

EarMagic – Absolute Pitch Ear Training Partner

Standard Edition

Getting Started Guide

Pianistica



Introduction

Thank you very much for your interest in EarMagic Standard Edition.

First of all, we would like to explain the concept behind the product. When you face the need to acquire Absolute Pitch, the foremost problem is to find your partner. Without him/her, you just can not start. The computer is a perfect partner for this since you can use it anytime you want. So, what the program is supposed to do is what your partner is supposed to do. It contains all the necessary features you need to begin your practice. This is, however, not a computer aided training course where the computer takes an instructor role. Basic Edition is aimed to take the partner role. Please note this difference. Since you can customize the program, you can apply your favorite method, if you have one.

By the way, if you are new to Ear Training, please read a white paper titled "Ear Training for Musicians" available at our website.

The Standard Edition is designed to be a good companion to our new book: A Totally New Approach to Ear Training available from our website. If you have used the Basic Edition before, it has the same interface plus 12 Note Mapper used in the book mentioned above. This is the entirely new approach to Ear Training. In fact, we have not seen anything like this anywhere in the world. We are very excited to offer this new method to the market. As always, please check our web site for recent developments.

We hope that this program will become your good partner. Ear Training is a time consuming process, but the payoff is far greater than the price you pay.

Sincerely,

Pianistica Product Development Team

Disclaimer

We have to start with the industry standard disclaimer. We spend a great deal of time making sure that the program does not cause any damage to your computer. However, you are solely responsible to determine the suitability or fitness of the program for your needs. We are not responsible for either direct or indirect damages by using this program. Generally speaking, it is very rare that this type of programs causes any damage to your computer. The program is not designed to collect your data nor change any of the computer settings. Nevertheless, it is you to decide whether the program is suitable for your needs.

Copyright July 2010 All Right Reserved

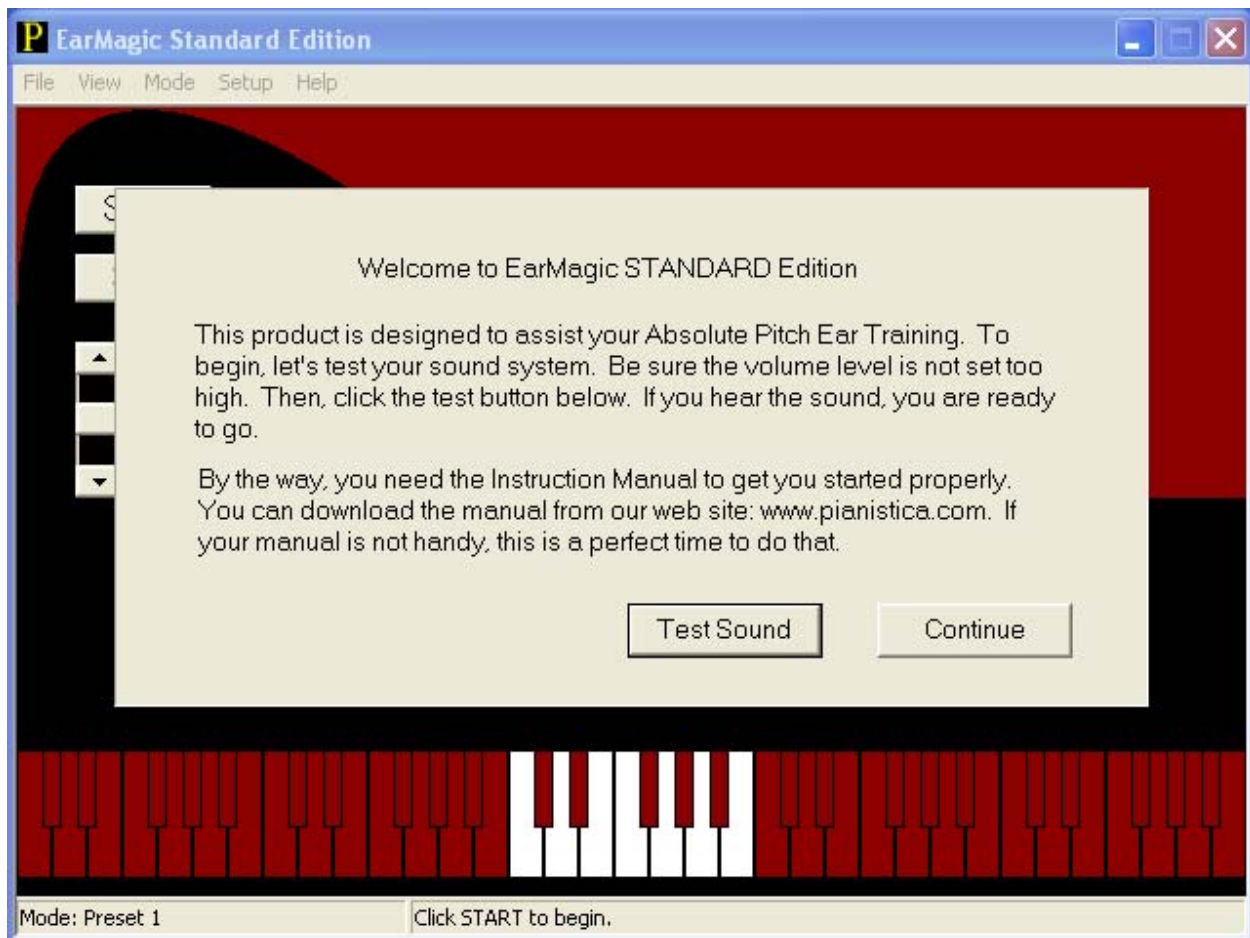
First Edition (Revision 01)

Let's Begin!

We know that you might want to start using the program right away. We, however, feel strongly that just 10 minutes of your time upfront will save you a great deal of your time. You can actually try the program while reading this. If you are reading this far, we assume that you have already downloaded the program to your machine. If not, you are a careful reader. We like that. Please visit www.pianistica.com to download the program.

