



## GS-201 Mark II – Tape Echo USER'S MANUAL

*Version 1.0.1*

[www.GenuineSoundware.com](http://www.GenuineSoundware.com)

### GS-201 Mark II Tape Echo

There was a time when the echo effect was made using magnetic tapes, and among the many units that the industry brought to the market, one model shone above all: the *Space Echo RE-201*. This was by far one of the most used and still today is one of the most sought after tape echo units ever made. The effect it produces seems to come from the space, like the sound of a choir of friendly aliens that come to bring their music to the Earth. Well, besides... it is actually one of the most hi-fi echo units made during the seventies, a big step forward its predecessors, bringing some innovations that were the state of the art in the early seventies for the Japanese electronic industry: the motor was a brush-less motor with hall-sensor speed control, the BIAS oscillator was very accurate and, maybe less important but curious nonetheless, it used two L.E.D. indicators... quite new for 1972.

GS-201 Mark II main features:

- Adjustable tape length from 1 meter to 4 meters
- Adjustable quality for all heads, including erase and write heads
- Adjustable Azimuth alignment for all heads
- Host Tempo synchronization with 16 divisions
- Stereo option with adjustable width (delay between channels)
- Adjustable noises (hiss & hum)
- Adjustable motor lag time
- Adjustable tape quality and loop junction
- RE-501 BBD Chorus
- RE-501 Sound-on-sound pickup head (4<sup>th</sup> head)
- Authentic "Folded Line" Spring Reverb emulation
- Built-in programmer with 128 Programs
- Import/export of Programs and Banks
- Built-in MIDI Learn function with import/export of custom Midi maps
- Adjustable output level
- Integrated help with tool-tips and readout displays

### NOTES ABOUT THIS MANUAL

It's important to read this manual before operating the software, mostly because not all parameters have an immediate audible effect, and moving them without knowing what each parameter does exactly and how it can affect the sound could totally void the experience of extreme realism offered by this software.

### SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

GS-201 Mark II is available in the following formats:

- for Windows: VST2 x64, VST3 x64, Standalone x64
- for OSX: VST2 x64, VST3 x64, Audio Unit x64, Standalone x64

Windows:

- any Windows computer manufactured after 2010 running Windows 7 x64 or higher
- ASIO compatible sound card for low latency performance

OSX:

- OSX version 10.11 or greater

### INSTALLATION ON WINDOWS

An automatic installer is provided. Double click its icon, accept the EULA and follow the on-screen instructions.

### INSTALLATION ON OSX

An automatic installer is provided. Double click its icon, accept the EULA and follow the on-screen instructions. At some point you might be asked to insert your user's log-on password, this is required by OSX to authorize the copy of the files into your Library.

## AUTHORIZING YOUR LICENSE

When the product is installed, it runs in DEMO mode so that you can test its sound and functionality, but with some minor limitations: the sound will be interrupted every 30 seconds, and importing / exporting Programs and Banks won't be allowed.

If you have purchased a license, you can authorize your copy by doing copy & paste of the 24 characters license code into the registration screen.



GET A LICENSE / REGISTER YOUR COPY

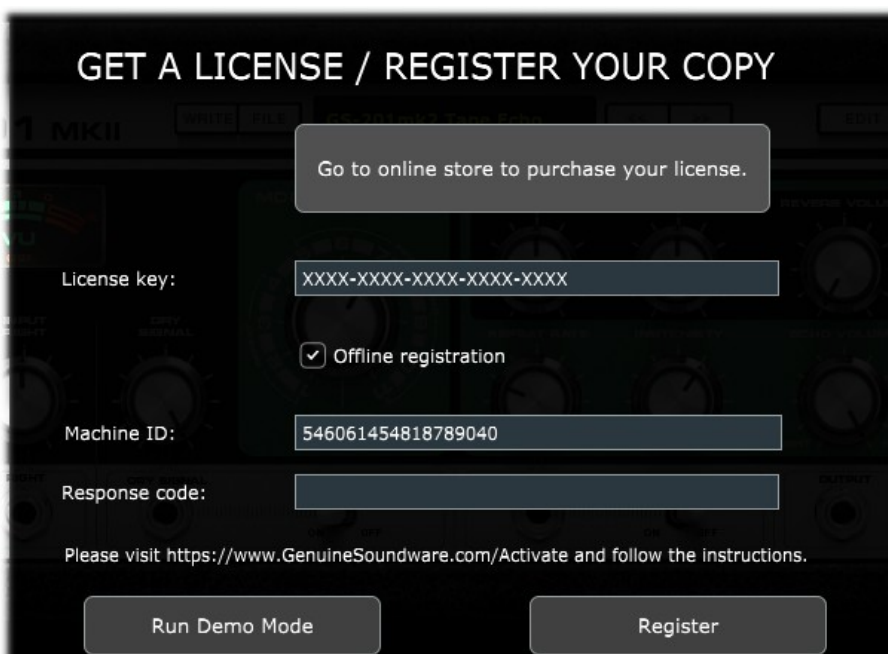
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License key:

