



Howies 179 Users Guide

Make Believe Studios Howies 179 Users Guide

Metric Halo

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1. Introduction



"The 179-120 was built in 1975 for the very first Neumann mastering consoles, the SP 75 and the SP 77. When I started at Masterdisk in '77, it was just there, bolted into the wall, part of the furniture. Bob Ludwig leaned on it. I leaned on it. It became a staple for both of us on records all through the '80s and '90s, and most people who love those records have never heard its name. That's exactly the point. It's the most unobtrusive stereo bus compressor ever made.

The sound is big and smooth; it holds a record together without ever telling you it's there. In my opinion, it's one of the finest-sounding stereo compressors ever produced.

I still have my pair racked up in Laurel Canyon, and for years when people asked me how to get that glue, the honest answer was: you can't. There are only a handful of these left in the world. That's what makes what Metric Halo and Make Believe Studios did so special, they didn't build something 'inspired' by it, they captured my actual units, exactly. Music today doesn't need more loud. It needs more glue, more weight, more *smooth*. This is where I've always gotten mine, and now it's in your DAW."

—Howie Wienberg

For reference, here are a few legendary albums this compressor was used on:

- Nirvana *Nevermind*
- Def Leppard *Hysteria*

- Beastie Boys *Licensed to Ill*
- Jeff Buckley *Grace*
- Run-DMC *Raising Hell*
- U2 *Pop*
- Deftones *White Pony*
- AC/DC *Back in Black*
- Prince *Batman*
- Smashing Pumpkins *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*
- Public Enemy *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*
- LL COOL J *Mama Said Knock You Out*
- Metallica *Master of Puppets*
- Red Hot Chili Peppers *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*

2. Operation



The best way to start getting a feel for Howies 179 is to get a mix playing on a stereo bus and instantiate the plug-in, automatically loading the *Factory Default* preset.

This is Howies default setting. It has an immediately audible effect without being over-exaggerated, making it the perfect starting point for tinkering.

Drive and Output Gain controls

Drive gain into the comp/limiter circuitry and post-processor **Output** gain are located above the main UI at the right of the plug-in preset header. Both the Input and Output have an operating range of $\pm 24\text{dB}$. Use the Input gain to set the incoming signal to just engage the GR meter. Fine tune by ear of course, but this range is the sweet spot for the distortion models.



Drive & Output level controls

Use the Output control to optimize levels for the next processor in the signal path.

Once you have your Output operating levels set, **Drive** is matched reciprocal gain control; it is a single control (handy for automation) which adds to the input gain as it subtracts from the output gain.

A +3dB Drive setting increases the signal to the processing stages while decreasing the processor output level by 3dB. Conversely, a -6dB Drive setting will attenuate the signal into the processor stages by 6dB while increasing 6dB at the output.

Increase Drive to bring more weight and density on more impactful passages, and maybe back off Drive a little for more open or laid back passages where the song requires more space and dynamic depth of field.

Meters

There are two analog-style meters at the left edge of the Howies 179 UI.

Gain Reduction meter



At the top left is a basic gain reduction meter, displaying the amount of gain reduction being applied by the compressor / limiter circuitry on a scale from 0db (no gain reduction) to 20dB of gain reduction.

Output meter



The Output meter sits directly below the gain reduction meter, and displays the final output gain of the signal leaving the Howies 179 processor.

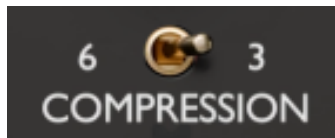
Calibration for Howies 179 hardware (and this plug-in) is +9 equals 0 dBFS, and the TEST hash mark is -9dBFS.

Input control



The **Input** control, at the top of the hardware control strip, sets the gain of source signal into the Howies 179 processor. The control has a range of ± 10 dB.

Compression



The **Compression** switch sets the amount of compression, which in the case of mastering should (hopefully) require a relatively light touch.

Compression in this case combines the functions of threshold and makeup gain, working with the Ratio setting to provide a smoother and more consistent sound.

Ratio



Ratio sets the gain reduction response curve from 1:1, 2:1 or 3:1. This control is naturally quite interactive with the Compression setting. When the Ratio is set to 1:1 no compression takes place allowing you to just emulate the box-tone of the device. Note that you may need to adjust the input level when in this mode; the limiter is not bypassed.

Operating Mode



Operating Mode switches the compressor/limiter sidechain between "Dual Mono" and "Stereo" modes. Note that Howies go-to preset is dual mono. Mmmmm...

Operating Level



Operating Level sets the internal operating level of the processor circuits between the factory unity gain and the setting that Howie eventually landed on as his "sweet spot" for the NTP 179-120 processor circuits. **Howie** operating level setting is the default. When set to Howie's mode, the input level is controlled by the input gain control to match Howie's analog chain operating levels where the average level of the signal is @ -12 dBFS. The limiter in the processor is also set to use higher threshold matching the analog operating levels. When this is set to normal mode it is assumed that you will be running at near FS, and the input level is automatically dropped 12 dB (and the output level is compensated). In addition, the limiter threshold level is also dropped by 9 dB.