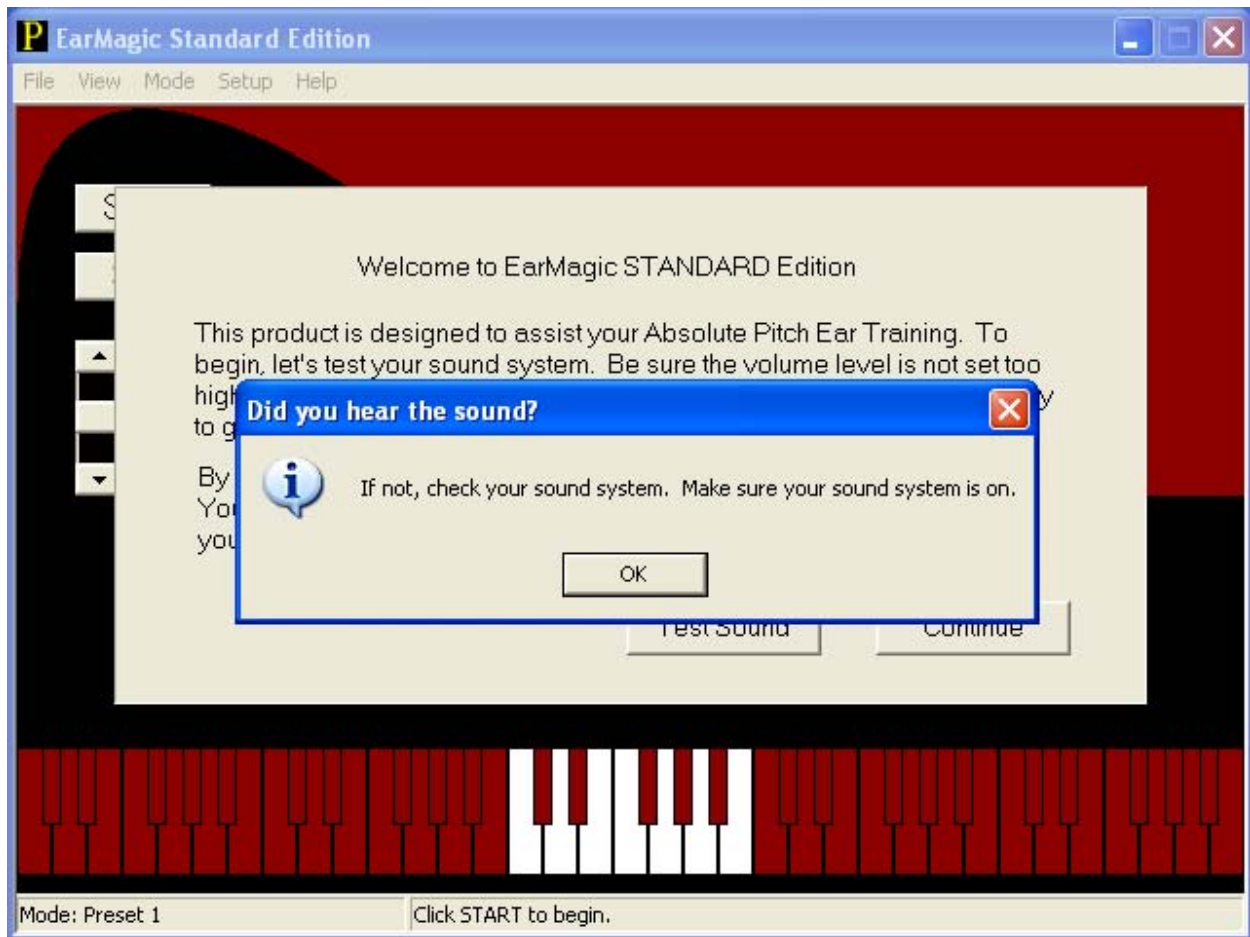
This program is designed to run on any Microsoft Windows computers. Well, Windows 95 and later editions to be precise. The other requirement is a sound card. Both of them are pretty standard these days. This program does not require Installation. You can just copy the program to your desired location and simple double clicks on the icon to start.

Here is an opening screen for the first time:



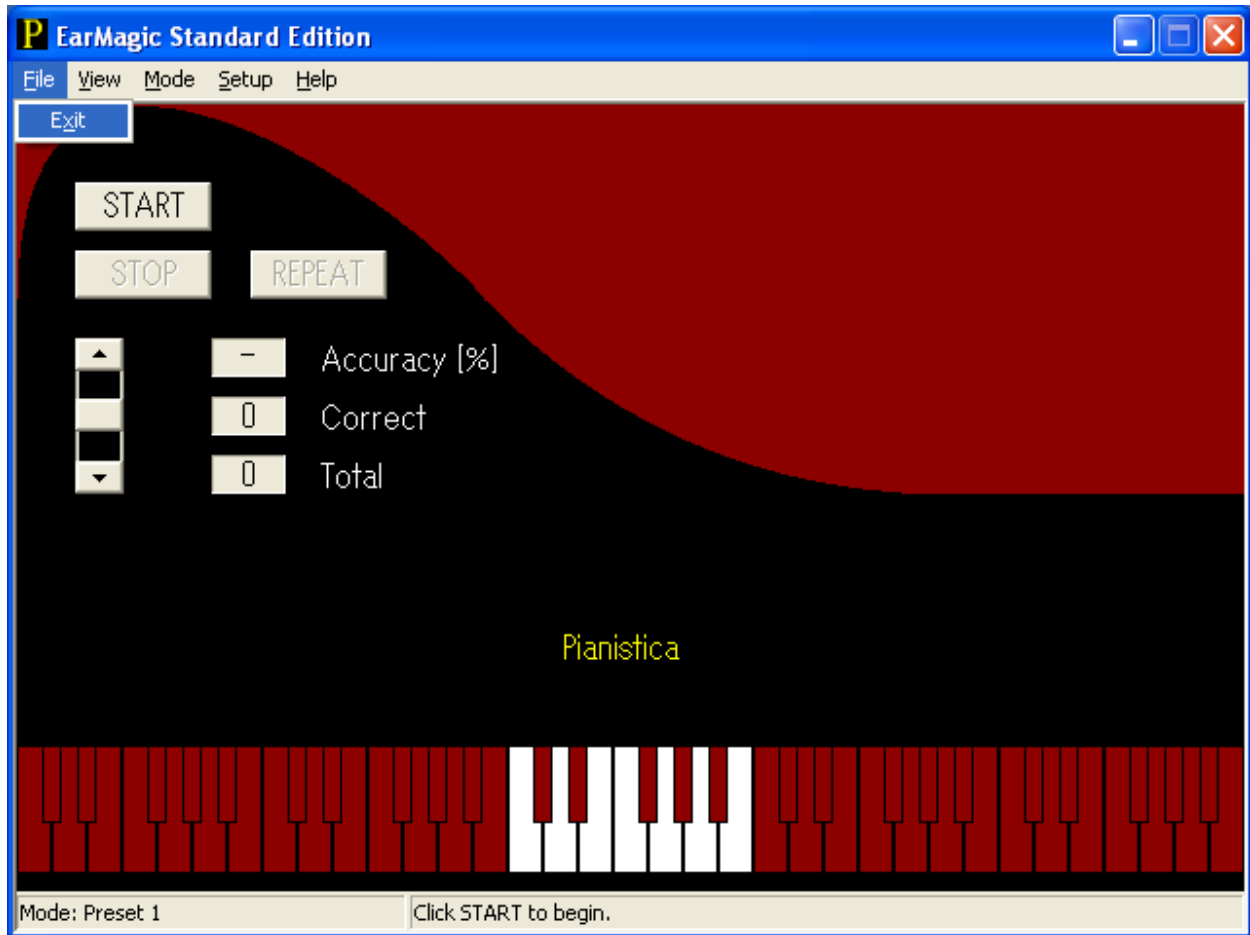
Warning: You should set your volume to a lower side to be safe. Don't blame us when you blow up your speakers.