Offline registration

Run Demo Mode Register

If the computer is connected to the Internet, just insert the license code and click REGISTER, the rest of the process is fully automatic. In case you wish to install GS-201 Mark II on a computer that isn't connected to the Internet, click the "Offline registration" option after inserting the license code, you'll be presented a numerical code in a read-only text box, copy that code somewhere (on paper or in a text file that you'll later save onto a USB stick), then go at a computer connected to the Internet, point your browser to <http://www.genuinesoundware.com/activate> and follow the instructions. The basic personal license allows three installations; extra installations can be purchased separately. Please contact GSi for this.



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Go to online store to purchase your license.

License key:

Offline registration

Machine ID:

Response code:

Please visit <https://www.GenuineSoundware.com/Activate> and follow the instructions.

Run Demo Mode Register

## THE MAIN WINDOW

The interface is organized in a main screen, an edit window (that will open in a separate window), a box for some Global Settings (that will open within the main screen) and some menus.



What you see in the main screen is the exact reproduction of the original Space Echo with just some technical variations, some of which are pretty obvious (you can't insert 1/4" jacks in the computer screen!).

The leftmost section includes the two knobs for the input level, one for the left channel and one for the right channel. The third knob adjusts the amount of dry signal reaching the output of the effect. The knobs at the max position represent the unity gain. You can also toggle the dry signal in one click using the small lever switch linked to the "Dry Signal" label.

In the middle of the interface there's the big "MODE SELECTOR" knob, and that's where the fun begins. This selector lets you choose which pick-up head you're using for your delay; the first 4 selections exclude the spring reverb, the next 7 selections are combinations of 1, 2 or 3 heads, and the last selection leaves the reverb alone. This knob can rotate endlessly.

Here's a picture of the heads of the hardware unit. From left to right you can see the erase head, the write head and three pick-up heads.



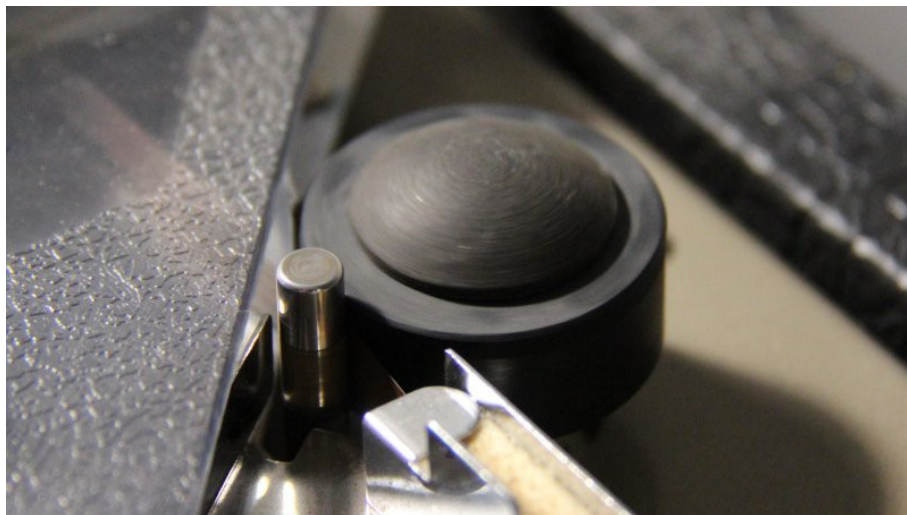
The logic of a tape delay is that the farther the pick-up head is located from the write head, the longer the delay time is. So the first head will have a short delay time, second head will have a medium time and the third head is the one with the longest delay time. This kind of structure is also known as “multi-tap delay”.

The combinations offered by the MODE selector are:

1. Head 1, no reverb;
2. Head 2, no reverb;
3. Head 3, no reverb;
4. Heads 2 and 3, no reverb;
5. Head 1 plus reverb;
6. Head 2 plus reverb;
7. Head 3 plus reverb;
8. Heads 1 and 2 plus reverb;
9. Heads 2 and 3 plus reverb;
10. Heads 1 and 3 plus reverb;
11. Heads 1, 2 and 3 plus reverb;
12. Only reverb.

Continuing on the green area, we find other three knobs.

