

*SESSION* // // *STRINGS 2*

**NI** NATIVE INSTRUMENTS

THE FUTURE OF SOUND

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Special thanks to the Beta Test Team, who were invaluable not just in tracking down bugs, but in making this a better product.

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# 1 Welcome to SESSION STRINGS 2

Thank you for choosing SESSION STRINGS 2.

SESSION STRINGS 2 is a huge advancement on the original SESSION STRINGS, updated with a more versatile sound, new features, and an improved interface.

With SESSION STRINGS 2 you have command of a top-notch string ensemble that offers a diverse number of playing styles, sound varieties, and outstanding sound quality.

We hope you enjoy using SESSION STRINGS 2 and we would be delighted to hear your feedback and ideas! You can find e-instruments on the web under <http://www.e-instruments.com>.

## **2 SESSION STRINGS 2 Key Features**

- The SESSION STRINGS 2 sounds were recorded with utmost precision and are designed for maximum flexibility.
- SESSION STRINGS 2 features sound settings for a variety of different genres. Its intuitive approach lets you quickly produce excellent phrases and arrangements, even if you don't have prior detailed knowledge of strings arrangement.
- SESSION STRINGS 2's unique Smart Voice Split allocates each note of a chord to the corresponding instrument group.
- The Rhythm Animator turns chords or single notes into rhythmic patterns while maintaining real-time performance capabilities.
- A Smart Chord mode lets you play authentic string chords and voicings with just one or two fingers.
- A variety of creative master effect presets provides a scope of inspiring sound images.

### **2.1 About KONTAKT / KONTAKT PLAYER**

SESSION STRINGS 2 is an Instrument powered by KONTAKT; you will, therefore, need KONTAKT or the free KONTAKT PLAYER installed on your computer in order to use SESSION STRINGS 2. Refer to the KONTAKT/KONTAKT PLAYER documentation to learn how to load and configure KONTAKT Instruments.

## 3 Using SESSION STRINGS 2

This section provides an overview of the SESSION STRINGS 2 interface and explains how to use it.

### 3.1 Main Controls

At the top of the instrument interface you will find the main controls.



The Main Controls

There are four Main Controls; the left controls are menus, whereas the right controls are switches:

- **Mode:** selects how the instrument plays:
  - *Velocity Switch* allows you to play and switch between articulations manually.
  - *Rhythm Animator* gives you the ability to play back rhythmic patterns by only holding a note or chord.

Details on how to use the different modes, and their controls, can be found here: [↑3.2, Main Window View](#)

- **Sound:** selects a preset effect configuration, allowing you to quickly change how the overall instrument sounds.
- **Smart Voice Split:** toggles on or off a system that divides the notes you play between the different sections of the ensemble.
- **Smart Chord:** a system that creates chords from single notes.

The Smart Voice Split and Smart Chord systems will be described in more detail in the following sections.

### 3.1.1 Smart Voice Split

The Smart Voice Split system splits the notes you play across the sections in a realistic manner. For example, if you play a C major 7<sup>th</sup> chord (which comprises of the notes C, E, G, and B) it might assign C to the basses, E to the celli, G to the violas, and B to the violins (depending on the range in which you play the chord).

The Smart Voice Split system will also work out the root note of the chord you are playing and assign that to the Bass section.

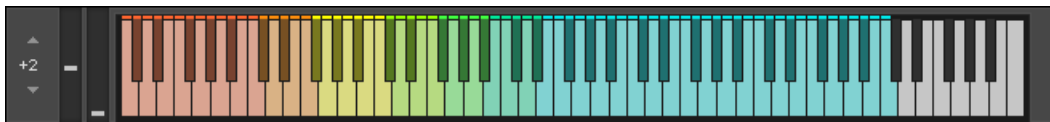
This system avoids a problem often found in string sample libraries where the size of the ensemble changes depending on the number of notes you are playing. For example, playing one note triggers 4 violins, but an additional note also triggers 4 violins, so suddenly you go from 4 violins to 8 violins, then 12, then 16, and so on.

If you do not wish to use the Smart Voice Split system, you can turn it off and the ensemble will play like a more traditional sampled string instrument. In this mode the different sections are simply spread across the playable key range.