Having said that, if you click on "Test Sound", you should hear something. You will see the following screen after the sound:



You click on "OK" button. You can repeat the process until you hear the sound. You can adjust the volume inside the program, too. If you are this far, your computer is compatible with this program. If you don't have a sound card installed in your computer, you will see an error message stating that. The program will terminate if that's the case. You need to find another computer. It shouldn't be too difficult. You can run this program pretty much any Windows computer. Outdated machines are just fine for this program as long as Windows 95 or any later edition is installed.

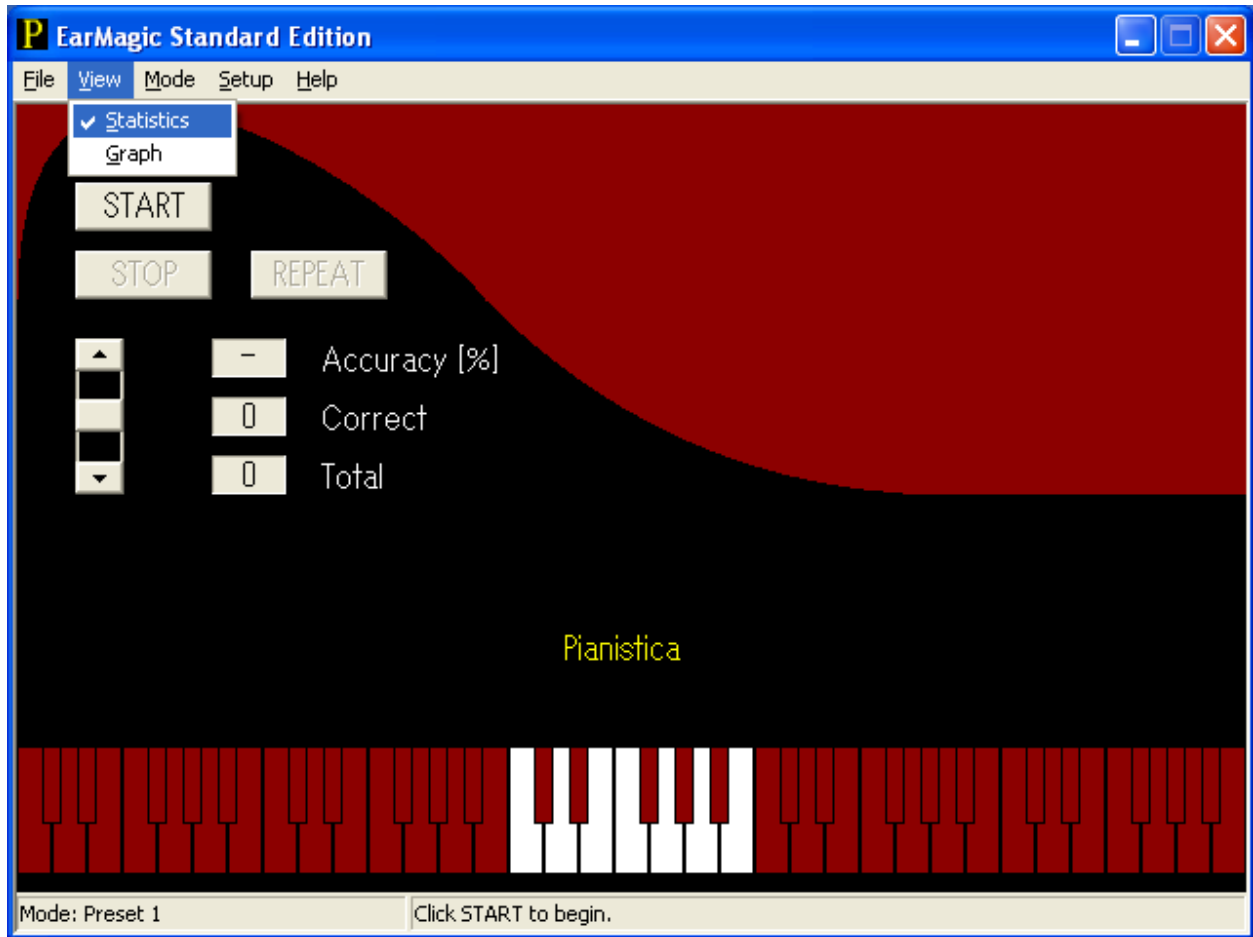
In the following session, we will look at menus and menu structure. The top menu contains File, View, Mode, Setup and Help as you see in the following pages. We will examine the content of the top menu starting File:



You will see “Exit” menu like any other Windows programs. You can exit the program through this menu or X box in the top right hand corner. There is no difference. Unlike other Windows program, however, there are no “Open” or “Save” menus. Because the program does it for you automatically. Once you exit the program, it saves everything. The next time you start the program, it will bring right back to where you left off. We hope you begin to understand why we said it was important to read the Guide first. We know you eventually figure this out, but why not from the beginning. Note: If you use an evaluation copy, the automatic saving feature is disabled. Other than that, everything works exactly the same.