**REPEAT RATE:** this knob varies the speed of the capstan motor that drives the tape. Take a look at the following picture. You can see the capstan (the iron shaft) and the pinch roller. These two elements are those that make the tape roll in a tape machine. In a normal tape recorder, the tape goes from its reel to the pick-up reel, while in a tape echo machine the tape loops continuously. The rotation speed of the capstan motor determines the speed of the tape, usually measured in IPS (inches per second). In this type of echo unit the speed of the tape can be varied, resulting in a delay time that varies accordingly, so the slower the tape runs, the larger the delay time is, and viceversa. In the Space Echo the delay time for each head is in the range:



Head 1: 60 ms to 165 ms

Head 2: 117 ms to 325 ms

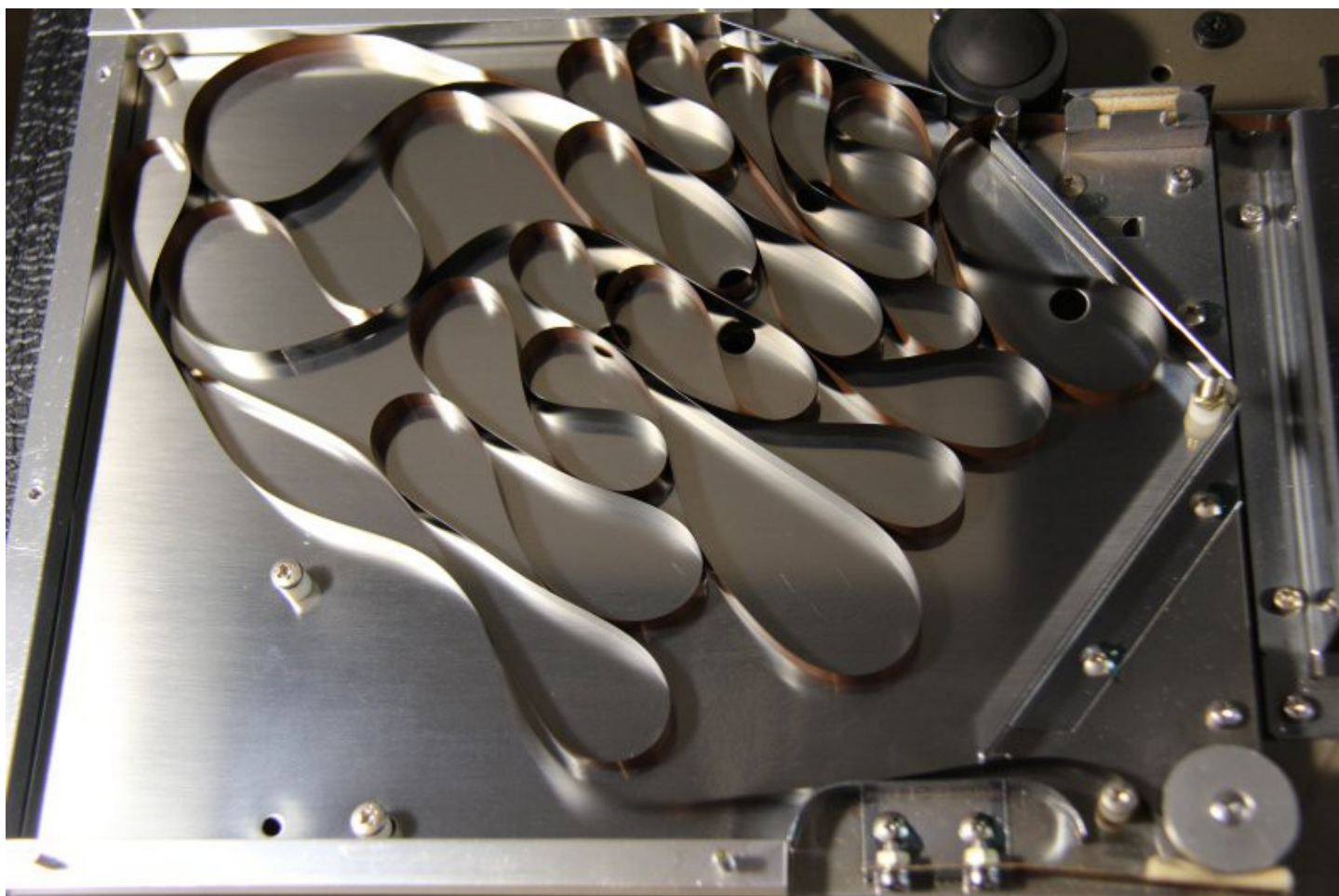
Head 3: 176 ms to 487 ms

As you can see, the heads are not perfectly equidistant one each other, so the delayed sound coming from one head never perfectly overlaps with that coming from another head. This is where the real magic of a genuine analog tape echo machine resides.

The running speed also affects the quality of the sound being recorded onto and played back from the tape. When the tape runs faster, the quality increases, the frequency spectrum is wider and, if the tape is of good quality, it can reach up to 16 KHz. On the other hand, when the tape runs slower, the delay times can be larger, but the audio quality decreases, the sound becomes duller and somewhat irregular.

