

Akai EWI USB - Tips and Tricks

Every composer struggles at some point with how to effectively get what is in his or her head and heart into a finished piece of music. Sometimes it can be equally hard just to get a specific sound or expression the way you want it. Fortunately, the EWI USB comes with Aria, a powerful tool for tweaking instrument sounds. Here are some tips and tricks that can help you use your EWI USB to go from writer's block to realizing your artistic vision in just a few minutes.



LAYERING

Mixing instrument sounds is a technique for creating a richer, fuller, more complex sound. Layering can be especially useful for solo musicians who are trying to achieve the sound of an ensemble. Here's how to do it with your EWI USB.

1. Select an instrument in Slot One. For example, here, we've selected a Jazz Tenor Sax.



2. Select an instrument in Slot Two. In this example, we've chosen a Cello.



3. Start Playing!

You'll hear both Sax and Cello sounds playing in unison. Experiment with panning each sound left or right, changing the volume and reverb level for the effect you desire. You can also vary these parameters to produce a more realistic ensemble sound. You can layer up to four sounds in Aria. If you are using your EWI USB with digital audio workstation (DAW) or composition software such as Steinberg Cubase, Apple GarageBand, or Ableton Live, you can lay down four layers in one take, add another set of four on top of that, and so on. Before long, you'll have a very rich sounding orchestral composition.

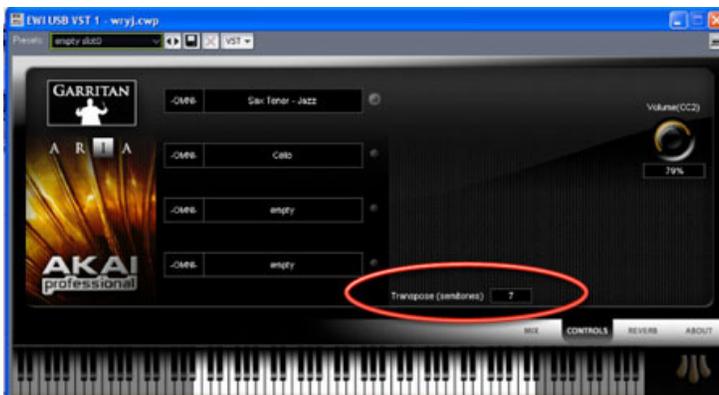
PLAYING CHORDS

You can play chords using your EWI USB. This is great for emulating piano or guitar chordal sounds.

1. Select an instrument in Slot One as shown in the layering tip above.
2. Select the same instrument for Slot Two, or choose a different one.
3. Click the Controls tab.



4. In the Controls tab, you'll see Transpose. You can transpose each sound by as many as ± 12 half steps. Try setting each sound to a different Transpose setting. For example, 0, 4, and 7 will create a major triad (three-note chord).



5. You can play a single note on your EWI USB and produce the sound of a piano player pressing a three or four-note chord. If you are new to music, this can be a great way to experiment with chord structure.

CONTROL OTHER SOFTWARE SYNTHS

You can control other software synthesizers using the EWI USB. Some examples include Ableton Live, IK Multimedia Sonik Synth, Apple GarageBand and Propellerheads Reason. The EWI USB has multiple MIDI controllers that you can set to allow you to expressively play your software synth. Aria makes software control easy.

1. Consult your software synthesizer documentation to find out which MIDI CC is used to control which parameter. For example, let's say "Filter Cutoff" is CC#72.
2. Open Aria and select EWI Configuration from the Tools menu.



3. In the window that opens, assign a controller to MIDI CC#72. Seven different controllers with different feels are available. For example, try assigning CC#72 to Breath CC2.
4. Open your software synthesizer and play your EWI USB. Notice that as you play harder, the sound now gets brighter because the EWI USB is capturing your breath information and applying it to the sound it creates.
5. This technique is not only useful for creating more expressive or custom wind instrument sounds; it opens up an entirely new world of sounds to your EWI USB. There are literally hundreds of thousands of samples to choose from in the world of software synthesizers. By purchasing additional sound libraries, you can easily make your EWI USB can sound like a Hammond B3 organ, a Steinway Grand Piano, vintage synthesizers, a complete sax quartet, whatever you like. Using a combination of software settings and your expressive playing can give you incredibly realistic orchestral sounds and the ability to make all-new sounds from scratch.

As you have probably discovered, your EWI USB is a highly advanced tool for artistic expression. With the tips above and your own creativity, you will soon be doing things with your EWI USB that you didn't know were possible.