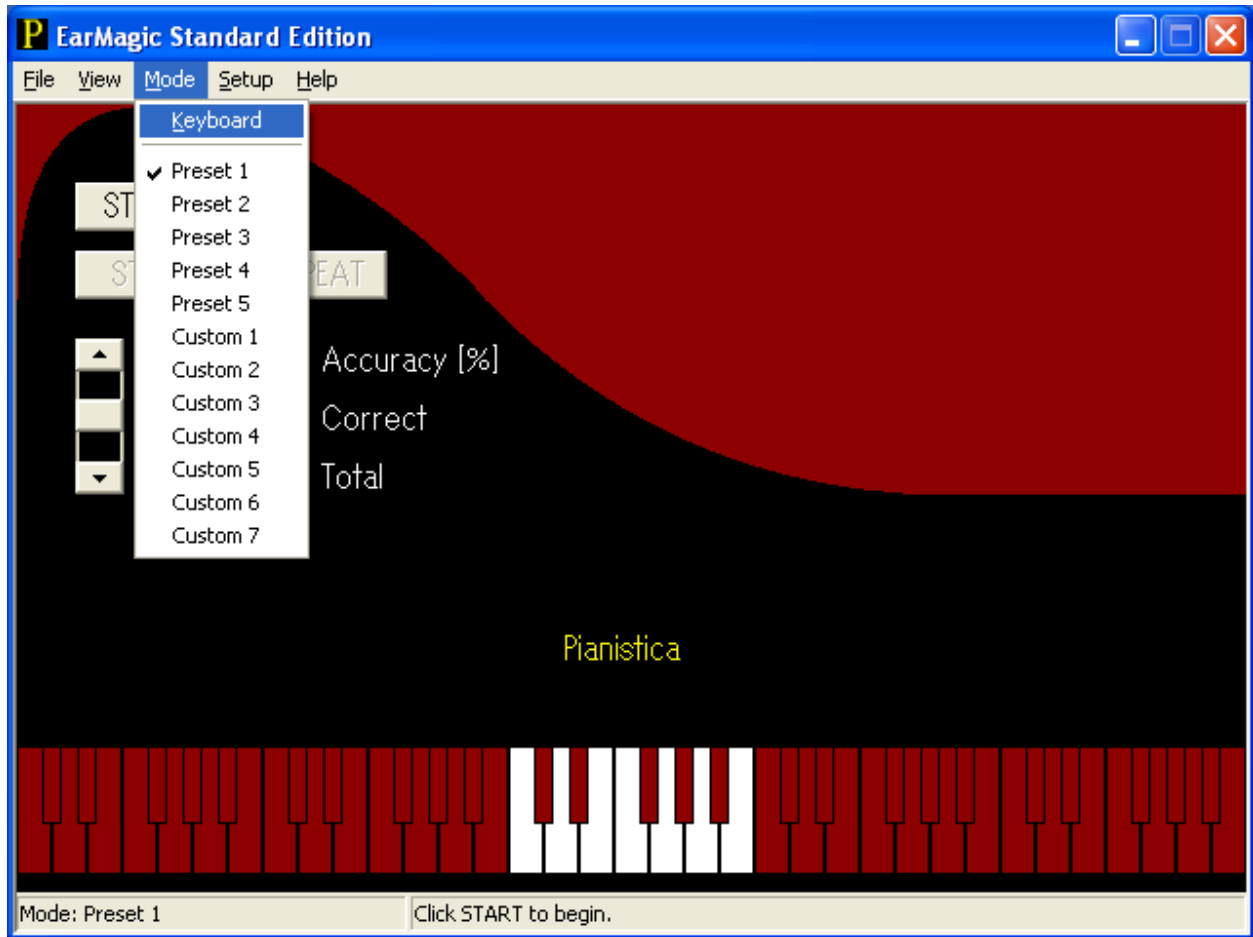
The next item: View

As you see in the following page, there are two menus underneath. Go ahead and try both of them. Statistics turn on and off “Accuracy [%]” and “Correct” counters. Graph turns on and off “Graph” View. You can turn them on and off even during your session. A session begins with “START” button and ends with “STOP” button you see on the screen. “STOP” is grayed right now since it is not available until you start a session. Don’t start it now. We will come back to that later. If you made a flying, just click on “STOP”.



