BLEVINS TONE CO.

WHIRLY

REED ELECTRIC PIANO · AU · VST3 · APP

User Manual



BLEVINS TONE CO. · VERSION 1.0

WELCOME

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SECTION 1

Introduction

Whirly is a reed electric piano: the small, bright, barking kind that sat in classrooms, churches and on stages all through the '60s and '70s. A steel reed is struck by a felt hammer, a pickup turns its vibration into a signal, and a small preamp, tremolo, power amp and pair of speakers built into the lid do the rest.

Whirly plays real recordings of two of these pianos, then runs them through a model of the piano's own electronics: the preamp with its tremolo, the volume control, the power amp and the two speakers. You get the attack, bark and bell of real reeds, and the same compression, wobble and speaker colour as the instrument.

Inside Whirly

- **Two pianos.** Piano A and Piano B are two different instruments, recorded at several playing strengths.
- **The piano's own controls:** volume, tremolo intensity and speed, key noise and a room.
- **A control plate** with drive, bass, treble, hum, touch and level, and switches for the output, tremolo mode and mains hum.
- **Stereo tremolo,** something the original never had: the sound swings from side to side while the key noise and hum stay put.
- **Audio Unit and VST3 instrument versions,** and a stand-alone app.

FREE

Whirly is a free download. There's no licence, trial or activation: install it and play.

SECTION 2

Installing Whirly

Whirly comes in the Blevins Tone Co. Mac installer. It installs three versions, plus the recordings they all share:

- **Audio Unit (AU) instrument** for Logic Pro, GarageBand, MainStage and other AU hosts.
- **VST3 instrument** for Ableton Live, Reaper, Cubase, Studio One, Bitwig and other VST3 hosts.
- **The Whirly app**, in Applications › Blevins Tone Co., to play from a MIDI keyboard without a recording app.
- **The recordings** (about 45 MB), installed in /Library/Application Support/Blevins Tone Co/Whirly. They're installed automatically whenever any version of Whirly is.

What you need

- A Mac running macOS 11 or later (Apple silicon or Intel; it runs natively on both).
- A MIDI keyboard. A sustain pedal is a big help.

Install

1	Quit your recording app.
2	Double-click **Install Blevins Tone Co.pkg** and follow the steps. Click **Customize** if you only want some of the plug-ins.
3	**Logic Pro:** make a Software Instrument track, then in its Instrument slot choose **AU Instruments › Blevins Tone Co. › Whirly**. **Other apps:** look in the VST3 instruments under **Blevins Tone Co.**
4	**The app:** open Whirly from Applications › Blevins Tone Co., then **Options › Audio/MIDI Settings…** to choose your audio output and tick your MIDI keyboard.

If something goes wrong

Problem	What to do
Whirly doesn't appear in Logic	In Logic, open **Settings › Plug-in Manager**, find Whirly, and click **Reset & Rescan Selection**.
Whirly doesn't appear in another app	Make sure the app scans **/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3**, then rescan.
Whirly opens but makes no sound	The recordings may be missing. Run the installer again; it puts them back.
No sound from the app	Check **Options › Audio/MIDI Settings…**: the right output, and your keyboard ticked under MIDI inputs.

UNINSTALLING

Open Applications › Blevins Tone Co. › Blevins Tone Co. Uninstaller and choose Whirly. It removes the plug-ins, the app and the recordings. Your saved presets are never touched.

SECTION 3

Quick start



Whirly: the piano with its five knobs above the keys, and the control plate below.

1	**Load Whirly** on an instrument track. It opens on **Whirly Burd**: Piano A, a little tremolo, plenty of key noise, a touch of drive and the line output.
2	**Play.** Dig in: the reeds bark and the preamp squeezes when you play hard, and stay round and sweet when you play softly.
3	**Try the other piano.** Click **Piano B** at the bottom left. The first time, it takes a moment to load.

4	**Add tremolo.** Turn up TREM on the piano and set the speed with FREQ. Click **STEREO** on the plate to make it swing from side to side.
5	**Hear the speakers.** Click **SPEAKERS** to play through the piano's own amp and speakers, then shape the tone with BASS, TREBLE and DRIVE.

SECTION 4

The piano's controls



The five knobs on the piano's front panel, left to right:

Knob	Range (default)	What it does
VOL	0–100% (70%)	The piano's volume control. It sits between the preamp and the power amp, as on the real piano, so with SPEAKERS on, turning it up also pushes the amp and speakers harder. With LINE OUT it's a plain volume control.
TREM	0–100% (0%)	Tremolo intensity: how deep the volume wobbles.
FREQ	2–10 Hz (5.6 Hz)	Tremolo speed.
NOISE	0–260% (100%)	The mechanical sounds of the action: keys being let go, dampers landing back on the reeds, and the thump of the keys. 100% is about what you'd hear from a real piano close up.
ROOM	0–100% (18%)	A small room around the piano. Its low end is filtered off so it never muddies the bass.

Piano A and Piano B

The two buttons at the bottom left choose the piano. They're two different instruments, each with its own character: try both with your part. Piano B is loaded only when you first choose it, so it uses no memory until then.