This also explains why high-end tape machines run their tapes at 15 or 30 IPS. At that speed, a 7" reel lasts less but can record higher quality audio, even though the tape hiss becomes more evident, but then there's the Dolby, etc. But this is another story.

There's one more aspect to consider about the tape transport: stability. In a regular tape recorder, the tape is kept into tension thanks to the two reel motors that are powered with opposite polarities, but in a tape echo machine like the Space Echo, since there are no reels, the method used to keep the tape in tension is by using some felts that have the dual function to keep the tape clean and under tension. But, unfortunately, the rolling is never perfectly constant, resulting in what's known as the "wow and flutter" effect. In GS-201mk2 this is adjustable in the Edit window.



**INTENSITY:** this knob adjusts what in more modern delay units is also referred to as the “feedback”. It's in fact the amount of output signal coming from the pick-up heads that is fed back into the write head along with the audio coming from the inputs. The higher is this level, the more feedback you have, resulting in a delayed sound with a long tail.

Now, what happens if the feedback signal becomes louder than what was picked up by the read head? Normally, if this was a digital unit, with a feedback signal of the exact same level of the input signal, the echo should just repeat forever and ever without ever fading out, but in an analog tape unit the result is pretty different, the sound is recorded on tape over and over and over resulting in a compressed and distorted sound that deforms in something very different from the original input signal. Now, since the analog circuitry and the tape itself produce a background hiss, even if no external signal is fed into the unit, when the INTENSITY parameter is cranked all the way up, the echo starts self-oscillating, because it's just the noise sound that is repeatedly recorded on tape taking its shape like a sort of a fat analog oscillator coming from a crazy synthesizer.

**ECHO VOLUME:** this is just the volume of the echo signal that is mixed at the output stage along with the dry signal and the reverb sound.

At the top right side, on the black area, there are three further knobs.

**BASS** and **TREBLE:** this is the equalization of just the echo sound, doesn't affect neither the dry signal nor the reverb signal. And this equalization is applied at the very last output stage, means that the echo signal that is fed back into the feedback chain is not affected by this equalizer.

**REVERB VOLUME:** here we adjust the output level of the built-in spring reverb. The Space Echo includes a small spring reverb tank consisting in a single spring split in three parts to form the shape of an “N”. This kind of reverb is a bit resonant and not really the ideal choice for every kind of sound, but particularly indicated for those dub drum loops or for some special effects.

The reverb accepts input only from the external source and not from the echo sound, so echo and reverb are set in parallel, not in series.

**POWER SWITCH:** this switch bypasses the effects but does not suspend the digital processing, i.e. the motor keeps running, the echoes keep playing and the reverb keeps... reverberating, it's all just muted. If you want to totally bypass the effect, use the host's Bypass function that will suspend all processing.

**SYNC SWITCH:** this tiny little switch enables something that is light years far from the reality of a tape echo unit: synchronization with song tempo. This is discussed later in this manual, and you should also know that, despite this function has been implemented, we don't like it at all... :-)



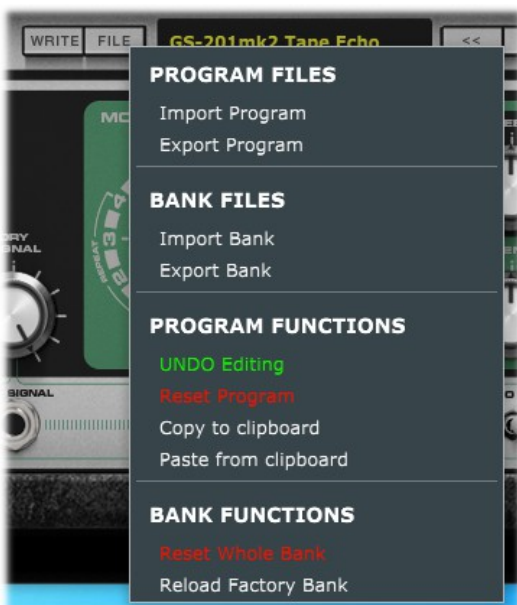
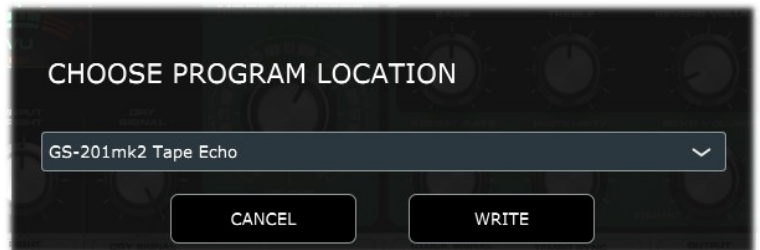
## THE PROGRAMMER

One of the most interesting features of GS-201 Mark II is the programmer. This section allows to Write / Recall user Programs, import / export single Programs or entire Banks, also copy & paste Programs from one location to another, or initialize the current Program for a fresh start.