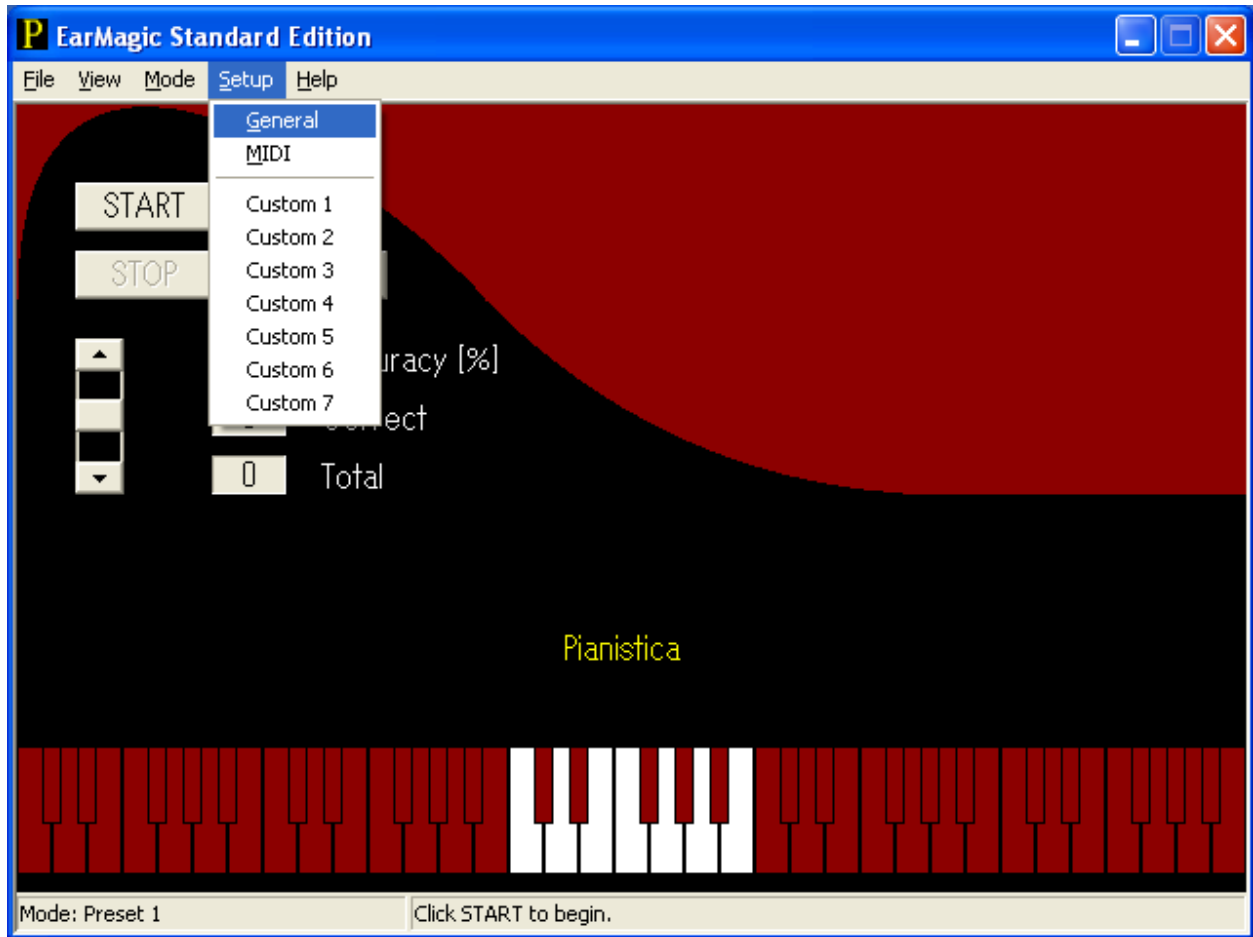
Now, let's move to menu: Mode

As you see in the next page, there are two categories here. One is "Keyboard", which lets you play a tune with your mouse. Sometimes you want to verify your sound in your head. We thought it might be handy to give you a keyboard for that purpose. It is a bit awkward to play the keyboard with mouse, but it is definitely useful when no other instruments are around you. The second category is "Preset" and "Custom". They are the same except Presets are pre-set by us while you can customize Customs. We will cover it in the next session.



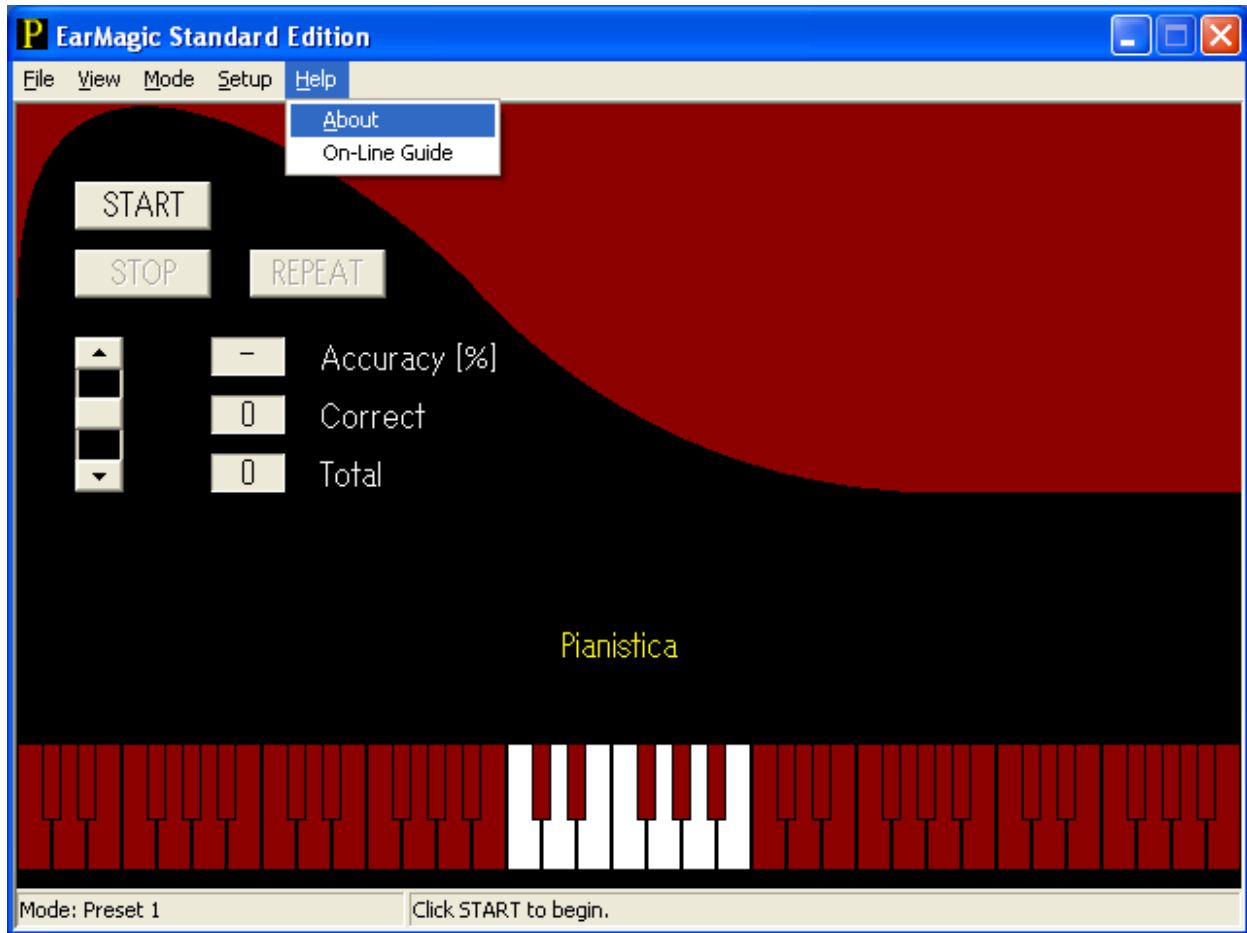
The next item: Setup

There are three categories under Setup as you see in the next page. The first one is General, which contains general settings for the program. The second one is a MIDI setting. You can select a desired MIDI out device if you have more than two MIDI output devices in your computer. And, the last one is Customs. Here you can customize which notes to be included in a selected Custom setting. You have Custom 1 through Custom 7: seven different configurations. We will cover the content of “General”, “MIDI” and “Customs” later in details.



The next menu: Help

As you see in the next page, there are two entries under “Help”, i.e. “About” and “On-Line Guide”. “About” tells you the version number of the program. “On-Line Guide” opens your default web browser and displays the main page for the software. If you have a pdf reader installed in your computer, you can directly open the same document in your browser. Just click on “Getting Started Guide”. You need an Internet connection to use this facility.