Each group's key range has a color:

- Basses: orange.
- Celli: Yellow.
- Violas: Green.
- Violins: Blue.

These colors are displayed on KONTAKT's virtual keyboard, as well as the KOMPLETE KONTROL keyboards (if you have loaded the instrument in the KOMPLETE KONTROL software).



The Virtual Keyboard

You can also see here where the different sections blend. For example, the blend between Basses (orange) and Celli (yellow) is a lighter shade of orange.



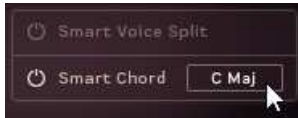
### 3.1.2 Smart Chord

The Smart Chord function lets you play full chords by pressing one or two keys on your external MIDI controller keyboard.

- ▶ To activate the Smart Chord function, click the power button next to the text **Smart Chord**.

Now you can set up the Smart Chord function:

- ▶ Open the Smart Chord setup window by clicking the chord button beside the **Smart Chord** text.





The Smart Chord Setup Window

The chords defined by root note and chord map will automatically be assigned to the (“white”) keys on your controller keyboard, starting with the C key.

If, for example, you select “F” as root note and “major” as gender, pressing the C key on your keyboard will therefore create an F major chord.

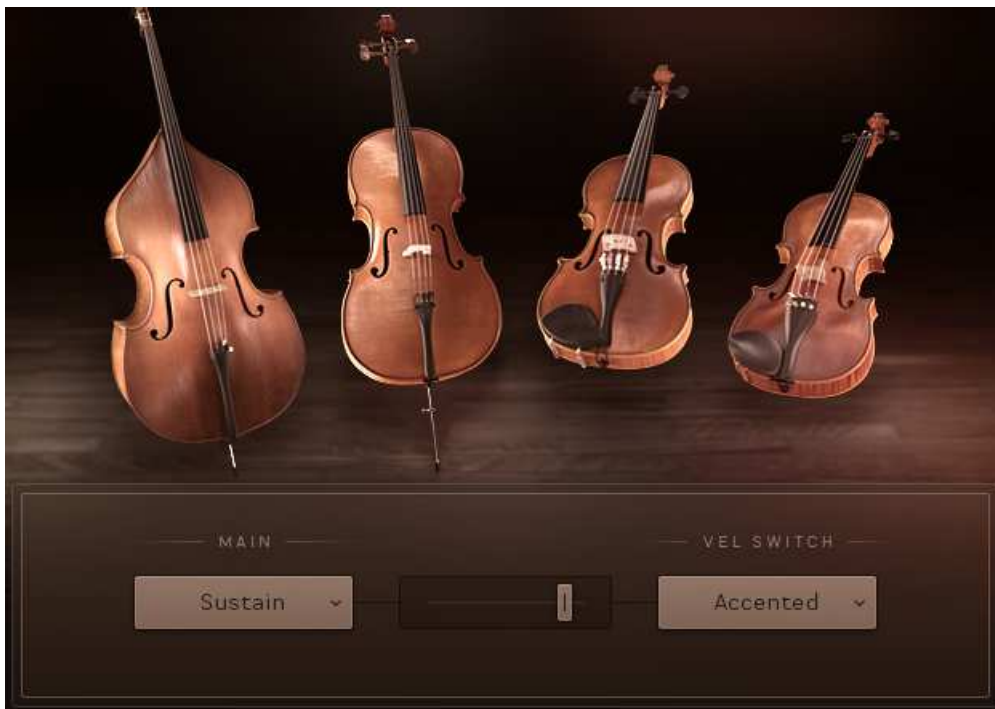
- Use the **ROOT** menu and **CHORD SETS** buttons to select the key for the smart chords.

Now you can play the resulting chords by pressing the respective key on your external keyboard controller. If you don't additionally press a modifier key, the degrees of the selected scale are used. These already include chord inversions.

By additionally pressing a modifier key (the “black” keys) you can modify the voicing of the chords.

## 3.2 Main Window View

- ▶ Click the **MAIN** button at the bottom of the interface to bring up the Main Window View.