Each Bank consists of 128 Programs numbered from 0 to 127, like the good old MIDI protocol required. To recall a Program, either use the Left / Right arrows on the right of the main display, or click on the Program name label for a full pop-up list of the 128 available Programs, or recall them from MIDI Program Change events (needs to be activated from the Settings Window).

To store a Program: once you're done with all your tweakings and you decide it's time to store the Program, just click the WRITE button to overwrite the current Program. If you want to give it a new name, right-click the name label and type the new name, press <ENTER> to confirm. In case you wish to store it to a new location, right-click the WRITE button, a dialog window pops up asking you to select a location from a drop-down menu.



Other operations with Programs and Banks can be performed from the FILE menu that you can access by clicking on the FILE button. Here you can export or import single Programs or entire Banks. Programs and Banks use a proprietary format and are saved in binary files, and the built-in bank is automatically saved every time a Program is written or the application / plugin is closed. The functions "Copy to clipboard" and "Paste from clipboard" can be used for reorganizing Programs in a Bank, and "Reset Program" recalls an initialized program with default parameter settings. Click "UNDO Editing" in case you wish to restore the status of all parameters as they were when the program was recalled. Operations such as import, reset or paste, that apparently overwrite the

current program, actually use a temporary volatile memory that is lost unless the WRITE function is used. Lastly, it's also possible to reset the whole Bank or restore the factory Bank.

## TEMPO SYNC

(a.k.a. “how to turn a beautiful, warm and unpredictable analog tape echo unit into a cold, boring and sterile digital delay”).

Was there sarcasm in this title? Maybe. A tape echo, by its nature, is something far from being precise, or “synchronized”, if you count that, as we learned from the previous chapters, the tape can slip because of the loop junction, the motor can “flutter”, the heads are not equidistant, the tape is kept in tension between two felts... How can we demand that such a mechanism can be so precise to be synchronized to something else in the digital domain? As a matter of fact, back in the analog days, when the studios could synchronize their tape machines to the Atari running the Midi sequencer, it was the tape to playback the SMPTE signal that was then translated in Midi tempo sync, not the other way around. There were tape machines that could be synchronized between them to double the number of tracks, but hey... they costed the price of a small Jet! A tape echo unit was mostly made to be portable, for the guitarist or the small band that wanted to have the echo effect in their rig.

Having said that, GS-201 Mark II offers the possibility to synchronize the delay to the tempo set in the DAW host software. When the SYNC is active, the RATE knob doesn't control the motor speed any more, it selects the Tempo Division in the following order, from the larger to the narrower:

*1 Bar, 1/2 D, 1/1 T, Half Bar, 1/4 D, 1/2 T, 1/4, 1/8 D, 1/4 T, 1/8, 1/16 D, 1/8 T, 1/16, 1/32 D, 1/16 T, 1/32.*

Divisions with T are triplets, those with a D are dotted.

When the tempo sync is active, the following features are disabled, and their relative parameters will have no effect:

- Motor Flutter
- Motor Lag
- Tape Junction

The synchronization is made only on the pick-up head n. 3. Since the heads are not equidistant, you'll find that Head 3 results synchronized but the remaining heads will not sound exactly in time.

## OPTIONS FOR THE STANDALONE APPLICATION

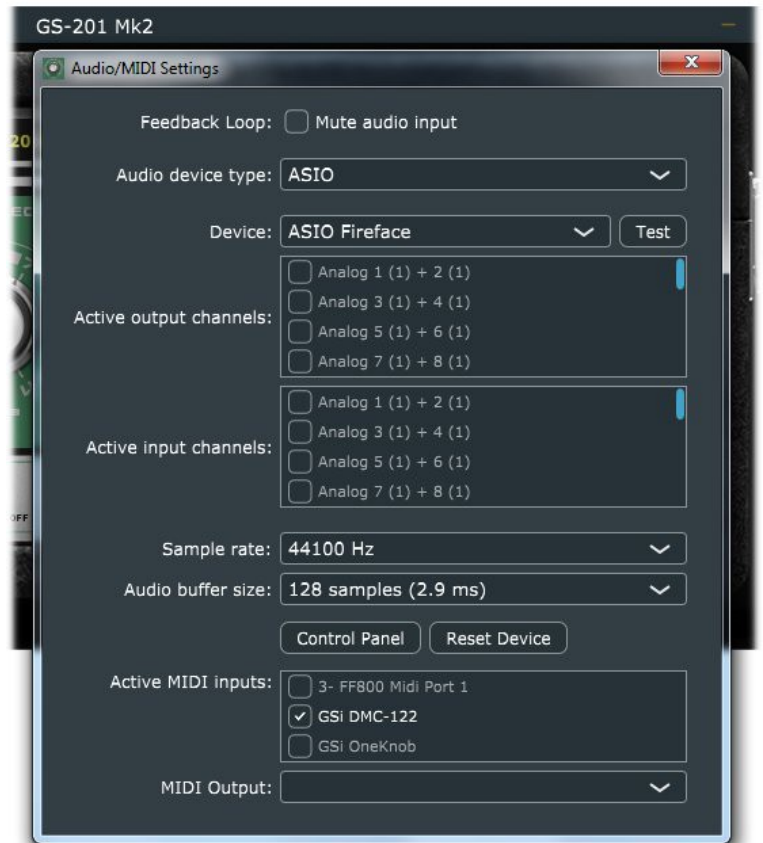
The standalone application offers an extra menu for setting the AUDIO and MIDI devices. Under Windows it is possible to select between the available audio driver types. For better performance, use a low-latency ASIO driver, possibly the most recent driver released from your sound-card's manufacturer. Select the stereo output port, the stereo input port, the sampling rate, the buffer size, and the MIDI input and output devices.