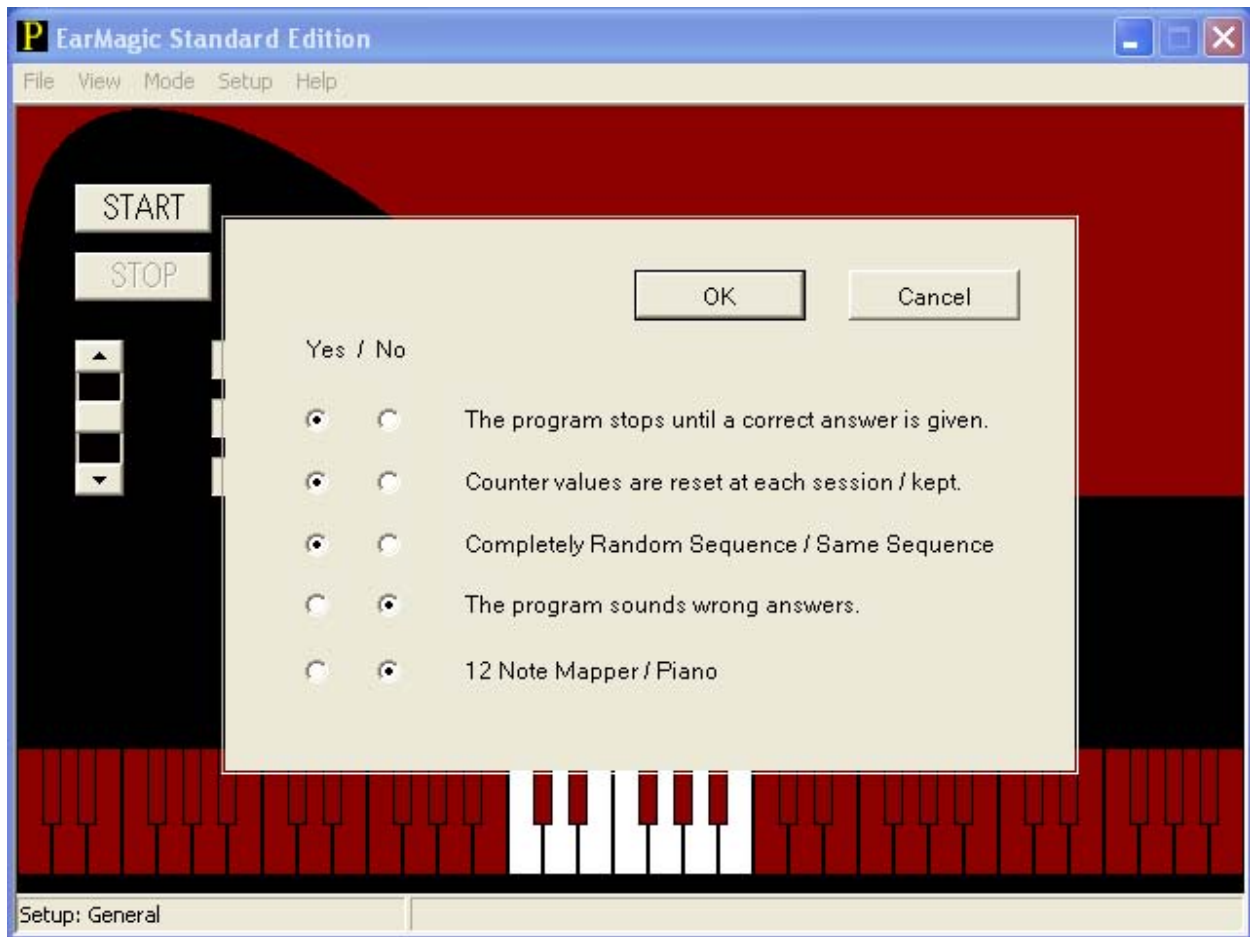


Now, somewhat you are situated. Why don't we jump into a session? "START" button will begin a session, but before that, please take a look at the left hand side, bottom corner. You will see what is selected under "Mode" in the Status Bar. You can change the mode through "Mode" in the top menu. We have already touched upon it. In the middle of the Status Bar, you will see a brief message indicating what you can do inside the main screen area.

Now, Preset 1 is just fine. Click "START" button to begin. You heard a note. Now, you need to select the note you heard on the keyboard using your mouse. Use the left mouse button. Red keys are irrelevant to this session. Did you hit it correct? Turns on both "Statistics" and "Graph" under "View" in the top menu if you have not already done so. If you made a correct choice, you should see a yellow bar in the graph and 100% in Accuracy. The Correct Counter should be 1. Total should be also 1. If not, you see no bar but a tiny yellow line above one of white keys, which indicates 0 % line. Each bar indicates 0 through 100 % divided by 10 red lines across, an increment of 10%. Now, it is not always a good idea to see both displays turned on during your sessions. You can, however, examine how you did at the end of the sessions. "REPEAT" button repeats the last note. "STOP" button will end the session. This is how each session works. You have 5 Presets and 7 Customs to work with.

General Setup

There are five parameters you can choose for your sessions as you see in the image below:



The program stops until a correct answer is given: Yes/No

Yes: The program does not proceed to the next note until you hit the correct note. This is the preferred setting for general practice.

No: The program will move to the next note regardless your answer. You cannot calibrate yourself at each note. This setting can be useful to test whether you are relying on your absolute pitch.

Counter values are reset at each session/kept.

Yes: The program resets the counters at the beginning of each session.

No: The counter values are retained. So, what you see will be the aggregate of all the sessions.

Completely Random Sequence / Same Sequence

Yes: Completely Random Sequence

No: The same Sequence – You might find it helpful to see what sequence of notes fools you.

The Program sounds wrong answers.

Yes: When you choose a wrong answer, you will hear the sound of the wrong note.

No: You will not hear any sound for a wrong note.

