

bLO-Fish VSTi by Opulent Audio
Version 1.5
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All emails should go to vst-support@opulentaudio.com

VST design, DSP and GUI, by Jeremy Phillips (Opulent Audio).

Special thanks to:

David Haupt, Etric Van Mayer, Chris Kerry, Lance Putnam, RH Modules, Scoofster Audio, and Jeff McClintock for outstanding modules and development tools.

Thank you so much for trying Opulent Audio's bLO-Fish VSTi! I hope you enjoy making fresh sounds for your tracks. It has been designed to be fast and easy to use.

This manual is intended to be a brief overview and instruction and not a lengthy journey into synthesis. You'll thank me when you're not still reading this in a half-hour.

It is assumed that you have a basic understanding of synthesizers and synthesis. If you are needing to learn more, the web is jam packed with such information. Google is your friend. If there's anything about bLO-Fish that isn't covered here, email me with your question.

To install bLO-Fish, simply unzip the zip file to your VST plugins directory. Consult your host's manual.

During the trial period, every time you load bLO-Fish, you will see a dialog telling you how many days remain in the trial. You also have the option to purchase a license (links to purchase web page) and enter the license information. You can view this dialog anytime by clicking the 'REG' button in the bottom right corner of the interface.

When the trial period expires, bLO-Fish will not output sound until valid license information is entered.

All over the synth, you will find pop-up menus when you click the grey square buttons. In a few places, buttons simply activate a function and you won't see a menu, but most of the time you will.

The interface is large. As screen resolutions are increasing, the interfaces on plugins are getting harder and harder to see. So let's call that advancement!

All components switch on and off. Turning unused items off saves a lot of CPU. Just don't forget to turn stuff on when you use it!

To keep things simple, bLO-Fish is color coded. Oscillators are green, filters are red, effects are purple, modulators and the modulation matrix are orange. Other/misc/main items are in a dark grey, including the gate sequencer and the phrase arpeggiator.

In the bottom right corner is where you may choose between monophonic and polyphonic operation. The retrigger mode determines whether or not notes retrigger (start over) when playing monophonic sequences. The portamento time knob adjusts the amount of "glide" between notes - so get funky!

Note - monophonic operation saves CPU (less voices) and is often sufficient for your needs. Polyphony is available to make bLO-Fish a more useful instrument, but it was initially intended to be a 'big monophonic synth'.

The "OMG" button in the top right corner is a panic button in case you get a stuck note. I haven't yet had any stuck notes, but I thought it would be good to include.

Most of bLO-Fish's parameters are controllable via MIDI.

Let's start with the oscillators.

bLO-Fish has three oscillators with several waveforms. They can be activated/deactivated by clicking the button next to the Osc #. The waveform is selectable with the same type of grey button.

Pitch controls: Shifter goes from -2, -1, to +1 and +2 octaves, coarse tune covers -1 to +1 octave, and fine tune covers -.1 to +.1 octave (just over a semitone each direction).

The button labeled '8bit' (glows green when active) is the LO-FI heart and soul of bLO-Fish. It changes the audio quality from 16 bit/44khz to 8 bit/22khz. This is available on a per oscillator basis, so you can mix the audio rates.

In the middle of the layout, you will find a graphic ADSR envelope which controls the amplitude of the oscillator. Graphic ADSRs are helpful as a visual aid. You can really see the path your sound is taking. Literally!

Remember - Longer release times consume more CPU.

Hard sync - the 3 oscillators also form a hard sync loop, each one hard syncing to the next (and Osc 3 back to Osc 1) using a knob that controls the amount of sync. The more hard sync you add, the more gnarly the sound gets. If you turn down the volume on the modulating oscillator, you will still get the benefit of the sync. This can also help with 'circuit-bent' type sounds. FYI - hard sync is what occurs when the output of one oscillator feeds into the pitch of another.

Output routing - you will find another menu from which to select each oscillator's output: Filter 1, Filter 2, Filters 1 + 2, or no filter - which goes straight past filters to the next step in the DSP path: effects. You can as well simply route to a filter and leave it off. I added the 'no filter' output just in case both filters are in use.

Did you want to read all night or play with this thing? Let's move on to filters!

You have two state-variable filters at your disposal. Both have selectable lowpass, highpass, bandpass and band reject modes. They operate on a parallel basis (side by side). Each filter has volume and pan.