The Main Window View

### 3.2.1 Velocity Switch Mode



The Velocity Switch Controls

When the instrument is in Velocity Switch mode, the velocity of the played key is used to select between two articulations: one for the low velocities and one for the high velocities.

- The articulation to be used at lower velocities is selected using the **MAIN** menu.
- The articulation to be used with the higher velocities is selected using the **VEL SWITCH** menu.
- The velocity split point is set using the slider between the menus.

The split point slider also displays the velocities of the notes you are playing, so you can more easily find a split point that suits your playing.



Depending on your Memory Management setup, selecting articulations can cause samples to be purged or reloaded. So when an articulation is activated, it might take time to load and become fully playable.

### 3.2.2 Rhythm Animator

The Rhythm Animator is a tool for creating rhythmic phrases that you can then play back easily by simply holding a note or chord.



The Rhythm Animator Controls

The Rhythm Animator controls are roughly split into three areas:

1. The playback controls are at the bottom of the interface.
2. The pattern selectors are located on the left.
3. The main area is the pattern editor / browser.



#### Playback Controls

In the middle you have a selection of buttons for setting the playback rate, including a [Triplets](#) option.

The other controls are as follows:

- [Retrigger](#): when active, the rhythmic pattern will restart from the beginning with each new note.
- [Order](#): defines the order that the held notes will be played back.
- [Swing](#): sets the intensity of swing applied to the rhythm.
- [Hold](#): when active, pattern playback will not stop when you release the MIDI keys.
- [Loop/One Shot](#): selects the loop mode:
  - *Loop*: the pattern will loop continuously.
  - *One Shot*: the pattern will play from start to end and then stop until retriggered.
- [Dynamic](#): defines how the Rhythm Animator should process its dynamics. When turned all the way to the left the Rhythm Animator will have full control of the dynamics; when turned to the right the played velocity or controller value will control the dynamics.

## Selecting Patterns



Pattern Selection Controls

Patterns can be selected either by key-switches on the white keys in the range of C-2 to A-2, or by clicking on the corresponding buttons on the interface.

The chain icon button to the top left is the link button. When active, selecting a pattern will also load a matching Sound preset.



Be aware of the link setting. Loading a pattern with link mode active will overwrite changes you may have made to the sound of the instrument.

## Editing Patterns



Pattern Editor Controls

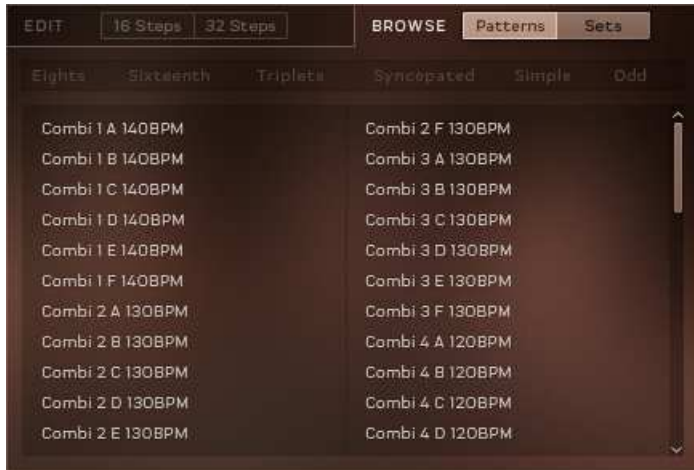
There are three main areas in the pattern editor:

- At the top you have the option to switch between 16 Steps or 32 Steps (this can then be defined further later)
- There are then three rows of controls that define how each step will be played:
  - The top selects the articulation for the step. You can select between 6 articulations, which are illustrated on the interface.
  - The middle row is used to define the dynamic level of each step.
  - The bottom row sets whether a step plays all held notes, or only a single note as defined by the [Order](#) menu.
  - Each of these rows can be randomized by using the corresponding [RND](#) button.
- At the bottom is a control for setting the start and end points of the pattern. Changing these will also change the length of the pattern.



## Browsing and Loading Patterns

- ▶ Click on either of the **BROWSE** buttons to the top right of the pattern editor to open the pattern browser.