12 Note Mapper / Piano

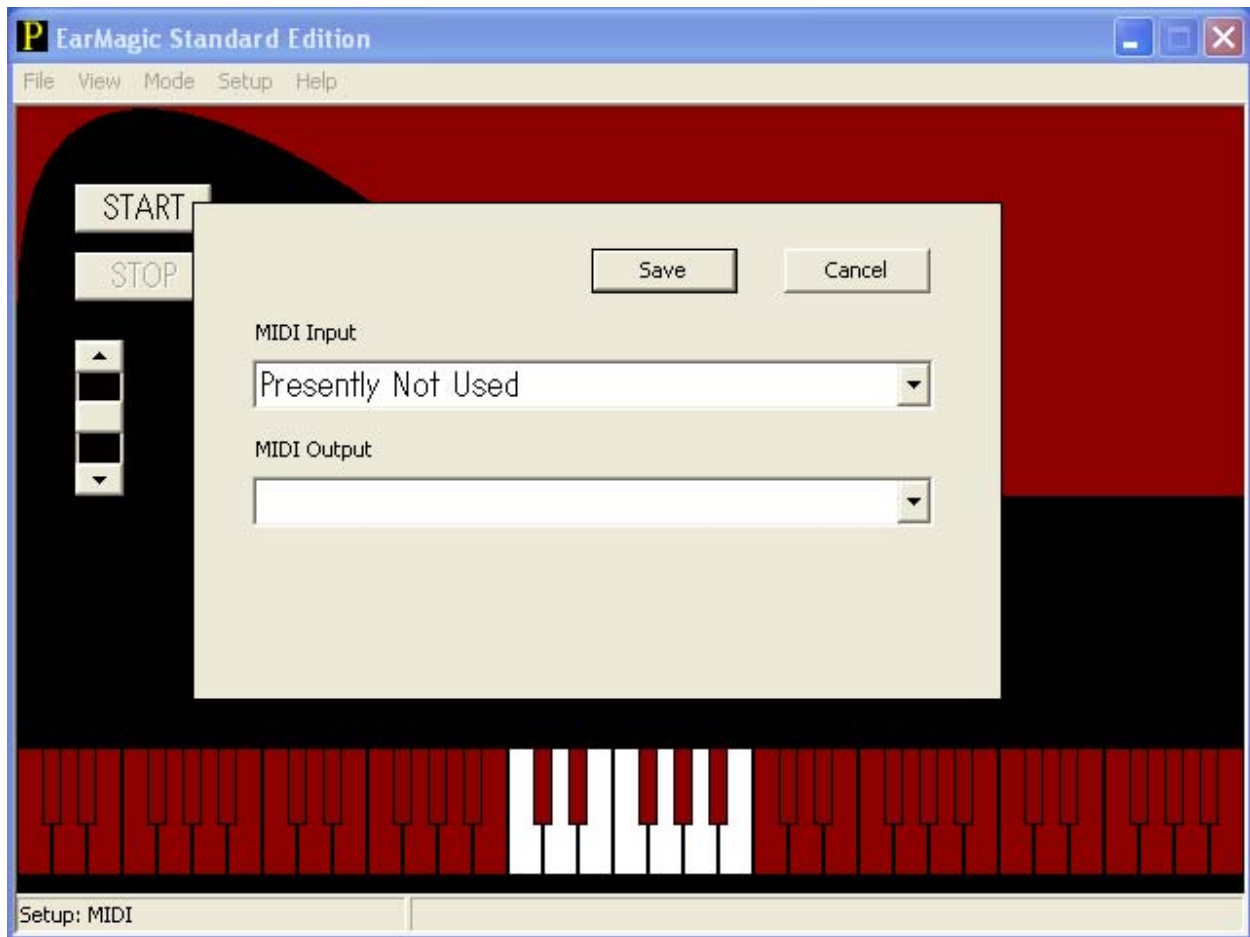
Yes: You will hear 12 different instruments sound for each note of an octave defined in the book: A Totally New Approach to Ear Training. This makes this program a good companion to the book as mentioned earlier. We strongly recommend using the program along with the book if you do not have any specific training method.

No: You will hear piano sound for all the notes. Once you acquire reasonable accuracy, you want to use this setting. After all, 12 Note Mapper is like a set of training wheels, which helps you learn how to ride bicycle.

MIDI Setup

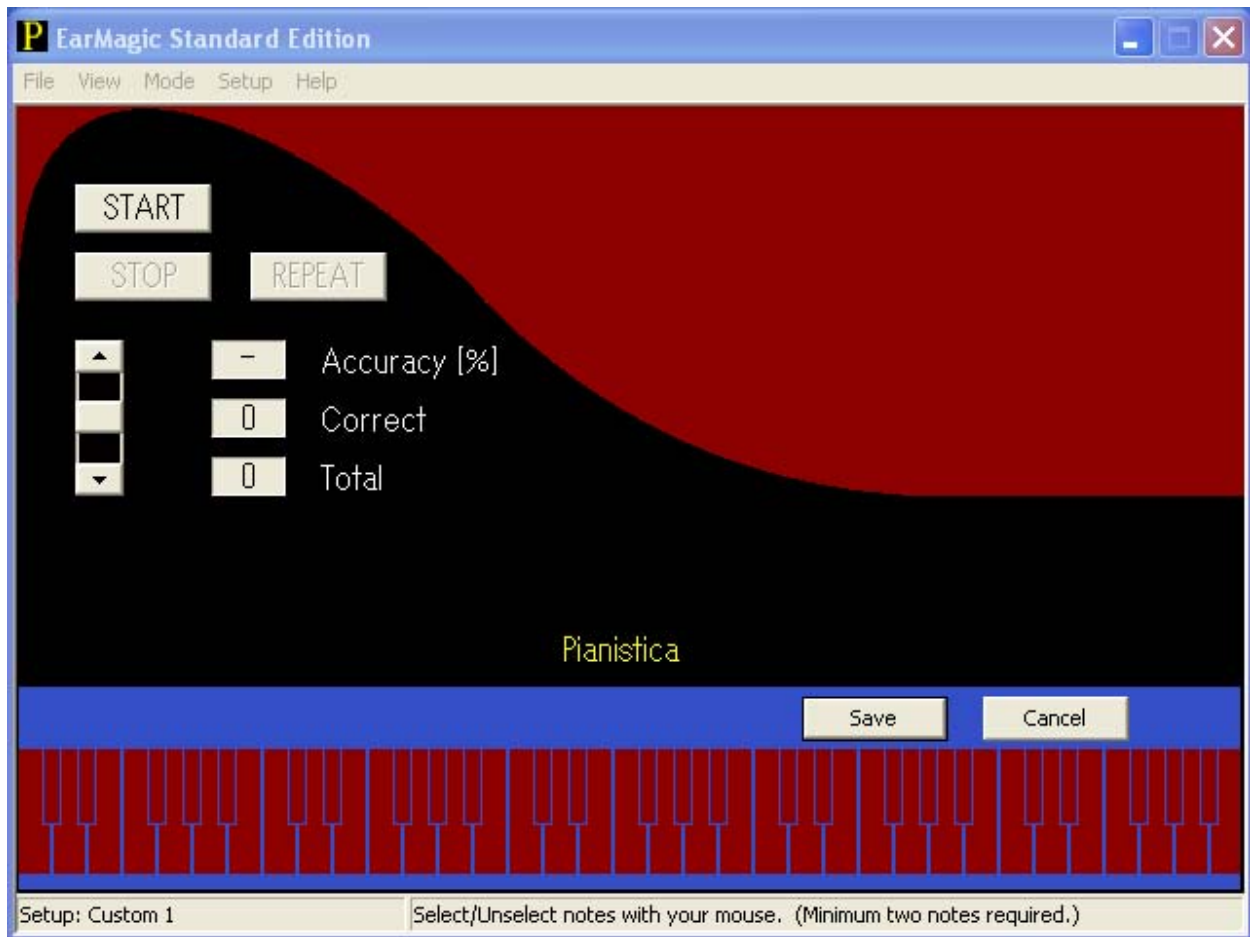
Here you can select a MIDI output device. When you open this menu for the first time, you will see a blank for MIDI Output. This is normal. The program chooses MIDI Mapper as a default, which cannot be designated as a regular MIDI device. Therefore, you will see a blank. If you do not select any specific device, it will be always a blank. If you have only one MIDI output device in your system, such as built-in software synthesizer, there is no need to specifically select a device. Of course, you can select the only device in the system. Then, you will see the specified device thereafter. However, there is no way to select MIDI Mapper after you specified any device, which is not really a problem. If you do have to see a blank, you can erase EarMagicStandard.ini to have the program to re-create the default blank for the MIDI Output device. Be warned, however. You will also lose all other settings as well. Here is a bit of the story behind MIDI Mapper. We used to have MIDI Mapper under Windows where you can direct MIDI Output to any output device in the system. This was discontinued from Windows Vista if we are not mistaken. This is the reason we implemented MIDI Mapper inside of our program.