Again you will find graphic ADSRs. This time they control the cutoff and resonance. Separate knobs control the amount of envelope applied to the cutoff and resonance. Different settings here will make dramatic changes.

After filtering, the effects section is the end of the audio chain (we still have modulations to talk about, but those travel 'upstream', if you will).

So let's discuss our small effects section.

The effects section is simple. Distortion first, then reverb. They both have wet/dry knobs.

The distortion unit earned its name "CheapoDisto" from its extremely basic concept - a waveshaper feeds into soft distortion. This is not a fuzzy or heavy effect. It's simply there to make your sounds a little rougher around the edges. There are three knobs. Not very difficult to use...

The reverb unit is quite CPU efficient. I think you'll be surprised. 3 modes - Normal, Gated, Freeze (throw it into freeze mode when you're playing a sound and the reverb unit will sustain that exact sound as you keep playing - try it, it's cool). All the *basic* reverb functions are present. The width control is very effective.

Tip - Gated reverb adds an interesting dynamic to many types of sounds.

Time to look at the modulations.

Plenty of modulation to be had with two host tempo-synced LFOs, one free-tempo LFO, and two ADSRs, as well as Mod Wheel, Aftertouch and Velocity.

The LFOs all have a variety of waveforms, with 20 to choose from on the tempo synced units! The tempo LFOs have waveform modifiers - a shaper and foldback unit. These alter the wave's shape to give different types of effects on the modulation target. You can get some interesting stuff here.

The tempo LFOs have the choice of normal (norm), dotted (dot), and triplet (trip) modes for syncing to your host's BPM.

Most parameters can be modulated via the modulation matrix - 6 slots with 8 selectable sources and 63 possible destinations.

Modulation amounts go from -99 to +99. Negative numbers give inverted mods.

The gate sequencer:

16 step, host tempo-synced. Just click to activate/deactivate a step. Steps can also be automated for some rhythmic madness.

It is at the top of the interface. It wasn't included in the mod matrix because many destinations simply won't benefit from it.

You can route the gate to each oscillator's amplitude individually, with mix amount knobs so it doesn't completely hijack the sound - you can just have a "touch" of gating if you like. You can gate just one oscillator if you want. Combined with other modulations, a gate can really spice things up quickly, rhythmically. It's not just for trance music!

Earlier I mentioned about not forgetting to turn things on and off. If you forget to turn on the gate, any oscillators it is routed to will fall silent. So if you don't hear anything - check that first (I hate to sound like an IP support tech - "uhh, is your computer on?").

The Phrase Arpeggiator:

The arp is tempo synced. When activated, it operates like a standard clocked arpeggiator - playing through the notes depressed, 1-4 octaves in different modes - at different BPM divisions. That's all fine and good (and fun) but the magic of the phrase arp happens when you click the 'Phr Hold' button. In this mode, as long as you keep keys pressed - every key you press will be added to the melody, even after you move on to other keys. This helps create some wonderfully complex patterns. When you let go, your sequence will play until you release the 'Phr Hold' button. If you press any keys, the whole process will start over. Basically, a full 'note-off' followed by a new 'note on' resets the arp. This feature is well suited for live jamming. To use the arp with your sequencer, it is best to leave the 'Phr Hold' off and simply plot long MIDI notes to represent your melody.

A note about presets/patches:

bLO-Fish comes with 72 presets (patches, whatever you want to call it). They are clustered with similar type sounds as much as possible. It is my opinion that "bass", "lead", and "key" type sounds are all very standard and with a little tweaking, are very much one in the same. So all the standard sounds are sort of mixed up together. It's such a shame to pigeon hole a preset with a "bass" tag or other label!

Well that should about cover all you need to know to get started with bLO-Fish. Without much time spent, you will be creating some killer sounds.

Thanks again for trying an Opulent Audio product!
Have fun. Make music. Give 'em hell!

System Requirements:

- Recent Windows OS (2000, XP, Vista)
- SSE enabled processor
- Sound card and VST host program

Basic recommendations for PC music:

- At least 1 ghz CPU, 1 gb of RAM
- Audio Interface/Sound card with ASIO driver
- VST host with sequencer, mixer and other studio options (a workstation)

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Use your gear responsibly. Protect it and your ears by keeping volumes at reasonable levels while creating new sounds. Opulent Audio accepts no responsibility if YOU screw up YOUR system or hearing.



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