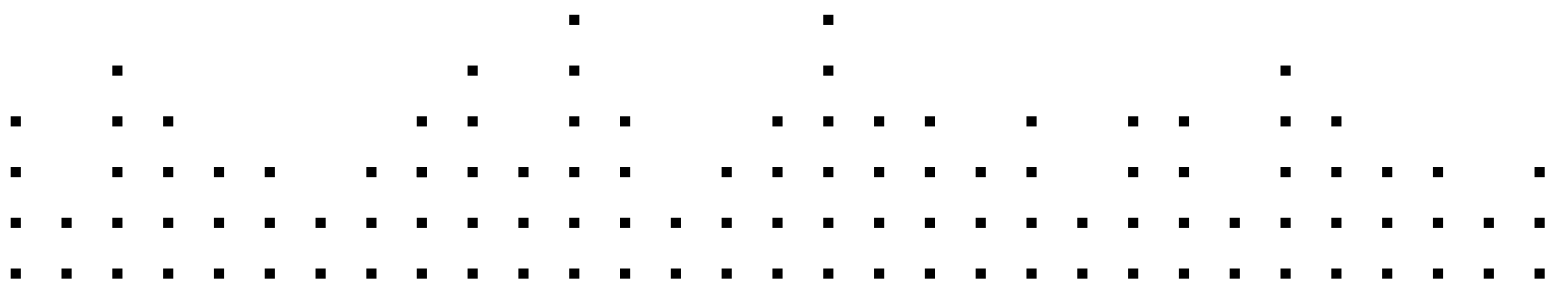


ALICIA'S KEYS



USER MANUAL



The information in this document is subject to change without notice and does not represent a commitment on the part of Native Instruments GmbH. The software described by this document is subject to a License Agreement and may not be copied to other media. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced or otherwise transmitted or recorded, for any purpose, without prior written permission by Native Instruments GmbH, hereinafter referred to as Native Instruments. All product and company names are [™] or [®] trademarks of their respective owners.

Manual written by Ryan Rainer

Document Version: 1.0 (01/2010)

Product Version: 1.0 (01/2010)

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

Germany

Native Instruments GmbH

Schlesische Str. 28

D-10997 Berlin

Germany

info@native-instruments.de

www.native-instruments.de

USA

Native Instruments North America, Inc.

5631 Hollywood Boulevard

Los Angeles, CA 90028

USA

sales@native-instruments.com

www.native-instruments.com



© Native Instruments GmbH, 2010. All rights reserved.

Table Of Content

1	Introduction.....	5
1.1	About Alicia's Piano	5
1.2	About KONTAKT / KONTAKT PLAYER.....	6
2	Getting Started	8
2.2.1	Choosing a Preset	8
2.2.2	Setting the Ambience	8
2.2.3	More Authentic Sound	8
3	Interface and Operation.....	9
3.1	Basic Controls	9
3.1.1	Knobs	9
3.1.2	Sliders	10
3.1.3	Buttons	10
3.1.4	Drop-Down Menus	10
3.1.5	Click Menu	10
3.1.6	Numericals	10
3.2	The Performance View	11
3.3	Choosing and saving Presets	11
3.4	Settings.....	12
3.4.1	The Room Tab	12
3.4.2	The Keys Tab	13
3.4.3	The Pedal Tab	15
3.4.4	The Resonance Tab	15
3.4.5	The Noise Tab	17
4	Credits	18

1 Introduction

The sound of Alicia Keys' favorite composer piano, recorded in her own studio, Oven Studios on Long Island, New York, is now available to you as ALICIA'S KEYS.

By using premium vintage microphones and preamps and carefully analyzing Alicia's playing we have successfully produced the very warm, soulful and inspiring sound of Alicia's piano – and it's fun to play!

The virtual piano has been tailored to reflect the style and sound aesthetics of Alicia Keys to an extent as it has never been done before for another artist. It was recorded with her original gear, and all aspects of recording and sampling technique were designed in close collaboration with Alicia. The result is a piano completely true to the original instrument with the sound and feeling of Alicia's artistic personality.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy ALICIA'S KEYS.

– Your Native Instruments Team

1.1 About Alicia's Piano

Fully redesigned at the turn of the millennium, today's C Series grands benefit from a host of recent Yamaha advances. The piano samples used to create ALICIA'S KEYS originate from Alicia Keys' own studio piano, the Yamaha C3 Neo. This grand piano is one of only three of it's kind in the world today.