GS-201 Mark II supports sample-rates from 44100 up to 384000. However, the best performance is achieved at 44100.

If you have two or more controllers connected to your computer, you can enable them all at the same time, their MIDI streams are internally merged.

The settings are immediately applied as soon as they're changed. Close this window when done.

*Please note: the standalone application always stores the last status, regardless of the Program that was selected the last time it was used.*



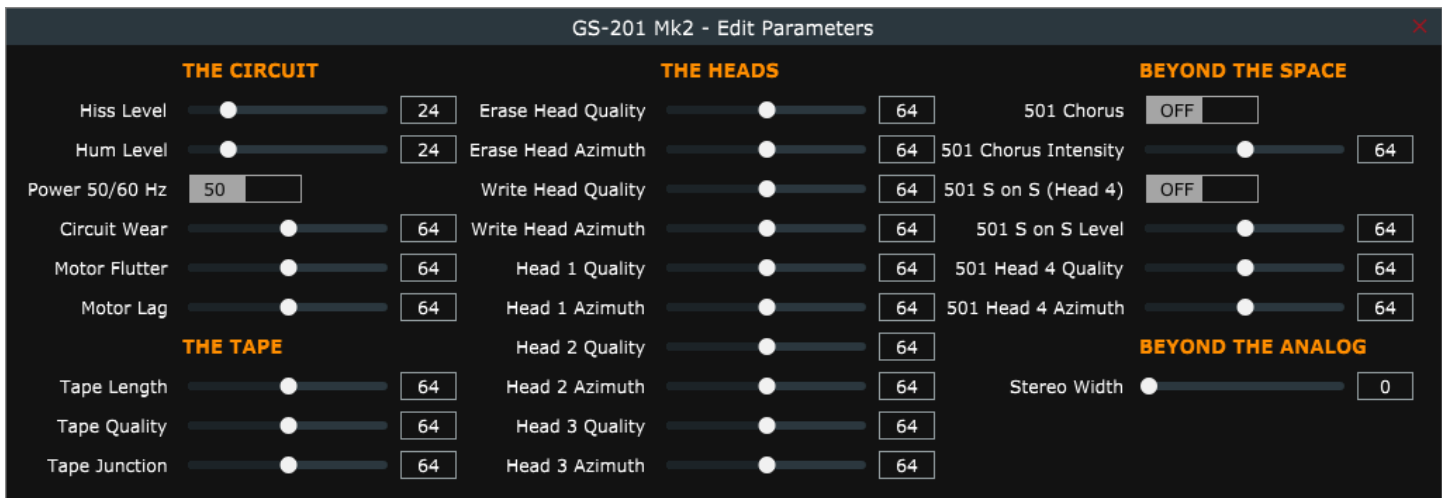
## SOUND EDITING AND GLOBAL SETTINGS

The buttons on the top right corner of the main screen are used to open the editing panel and the global settings window. Click a button to open the view, click again to close it.



## THE EDIT PANEL

Here is where you find all editing parameters, to get deep into the customization of your echo sound. This window is divided in sections, each representing a block of the effect's structure.