Presets

The PRESET box at the top left holds the factory preset, **Whirly Burd**, and any presets you save. Your recording app's own preset menu works too.

Credits

The **Credits** button, next to the output meter, shows who recorded the two pianos.

SECTION 5

The control plate



Control	Range (default)	What it does
DRIVE	0–100% (0)	A tube preamp after everything else, for grit. All the way down it's out of the circuit completely. Turning it up adds warmth, then hair, then a gritty bark, but it never clips hard. The level is matched as you turn it, so louder doesn't fool you into thinking better.
BASS	±12 dB (0)	A low shelf at 100 Hz.
TREBLE	±12 dB (0)	A high shelf at 3 kHz.
HUM	0–400% (100%)	The piano's mains hum and preamp hiss. 100% is a typical piano; all the way down is silent.
TOUCH	Lighter to heavier (centre)	How hard you have to play. Turn it toward lighter if your keyboard makes it hard to get the bark; turn it toward heavier for more room at the soft end.
LEVEL	−24 to +15 dB (0)	Whirly's output level. Line out and speakers are matched, so you can switch between them without changing it.

The switches

Switch	Choices	What it does
OUTPUT	LINE OUT / SPEAKERS	LINE OUT is the piano's headphone and line output, straight from the preamp: bright and clean. SPEAKERS plays through the piano's own power amp and two small speakers, with their midrange bark and soft top end.
TREMOLO	MONO / STEREO	MONO is the original tremolo. STEREO swings the sound between left and right; the key noise and hum stay in the middle.
MAINS HUM	60 Hz / 50 Hz	The pitch of the hum: 60 Hz as in North America, 50 Hz as in most other countries.

SECTION 6

Playing Whirly

- **64 keys,** A1 to C7 (MIDI notes 33 to 96), like the real piano.
- **The sustain pedal** lifts the dampers. Watch the pedal between the piano's legs move when you press it.
- **The top five keys have no dampers,** as on the real piano: they ring on after you let go, pedal or not.
- **Dampers aren't instant.** Low notes take a moment to stop, as the felt settles on a heavy reed.
- **Playing strength matters.** Each piano was recorded at several strengths, so soft notes are mellow and hard notes bark, not just louder.

Signal flow



With LINE OUT chosen, the power amp and speakers are skipped and the signal goes from the preamp and VOL straight to BASS and TREBLE.

SECTION 7

Tips and troubleshooting

If you hear…	Try this
Not enough bark	Play harder, or turn TOUCH toward lighter. With SPEAKERS, turn VOL up and LEVEL down.
Too much bark	Turn TOUCH toward heavier, or turn DRIVE down.
Too thin or too boomy	BASS and TREBLE. SPEAKERS also takes off the extreme low end, as the real speakers do.
Clicks and clunks when you let go of keys	That's the action. Turn NOISE down.
A constant buzz	That's the hum. Turn HUM down; all the way is silent.
Piano B doesn't play right away	It loads the first time you choose it, which takes a moment.
No sound at all	Check LEVEL and VOL, then run the installer again in case the recordings are missing.

SECTION 8

Credits

Piano A is made from a free sample set recorded and shared by Pie-finger, who gave permission for anyone to use the recordings for any purpose. Thank you!

Piano B is made from "Wurlitzer EP200 Electric Piano" v1.1 by Greg Sullivan (sullivang.net), as mapped by kinwie for sfzinstruments, used under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported licence (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0). Changes made for Whirly: resampled to 48 kHz, loops added so notes can carry on decaying at their own rate, and levels set per velocity layer.

The full licence and the open-source notices (including the VST 3 SDK, used under the MIT licence) are installed in Applications › Blevins Tone Co. › Manuals as **Whirly Open-Source Notices.txt**.

SECTION 9

Specifications

Item	Value
Formats	Audio Unit (AU) and VST3 instrument, and a stand-alone app; universal binary (Apple silicon and Intel)
Pianos	Two recorded reed electric pianos, several velocity layers each; 64 keys, A1–C7
Electronics	Modelled preamp with tremolo (mono or stereo), volume control, power amp and two speakers; line output
Controls	Volume, tremolo intensity and speed, key noise, room, drive, bass, treble, hum, touch, level
MIDI	Notes, velocity, sustain pedal (CC 64)
Recordings	About 45 MB on disk, held in memory as needed (Piano B only once chosen)
Output	Stereo; no latency
Requirements	macOS 11 or later; a 64-bit AU or VST3 host, or the app

SECTION 10

Legal

Whirly software, panel designs, artwork and this manual © 2026 Blevins Tone Co. All rights reserved. Use of Whirly is governed by the licence agreement supplied with the software.

Whirly is an original Blevins Tone Co. design. Where this manual describes a sound or a module as being in the style of a kind of classic equipment, that describes the character Blevins Tone Co. set out to capture; it does not imply any connection with, or endorsement by, any manufacturer.

Piano B's recordings are by Greg Sullivan and used under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported licence; the name of the original sample set is given above only to credit it as that licence requires. Piano A's recordings are by Pie-finger, used with permission.

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