1.2 About KONTAKT / KONTAKT PLAYER

ALICIA'S KEYS is an Instrument powered by KONTAKT; you will, therefore, have to have KONTAKT or the free KONTAKT PLAYER installed on your computer in order to use ALICIA'S KEYS. Refer to the KONTAKT / KONTAKT PLAYER documentation to learn how to load and configure KONTAKT Instruments.



ALICIA'S KEYS loaded in KONTAKT PLAYER

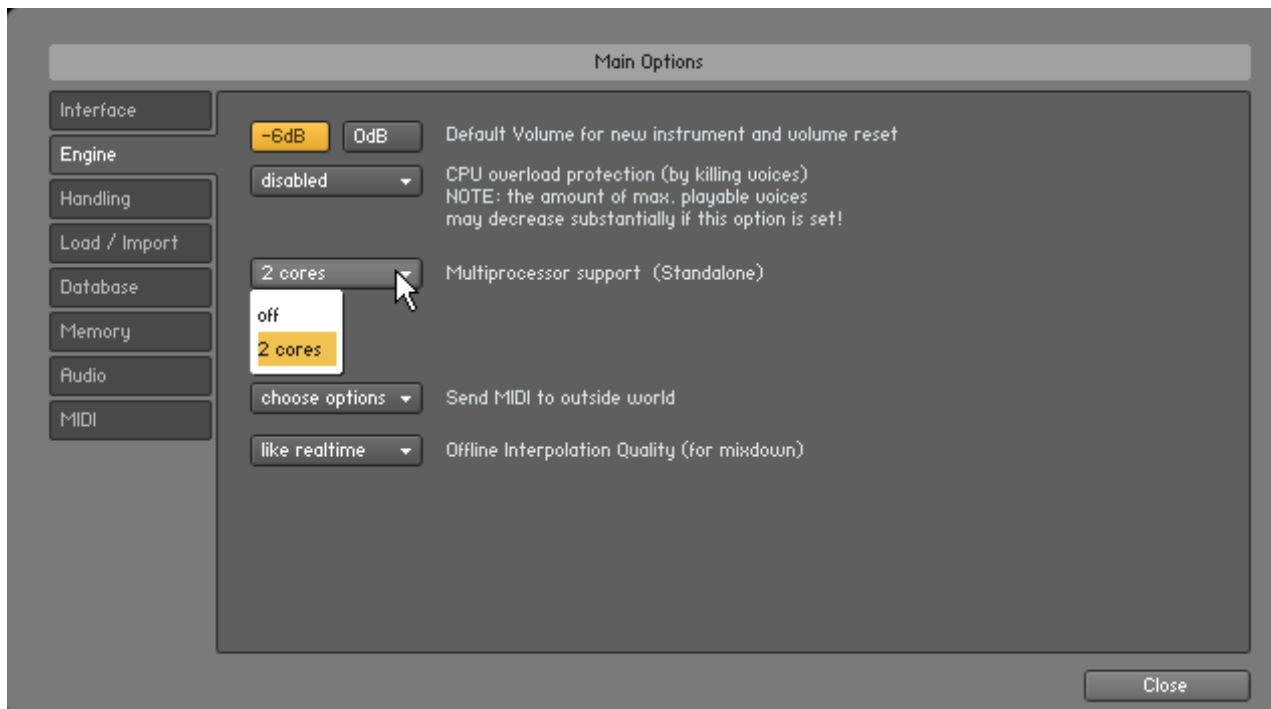
Enabling Multi-processor Support in Stand-alone mode

If you are using ALICIA'S KEYS on a computer with two or more processors (or processor cores), make sure to enable multi-processor / multi-core CPU support in KONTAKT's / KONTAKT PLAYER's Options dialog:

1. To open the Options dialog, click the Options icon in KONTAKT's / KONTAKT PLAYER's main header.



2. In the Options dialog, select the Engine tab.
3. The menu labeled Multiprocessor support (Standalone) should hold an entry reflecting the number of processor cores found in your computer. Select this entry to enable multi-processor support.



Note that your multi-processor equipped computer will only achieve its full performance if Multiprocessor support is enabled. De-selecting this option will result in a lower voice count.

2 Getting Started

This section will take you through a few basic tasks to get you started with your new piano. These steps will help you begin to get the sound you want out of ALICIA'S KEYS. For more detail on how the various controls work, refer to the [Interface and Operation](#) section of this manual.

2.2.1 Choosing a Preset

Once you've experimented a bit with the dry sound, try the different factory presets until you find a suitable sound. Each preset represents the sound of the piano in a different room, and whether you are hearing the sound from behind the piano or from the audience.