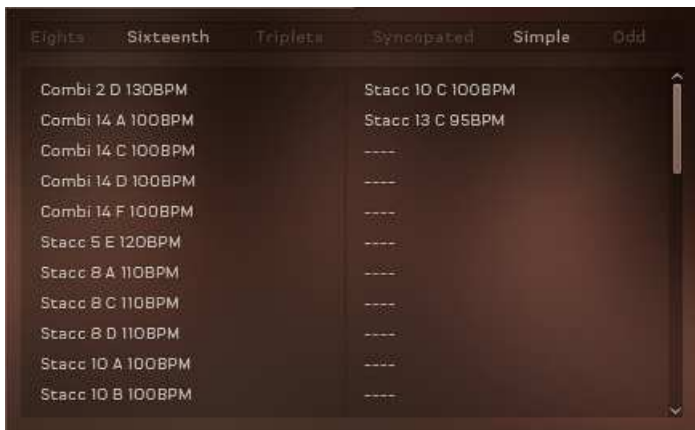
The Patterns Browser

You can browse for either individual **Patterns**, or full pattern **Sets**.

Pattern Sets will load a pattern in each key-switch, whereas individual patterns will only be loaded into the selected key-switch.

The displayed patterns or sets can be filtered by tags:

1. Click on the tags above the browser to filter the browser contents.



The Browser Filtered by the Sixteenth and Simple Tags

2. To load a pattern or set, double-click on its entry in the browser.

## 3.3 Effects Window View

The Effects Window View is where you control the overall sound of the NKI.



The Effects Window View

A combination of global sound settings and master effects give you the ability to fine-tune your sound.

### 3.3.1 Shape

The **SHAPE** Controls are three controls that alter the sound of the instruments in a way that is deeper than audio effects.



The Shape Controls

- **Attack:** adjusts the volume envelope attack (fade-in) time.
- **Release:** adjusts the volume envelope release (fade-out) time.
- **Stereo Width:** controls the width of the stereo image. With this knob turned all the way down, the resulting audio output will be mono. Leave this knob in the middle setting for the natural width of the recorded samples.

### 3.3.2 Humanize

The **HUMANIZE** Controls add levels of subtle randomization and variation to certain sound parameters to create imperfections that can make performances sound more natural.



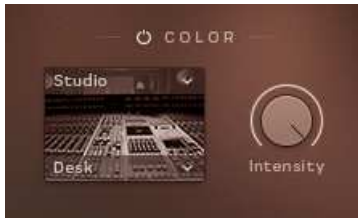
The Humanize Controls

There are two knobs for controlling the humanization amount of two parameters:

- **Pitch:** adds variation in tuning
- **Timing:** adds variation in note start and end timing

### 3.3.3 Color

The Color effect is a creative tool with a number of different modes that are all controlled with a single **Intensity** knob.



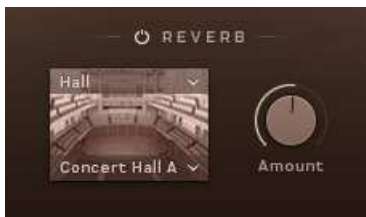
The Color Controls

The mode of the Color effect is set via two menus:

- The menu above the effect thumbnail selects the category of effect:
  - *Studio*: effects that emulate studio equipment, from tape saturators to channel strip emulations and tube pre-amps.
  - *Distortion*: heavier distortion effects that really degrade your sound.
  - *Modulation*: effects that add movement and animation to the sound.
  - *Accent*: these effects are creative, but not too out there, and really benefit from real-time control of the **Intensity** knob.
  - *Abstract*: the weird and the strange.
- The menu below the thumbnail can be used to select an effect. The contents of this menu depends on the category selection.

### 3.3.4 Reverb

The Reverb effect simulates an acoustic space. It can be used subtly to give distance to the sound, or it can be used to completely change the space the instruments are in.



The Reverb Controls

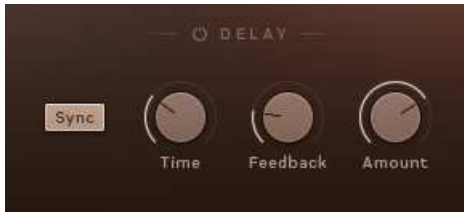
The character of the reverb is selected using two menus above and below the effect thumbnail:

- The top menu selects the reverb category.
- The lower menu selects the reverb character.