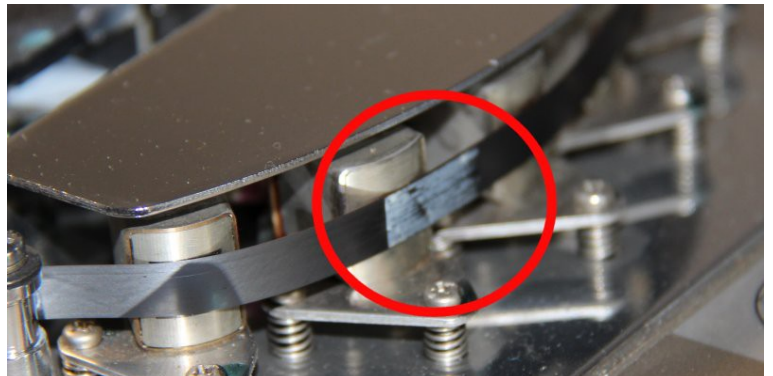
### THE CIRCUIT

- **Hiss & Hum Level:** adjust separately how much of hiss and hum noise you want to be mixed in the sound. The hardware echo unit produces some background noise coming from both the electronic circuit and from the tape, and it's impossible to have it perfectly clean. If you wish a very realistic simulation of the original Space Echo, these parameters should never be set below value 24. Please note that if these are set to zero, you also lose the self-oscillating feedback.
- **Power 50/60 Hz:** this affects the frequency of the hum noise. As you know, the power lines carry alternated current but not all Countries use the same frequency. Europe is on 50 Hz, USA uses 60 Hz... just chose the one you prefer.
- **Circuit Wear:** by increasing this parameter you get a more distorted and less defined sound, as if some parts of the circuit were old and would need replacing. Setting this to zero will remove all distortions.
- **Motor flutter:** this adjusts the amount of wow&flutter effect that alters the pitch of the recorded sound. The middle position represents an averagely good capstan motor with just its normal amount of fluttering. Zero is perfectly stable (impossible to reach with the actual unit), max means the motor needs to be cleaned, lubed, bushings need replacing and probably the unit is even overheating.
- **Motor Lag:** this adjusts the time of ramp up/ramp down of the capstan motor. Middle position is normal, zero makes it almost instantaneous, max position is like the motor is too lazy.

## THE TAPE

The following three parameters adjust some important aspects of the tape, the main element of the tape echo.

- **Tape Length:** adjust the length of the tape loop from 1 meter to 4 meters. How will this affect the sound? Not the sound itself, but the way the echo works. This has mostly to do with other two parameters explained later: the Tape Junction and the Erase Head Quality. When all the available tape reaches its end, since it's a closed loop, it restarts from the beginning, but if the erase head isn't working properly, the tape isn't erased completely, leaving a bit of the old audio still playing in the background. A cause of this malfunction in the hardware unit could be the wrong BIAS, or magnetized write head, or erase head misalignment. GS-201 Mark II lets you adjust this kind of misbehavior.
- **Tape Quality:** this adjust the audio quality of the tape. If the tape is good (higher values), the sound will be clean and free from disturbances; with a bad tape (low values), you'll hear some sort of "holes" in the sound, like some particles of the magnetic tape have lost their magnetic power. The middle position reflects what you should expect from a real unit.
- **Tape Junction:** as explained above, this kind of echo unit uses a tape loop, the loop is made possible thanks to a short piece of adhesive that joins the head and the tail of the tape strip. If the junction is not well made, or if the adhesive tape used for the junction is too thick, every time the junction passes across the heads causes a sort of a rattle, and when it reaches the pinch roller, the tape slips a little causing a slight loss of speed. This parameter in the middle position reflects what you should expect from an averagely good junction, a higher position makes it yet more evident, lower values make it less evident. You will also notice that the parameter Tape Length determines how frequently you'll hear the tape junction: with a shorter tape you'll hear the junction more frequently. Also the parameter Repeat Rate has the same effect: if the tape rolls faster, the junction comes quicker.

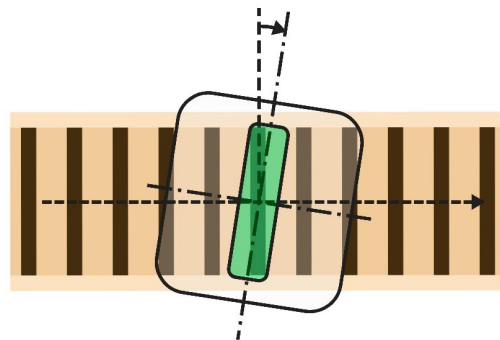


## THE HEADS

For each head you can adjust the Quality and the Azimuth. The quality of the erase head has a different effect than the quality of all other heads.

- **Erase Head Quality:** As explained in the previous paragraph, the Erase Head Quality can determine the way the tape is erased each time the loop restarts and the tape passes over the erase head. If this parameter is too low, the tape is not properly erased. Setting this parameter at zero leaves almost 50% of the original sound still on tape, making it really hard to erase, especially if the tape is very long. Setting this parameter at max, erases perfectly the tape, acting like a digital delay.