2.2.2 Setting the Ambience

For more control over the Room settings, check out the Room controls. Press the Settings button to open up the Settings window. Here you can adjust the digital ambience and select the type of room you want the piano to be played in. You'll hear how each room experiences different reverb amounts when the piano is played. You can also choose the perspective of where the sound of the piano is being heard from here, artist or audience.

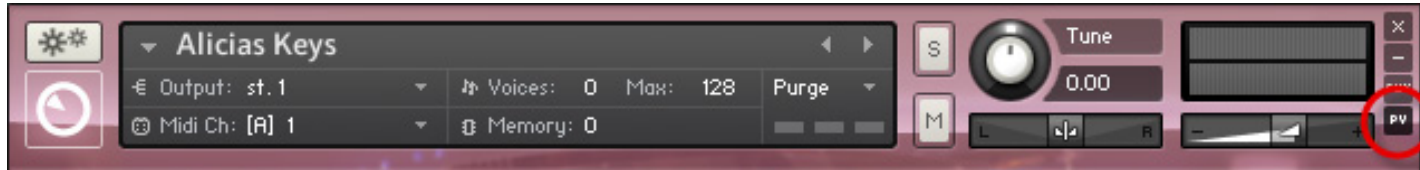
2.2.3 More Authentic Sound

ALICIA'S KEYS has many controls for tweaking the piano to produce a more authentic instrument sound. A few of these controls can be found in the Noise settings, under the Noise tab in the Settings window. Here you can adjust the sounds produced when keys are played and released as well as the sound the pedal makes while being played. Finally you can adjust the level of static microphone noise to create that old-school sound.

3 Interface and Operation

This chapter will introduce you to ALICIA'S KEYS specific controls, which are situated in the Performance View section of the Instrument within your KONTAKT / KONTAKT PLAYER software.

- ▶ Press the Performance View button (PV) in the lower right of the Instrument Header to show/hide the Performance View.



The Performance View button in the Instrument Header

To learn how to operate the Instrument Header's controls, refer to the documentation of your KONTAKT / KONTAKT PLAYER software.



Note that ALICIA'S KEYS will not work properly if you transpose it using KONTAKT's Instrument option MIDI Transpose (Instrument Options > Instrument > MIDI Transpose): pedal noises will not sound, and 'pedal down' samples will not be released, but play until end.

3.1 Basic Controls

There are six basic types of controls: knobs, sliders, buttons, drop-down menus, click menus, and numericals.

3.1.1 Knobs

- To change a knob value, click on it and drag up to move the knob clockwise, or down to move it counter-clockwise.
- Knobs can be fine-tuned by holding down your computer keyboard's [Shift] key as you move the knob.
- [Ctrl] + Click (Mac OS[®] X: [Cmd] + Click) resets a knob to its default value.

3.1.2 Sliders

- To change a slider's value, click and drag the slider to the right to increase, or to the left to decrease the value.
- Sliders can be fine-tuned by holding down your computer keyboard's [Shift] key as you move the slider.
- [Ctrl] + Click (Mac OS® X: [Cmd] + Click) resets a slider to its default value.

3.1.3 Buttons

These are all toggles – click once to turn on, again to turn off. The background of most buttons will change its color for the On and Off states.

3.1.4 Drop-Down Menus

These look like buttons, but have small arrows that point down. To access a drop-down menu's entries, click on the menu. A list holding several entries drops down. To select one of the entries, move the mouse to the desired entry so that the entry gets highlighted, then release the mouse button. The piano takes whatever action you've requested, then closes the menu.

3.1.5 Click Menus

These are only available in the Instrument Header. Click the top arrow to access the previous setting. Click the bottom arrow to access the next one.

3.1.6 Numericals

These are fields that contain numbers.

- ▶ Click on the numerical, then drag the mouse up to increase the value, and drag down to decrease the value.

or

- ▶ Double-click on the numerical, and type in the desired value.

Directly editable numericals are only available in the Instrument Header. The parameter values in the Performance View can be changed only by operating the relevant controls.

3.2 The Performance View

The Performance View holds all the relevant controls for shaping the sound of the piano.



Instrument Header with Performance View open

3.3 Choosing and saving Presets

ALICIA'S KEYS offers a selection of a number of factory and user effect presets.

Choosing a Factory Preset

The factory presets offer the piano in three different rooms: Hall, Auditorium or Studio, in small or large sizes. These rooms can be adjusted even further by choosing the room as experienced by the audience or the artist. Together there are 14 different factory presets.