The program does not use MIDI Input device at this moment.



Custom Setup

Here you can select which notes to be included in each Custom Setup. You can use your mouse to select or unselect any desired notes. There is one condition. You need to select at least two notes. Otherwise, you won't be able to start a session. There will be a warning when you click on "START" button. Otherwise, you can include any notes you desire.



For your reference, the following is a brief description for each Preset:

Preset 1

All white keys: It is probably one of the easiest to start with. If this is still confusing, create your custom sessions. Custom 1 through 7 can be used to meet your needs.

Preset 2

All black keys: This key combination has an interesting effect. Many people who have absolute pitch yet not firmly, tend to be confused with half step difference. Try this one if you are one of them.

Preset 3

B Major: This is a combination of white and black keys and half step lower than C Major, which tend to confuse a lot of people.

Preset 4

The standard middle twelve notes: If you somewhat possess absolute pitch, this one is probably a good starting point. If this is too easy, try Preset 5.

Preset 5

This is hard. If this is not an issue, use one of the Customs to include all the notes. That makes everyone envy you.

Well, this is the end. You know everything you need to get started. We hope you can get a good use out of the program. Good Luck!

Tips

There is a hidden feature in the program not explicitly described. EarMagicStandard.log is a log file and originally designed to capture any error conditions during the program operation. It now contains a part of the program operation history, e.g. what sessions you ran, what question notes you heard, what your answers were, etc. You can just double click on the icon. Notepad should open the file for you. You can examine what sequence tends to fool you. Each item in the file is self explanatory. Please remember that the file is overwritten every time you start the program. If you need to keep it, please rename it with whatever file name you choose before starting the program again.

Known Issues

We noticed that the program does exhibit two anomalies when you run under VMware. The first one is a bit of screen issue. It is a very minor annoyance. This does not happen in real hardware. Just a tiny part of every key does not display correctly at a startup. The second one is related to a sound card simulation. When you choose 12 Note Mapper under General Setup, certain instruments, such as one used for G#, do not fully sound. This does not happen in real hardware, either. This presents a usability problem. We tend to think these two issues are caused by a VM (Virtual Machine). Unfortunately, there is no much we can do.

Maintenance

As long as you perform regular backups of your computer, there is nothing you need to add to your regular chores. There are, however, a couple of things you might want to know. The program creates two files, namely EarMagicStandard.ini and EarMagicStandard.log. EarMagicStandard.ini stores all of your settings and scores. EarMagicStandard.log is a log file. When something goes wrong, the program tries to save what has happened before exiting.

When you want to re-locate the program, you need to move EarMagicStandard.ini as well. Otherwise, you will see a splash (opening) screen again and need to set all of your Custom settings. Just erase EarMagicStandard.log file unless you observe anomalies. You can move it together if you want, but the file is overwritten every time you start the program.

If you happen to damage EarMagicStandard.ini file by accident, you can simply delete it. The program will create a new one for you. Yes, you have to set all of your Custom settings again. If you don't want to go through this, you can copy the file and save it in a safe place. If you regularly back up your system, you do this already.

System Requirement

This is a tentative specification, but the program is designed to run on all Microsoft Windows starting Windows 95. The earlier Windows (called 16-bit) up to 3.11 are not supported. You need a sound card with MIDI capabilities for Windows 95, 98, 98SE, ME and 2000. For Windows XP and later versions, any sound card is sufficient since Windows provide Software Synthesizer. Any CPU with speed greater than 90MHz is sufficient. Please note that Windows have their own requirements to run properly.

If you encounter any problems while meeting this requirement, please let us know. We need to revise our System Requirement to reflect it. Windows NT Workstation 3.5 and 4 are not supported since they were primarily for corporate computing environment. As a matter of fact, we do not have those versions handy. So, there is not much we can do.

Our Current Plan

A lot of things have changed since the Basic Edition. We planned Basic Plus Edition with Guitar Interface. This did not happen. MIDI Guitar Interface was not usable as we hoped. We had so many tracking issues. Now, we are actually looking at a different guitar interface. This might come back as Standard Plus Edition. Pocket PC Edition did not happen, either. Windows CE is too complicated for ordinary users. Have we given up on portable devices? Far from it. We are working on an iPhone version, instead. A separate program, 12 Note Mapper, encountered a latency issue under Windows. Actually, this is not a problem caused by our program, but a well known issue with the built-in software synthesizer under Windows. Unfortunately, this makes it difficult to release this rather useful program to general public. You have to purchase a separate low latency software synthesizer or get a hardware device to use the program. Nevertheless, we decided to release the program with more updated features shortly. We will have to say that the program is for advanced MIDI users only. We will work on a Mac version since Apple eliminated the latency issue. As always, please check our web site for recent developments.

By the way, if you need a large quantity, please contact us. We might be able to set up a site license.

Sincerely,

Pianistica Product Development Team