- **Erase Head Azimuth:** what is the “Azimuth”? This term is mostly used in astronomy, but with respect to a tape machine it indicates the angle between the head and the tape. If the angle of the head isn't perfectly perpendicular to the tape, this may alter the sound in different ways, according to the misaligned head or to the degree of misalignment. In the case of the erase head, if the angle is wrong and the head isn't able to erase the tape completely, not only part of the original audio remains on the tape but it is also slightly altered because of the BIAS waveform that alters the tape content the wrong way.



- **Write Head Quality:** normal position is in the middle, means good quality. Higher values mean better quality but also result in a slightly decreased output gain, lower values tend to darken and distort the sound a bit. Since this is the write head, it's characteristics will affect all what's later read by the pick-up heads.
- **Write Head Azimuth:** if the angle is tilted, the sound recorded on tape takes a different coloration, like a sort of a comb filter that creates holes in the frequency spectrum.
- **Heads 1, 2, 3 Quality:** this is the same as for the Write Head, but will of course only affect one single head. The difference is that in a multi-tap configuration (for example MODE 11), if a single head has a different quality, you will hear a single repetition with a different sound.
- **Heads 1, 2, 3 Azimuth:** the same as for the Write Head, but related to a single pick-up head. Of course, if a single pick-up has a misaligned azimuth, resulting in an altered sound, this will be fed back into the feedback chain resulting in an altered delay tail sound.

## BEYOND THE SPACE

This section includes parameters for some extra functionality borrowed from another famous tape echo unit from the same manufacturer, the Chorus Echo RE-501. This unit, in addition to the 3 tap delay and the spring reverb, added one extra pick-up head and a single voice BBD Chorus. This effect consists in overlapping the dry sound with a copy of the same sound modulated in time by a triangle LFO.

- **501 Chorus:** use this switch to toggle the Chorus effect. If you disengage the dry sound, you'll hear only the chorused voice, in this case it turns into a vibrato effect.
- **501 Chorus Intensity:** adjust the amount of chorus, consisting in both the LFO speed and LFO amplitude.
- **501 S on S (Head 4):** this switch toggles the 4<sup>th</sup> pick-up head, also called Sound-on-sound because it's put very distant from the write head, resulting in a delay time that ranges between 506 ms and 1835 ms.
- **501 S on S Level:** this slider adjusts the output level of the 4<sup>th</sup> pick-up head.
- **501 Head 4 Quality:** same as the other three heads, adjusts the quality of this 4<sup>th</sup> pick-up head.
- **501 Head 4 Azimuth:** adjusts the 4<sup>th</sup> head alignment.

## BEYOND THE ANALOG

This section includes the **Stereo Width** parameter, that doubles the output signal by delaying the right channel output by a time comprised between 0 and 50 milliseconds. Adjust the amount of delay to match the desired effect.

## THE GLOBAL SETTINGS WINDOW

This panel shows the global settings that are stored in a separate file and affect the overall operation of GS-201 Mark II.



Settings are:

- **Output Level:** adjust the overall output level from -3 dB to +3 dB. Default is zero.
- **Show Tool Tips:** enables or disables the tool tips that appear when the mouse stops over a parameter control. If you feel the tips are disturbing, you can disable them here.
- **Receive MIDI Program:** check if you wish to switch between Programs by sending MIDI Program Change events.



## MIDI LEARN

GS-201 Mark II features an advanced MIDI “Learn” system for helping with mapping MIDI CC messages to the parameters. By default, no parameters are mapped, but it's very easy to change the assignments to fulfill different requirements.

Right click on any parameter on the interface (also in the separate editing windows) to access the MIDI Learn menu.

Click on “Start MIDI Learn” to start learning the MIDI parameters coming from your controller. A dialog window appears which you should give confirmation to if your assignment is done as expected, or you can click on “Abort” and abandon the operation.

If you're creating your map but you don't need to catch the CC numbers from your controller, you can still use the other menu options to set the values manually. Set the CC number, the MIDI Channel (1 to 16 or OMNI), the min and max values. If min and max are swapped (i.e. min is major than max) the parameter will respond reversed.

You can “unassign” a parameter if you don't want it to be controlled by any MIDI message, or you can assign default values if you're unsure what assignment to give to it.

Last but absolutely not least important, you can save your entire MIDI map to a file or load it from a previously saved file, so you can have more mappings ready for different controllers that you might have.

## MIDI OUTPUT

GS-201 Mark II also supports MIDI Output. It sends the values of all controllers that have been assigned. This is useful in case a controller that needs feedback is used, like those with motor-faders or other kind of controlled that need to be updated by the software.

**PLEASE NOTE:** you should avoid MIDI loops (i.e. the MIDI output coming from GS-201 Mark II that is fed back into its MIDI input), this could cause some unwanted behavior or even cause a crash. Some DAW host programs have a built-in MIDI Loop check, but it's a good practice to pay particular attention to all MIDI routing.



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## 4 DISPUTE

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