Creating your own Preset

Once you have created a sound you like, you can save your settings as a user preset. To do this, click the Preset drop-down menu and select one of the Save as User-preset entries provided at the end of the list. This preset will now contain all the values of the Room Settings controls you have defined and can be loaded again at any stage.

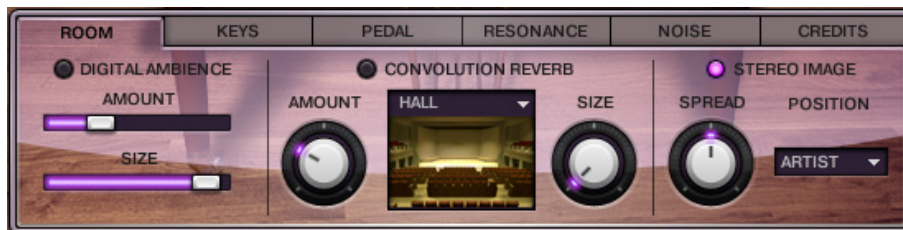
3.4 Settings

Press the Settings button in the Performance View to open the Settings window. The Settings controls are organized in five categories, each of which has its own tab: Room, Keys, Pedal, Resonance and Noise.

3.4.1 The Room Tab

The settings in the Room tab let you add a room simulation of your choice to the piano sound. The dimensions of a room and the type of surface materials have a big impact on the sound of the piano. For example, the sound of a piano played in a large concert hall is very different to that experienced when the same piano is played in a small studio space. Each type of room creates a unique sound and has its own ambience, because of the way sound waves are reflected by the room.

You can adjust the type and feel of the room using three settings: Digital Ambience, Convolution Reverb and Stereo Image. Each of these effects is turned on and off by pressing the button next to the effect name.



The Room tab

Digital Ambience

- **Amount:** Adjusts the amount of digital ambience.
- **Size:** Adjusts the virtual size of the room.

Convolution Reverb

Amount: Adjusts the convolution reverb amount.

- **Location:** These predefined convolution effects allow you to determine the reverb that would be experienced in different acoustic spaces. Select one of the following rooms to load a convolution preset:
 - Hall
 - Auditorium
 - Studio
- **Size:** Adjusts the virtual size of the room.

Stereo Image

- **Spread:** adjusts the width of the stereo effect. The larger the value, the greater the width of the stereo image and vice versa.
- **Position:** Choose the perspective from which the piano is heard, either artist or audience.

3.4.2 The Keys Tab

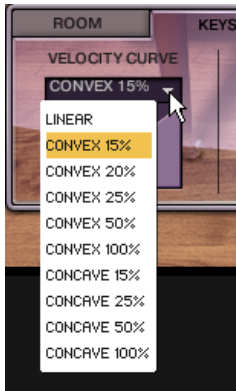
The settings in the Keys tab deal with how the piano will respond and give expression to your individual playing style.



The Keys tab

Velocity Curve

Changing the Velocity Curve will affect how the piano will respond to your playing at different MIDI velocities, that is, how hard or softly you play the keys. With a positive or convex slope, the piano will be more sensitive to softer playing. When the slope is negative or concave, there is less response to softer playing and more sensitivity to harder strokes. There are 10 different velocity curves to choose from.



- ▶ Select the entry that matches your playing style from the Velocity Curve menu.

Finger Attack

Turn the Latency knob to adjust how much the sample start is offset. At 100% you get a slower attack but more of the noise as the finger touches the key. With lower values you get a quicker attack and less latency. Select a low percentage for low latency. Select a high percentage for a larger part of the original attack of the note to be included. The default latency value is 50%.

Key Release

Adjust the Decay Time knob to determine the amount of time before a key is released.

Self Masking / Repetition

Controls whether to fade-out old notes when the same note is played at a higher velocity. Turn this feature on or off by pressing the button.

- **Fadeout Time:** Determines how long it takes for a note to fade out once it is masked (released).
- **Style:** Select an entry from this menu to determine how often the Self Mask should set in. The three options are: *Aggressive / Repetition Friendly / Kill only old notes*.
 - *Aggressive:* fade-out notes with less velocity irrespectively of the time that has passed since they were played.
 - *Repetition friendly:* fade-out notes with velocity values at least ten steps below the value of the most recently played note and if more than 500 ms have passed since they were played.
 - *Kill only old notes:* fade-out notes with velocity values at least 40 steps below the value of the most recently played note and if more than 800 ms have passed since they were played.

