the Mix knob to 100.

Presets

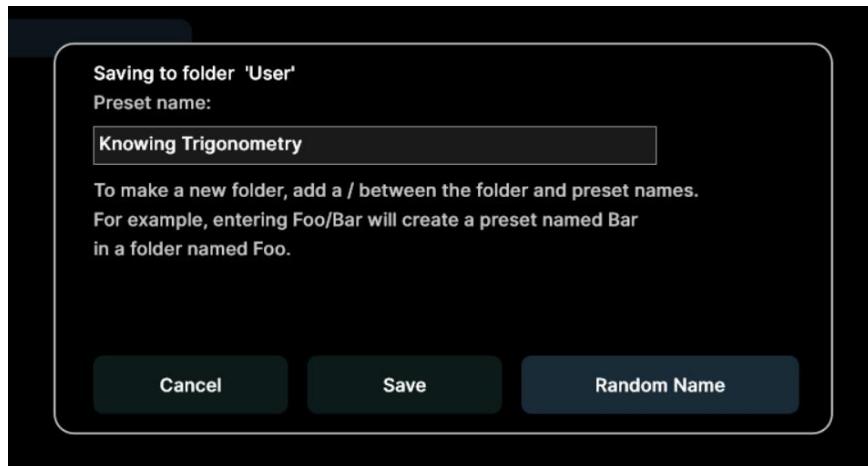
Ascent includes a number of presets to serve as a demonstration of its capabilities and inspirations for your own creations. To access the presets, click the hamburger icon near the top right corner of the window to open the preset browser. Click the Close button at the lower left corner to dismiss the preset browser.



The browser displays presets and folders in scrollable lists, arranged in columns. The browser displays four columns so you can nest up to three levels of folders within the Presets folder; that is, two levels of folders within the User folder. The leftmost list shows the presets and folders within Ascent's preset collection. Clicking any of these folders reveals its contents in the next list. These folders can contain sub-folders of their own. Clicking on a preset name loads the settings into Ascent. Double-clicking a preset name loads the preset and dismisses the preset browser. **Loading a preset irretrievably erases Ascent's current settings and any audio you've recorded**, so if you have created something that you want to use again, save it as a new preset before loading another preset.

The folders and presets in the browser correspond to folders and files within Ascent's own folder on your storage device (i.e. your computer's hard drive or SSD). This folder is located at `C:\ProgramData\Audio Damage\Ascent\` on Windows, and `~/Music/Audio Damage/Ascent/` on macOS and Linux. You can store your presets anywhere you like but, to avoid possible collisions during future updates, do not store your presets within the Factory folder.

To save your presets, click the Save Preset button at the left edge of the window. This invokes a dialog box with a couple of helpful features. As the text therein describes, you can create a folder within the destination folder (whose name is given at the top of the dialog box) by adding the folder's name to the beginning of the preset's name, separated by a slash mark.



Clicking the Random Name button replaces the preset's name with a pair of words chosen at random from two lists. While the resulting names won't have any connection with what the plugin is doing, you may find this feature useful for coming up with alternatives to routine names like "My Preset 12".

Potential pitfall: once you've saved a preset, clicking its name in the list loads the preset, overwriting whatever changes you've made since you saved the preset. Hence if you want to save the preset again to preserve the changes you've made, **do not** click on its name before saving it.

You can delete presets from the lists by clicking their name and then clicking the Delete Preset button. Ascent will give you a chance to confirm this action or cancel it. If you confirm, the preset/folder will be removed from your storage system and is gone for good.

Importing and Exporting Presets

Preset files are plain-text XML files so that you can exchange them online in forums, copy them between a Windows computer and a Macintosh (and even between an iPad and a regular computer), email them to your friends, etc.

The two buttons with icons representing copying and pasting (copy on the left, paste on the right) copy Ascent's current settings to the system clipboard and paste settings from the clipboard. You can use the copy and paste commands to transfer settings between two instances of Ascent or paste the settings into an email message or text editor. When copied to the clipboard, presets are presented in the same XML text as used in preset files.

The Import Preset / Zip button provides a way to add presets to Ascent without manually moving them into the appropriate folders in your file system. Clicking this button produces a file-browser window wherein you can select either a single preset file or a .zip file containing one or more presets. After you select the file, Ascent copies the preset(s) into whichever folder you have selected in Ascent's preset list, unzipping the file first if necessary.

Depending on whether you've selected a preset or folder, the Export Single Preset or Export Folder As Zip button performs the complementary functions of the Import button. First select either a preset or a folder in Ascent's list, then click the export button. A file-save window appears; choose a location in your file system, give the file a name, and click Save. If you have chosen a folder in Ascent's preset list, the plugin places it and all of the presets it contains in a .zip file.

Default Preset

If you save a preset with the special name "Default" in the User folder, new instances of Ascent will load it automatically when you add it to your DAW session. You can use a default preset file to give you the same starting point with Ascent whenever you use it. Ascent's installer creates a default preset file for you but feel free to replace it with your own.

And Finally...

Thanks again for purchasing Ascent. We make every effort to ensure your satisfaction with our products, and want you to be happy with your purchase. Please write to support@audiodamage.com if you have any questions or comments.

Document Revisions

- 4 November 2025: Initial release