An additional **Amount** knob controls the reverb effect output volume.

### 3.3.5 Delay

In its simplest form, a delay effect delays the sound. However, when you mix this delayed signal with the input signal you get an echo effect.

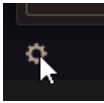


The Delay Controls

- **Sync**: toggles tempo sync on or off. When active, the delay times will sync to the host tempo.
- **Time**: sets the delay time (i.e. the time between the input signal and the delayed signal).
- **Feedback**: controls how much of the output signal is fed back into the effect input. Essentially this controls the number of repeating echoes.
- **Amount**: controls the output volume of the effect.

## 3.4 Settings Window View

- ▶ To access the Settings window view, click on the cog icon in the bottom left corner of the interface.

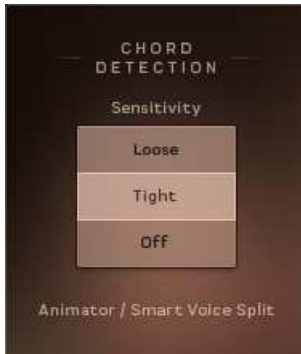


The Settings Window View

The Settings window view is where you can select and set up a number of parameters that you can control using external MIDI controllers or by the way you play. In addition, you can activate or deactivate a few important sample management functions.

### 3.4.1 Chord Detection

The Chord Detection section sets the sensitivity of the chord detection for the Rhythm Animator modes and the Smart Voice Split system.



The Chord Detection Settings

There are three Sensitivity settings:

- **Loose:** a longer chord detection time. This catches more notes, but has a slower response.
- **Tight:** a shorter chord detection time. This has a faster response, but can occasionally miss notes if your playing is a little loose.
- **Off:** turns chord detection off completely.



### 3.4.2 Dynamic Control

The Dynamic Control section is where you set how you want your MIDI setup to control the dynamics of the instruments.



The Dynamic Control Settings

The top three knobs set the ranges and sensitivity of the dynamics:

- **Min**: sets the limit for minimum possible dynamic level.
- **Curve**: sets the dynamic response curve.
- **Max**: sets the limit for maximum possible dynamic level.

The lower buttons set which MIDI messages will control the dynamics:

- **Midi CC#**: a MIDI controller of your choice will control the dynamics. You can set the MIDI controller number either via the number display, or by clicking on the **Learn** button and then moving the control you wish to use.
- **Modwheel**: the Modwheel will control the dynamics.
- **Velocity**: the key velocity (i.e. how hard you hit the MIDI keys) will control the dynamics.

### 3.4.3 Pitchbend Setup

Here you can select one of three available options and thereby define what happens when you use the Pitch Wheel on your controller keyboard.



The Pitchbend Settings

There are two options:

- **Scoops and Falls:** with this option selected, the Pitch Wheel will act as an articulation selector. When the wheel is up, the “scoops” articulation will be selected; when the wheel is down, the “falls” articulation will be selected.
- **Range:** with this option selected, the Pitch Wheel will perform in the traditional manner, altering the pitch of the played notes. The numeric display can be used to select the maximum pitch change in semi-tones.

### 3.4.4 Memory Management

The three functions available in this section help you create an even more realistic strings section sound. As this may also increase your computer's workload, these functions are optional.



The Memory Management Settings

#### Release Samples

If you activate this function, special release samples, which reflect natural instrument release behavior, are applied at the end of played notes.

#### Round Robin

If you activate this function, various slightly different samples (instead of one) become available for each note of each instrument you play. These samples are used randomly which creates a much more lively and realistic acoustic picture.

#### Purge Mode

The Purge Mode sets how many samples will be loaded into memory.

There are two settings:

- **Standard:** purges all unused articulations.

- **Ultimate**: keeps everything in memory; changing settings will never cause KONTAKT to purge or load anything, but the overall memory footprint will be high.

### 3.4.5 Tuning

The Tuning section has a single control for fine-tuning the instrument or ensemble. 440Hz is the general modern standard, and thus the default setting, but you may wish to change this for your project.

---

## 4 Credits

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