3.4.3 The Pedal Tab

The settings in the Pedal tab let you adjust how the piano pedals will respond to pedal action. Alicia's piano has the Sustain (Damper) and Sustainuto pedals. The Sustain Pedal causes the dampers to be lifted off all strings of the piano, allowing them to ring out while the pedal is depressed. The Sustainuto Pedal has the same effect, but only on the notes that are played before the pedal is depressed, and afterwards are released. These notes will continue to ring out after they have been released.



The Pedal tab

- **Half Pedaling:** Click the button labeled Simulate Half Pedaling with Impulse Response to enable half pedaling simulation (based upon impulse responses). When this is enabled, you can gradually press the Sustain Pedal and the more you press it the more resonance emerges. In this way you can go continuously from a pedal-up sound to a pedal-down sound. This assumes that you have a Sustain Pedal that is capable of sending continuous values.



Note: If you play a note with the pedal up and then press the pedal afterwards, the triggered pedal-up sample will gradually change into a more pedal-down like one. This is simulated using the Impulse Response. However, if you play a note while the pedal is down, releasing the pedal afterwards will not cause a gradual change of the sound.

- **Pedal Controllers:** Drag the sliders to change the amount of sustain achieved when the Sustain and Sustainuto pedals are depressed.

3.4.4 The Resonance Tab

About Sympathetic Resonance

On a real piano, when a particular note is played and the Sustain pedal is depressed, other strings corresponding to the harmonics of that note will also vibrate in sympathy. This is known as sympathetic resonance.

The same effect can be achieved without the use of the pedal, by silently pressing the keys corresponding to these harmonics instead (This has the same effect as pressing the Sustain Pedal on these strings). Using this method allows you to determine exactly which harmonics you would like to resonate.

Sympathetic Resonance Rules

Setting these rules allows you to determine how much Sympathetic Resonance is experienced when playing the piano. You can set the number of rules for Pedal Up and Pedal Down mode separately. Click the button to enable or disable Sympathetic Resonance Rules. In Pedal Down mode it is generally better to use fewer rules for performance reasons.



Note: More rules means more sympathetic resonance harmonics but also a higher voice count which could negatively affect performance.

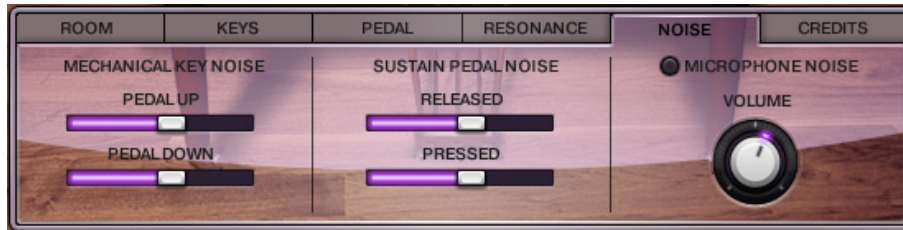


The Resonance tab

- **Volume:** Adjusts the overall volume of resonance sounds.
- **Pedal Up:** Controls the number of different resonance intervals for keys that are physically pressed, rather than sustained using the pedal. The higher the number, the higher the voice count and CPU usage.
- **Pedal Down:** Controls the number of different resonance intervals for keys that are not physically pressed, but rather sustained using the pedal. The higher the number, the higher the voice count and CPU usage.
- **Voices:** Determines the maximum number of voices. This should be lowered if you experience performance problems.
- **Allow Silent Key Strokes:** Activating this control will cause notes with velocity 1 (notes pressed very softly) to be completely silent. Even though such notes are silent you can get sympathetic resonances in them.

3.4.5 The Noise Tab

The settings in the Noise tab help further to achieve a more authentic piano sound. Here you can adjust how much sound the keys and pedals make when they are depressed and released. Furthermore, you can control the amount of microphone noise to create a static microphone effect.



The Noise tab

Mechanical Key Noise

- **Pedal Up:** Level of the sound generated when a key bounces back into position after being released while the pedal is not depressed.
- **Pedal Down:** Level of the sound generated when a key bounces back into position after being released while the pedal is depressed.

Sustain Pedal Noise

- **Released:** Level of the sound generated when the pedal is released.
- **Pressed:** Level of the sound generated when the pedal is depressed.

Microphone Noise

To add microphone noise to the piano sound, click the Microphone Noise button. Adjust the Volume knob to control the level of static microphone noise. The volume of the noise is constant as long as something is being played. More static noise adds an old-school vintage effect to the piano.

4 Credits

Produced by: Alicia Keys

Edited and programmed by: Scarbee

Concept created and piano sound engineered by: Ann Mincieli

Script programming: Nils Liberg

Additional samples recorded by: Miki Tsutsumi

Convolution Reverb IRs by: Ernest Cholakis