Attack



Attack sets how quickly gain reduction is applied based on the Compression setting.

Howies 179 has three Attack settings, Slow, Moderate and Fast, measured in “milliseconds to achieve a 20dB gain reduction”. Slow = 200ms, Moderate = 100ms and Fast = 50ms.

Recovery



Recovery sets how quickly gain reduction returns to unity gain based on the Compression setting.

Howies 179 has three Recovery settings, Slow, Moderate and Fast, measured in “seconds to recover from a 20dB gain reduction”. Slow = 0.16s, Moderate = 0.1s and Fast = 0.06s.

LIM indicator



OFF = no limiting, ON = Limiter engaged

The **LIM** (Limiter) LED lights whenever the peak limiting circuit engages to catch a high peak input. The brighter it gets, the higher the peaks it is trying to control.

Please Note (for all Metric Halo plug-ins):

Tooltip mouse-over pop-ups are available for the controls by clicking the circular ? Help icon in the plug-in header bar.

Knob parameter values are displayed via tooltip overlay as you adjust.

Right-click a control to enter a value manually.

3. Plug-In Header Bars

All Metric Halo and Make Believe family plug-ins display the MH header bar at the top of the plug-in window. This header bar allows you to organize and access all your presets across all supported plug-in formats on Mac, Windows and Metric Halo hardware DSP via MIOConsole3d.

It is especially useful in that, regardless of platform, it provides a straightforward, powerful and consistent processing workflow wherever you might be working.

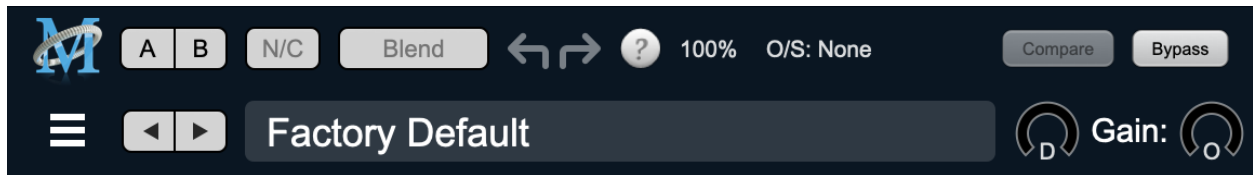
With the constant evolution of computer capabilities opening the door to new production techniques and music delivery formats, the differences between DAW software workflows have become ever more diverse. Many of the major DAWs provide their own plug-in headers within every plug-in instance window, providing their own feature set catering specifically to their internal workflow.

Conversely, other equally popular DAWs provide no added feature support for plug-ins (such as plug-in parameter Undo/Redo), opting instead to insert plugs as a straight processing block.

The plug-in header bar bridges that gap by offering the most asked for plug-in functions in a simple GUI, making all of our plug-ins functions and their presets available to every user on every platform.

The plug-in header bar has two rows of controls, with the Metric Halo logo icon at the top row left.

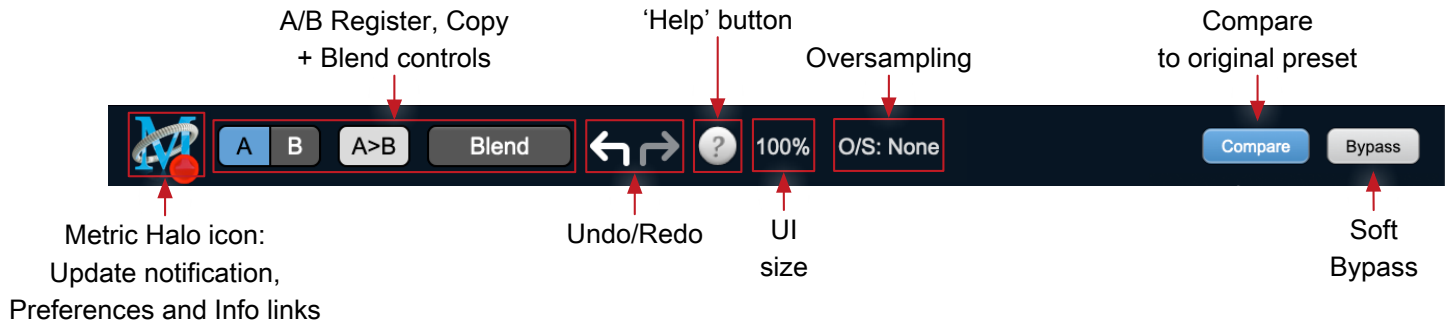
The top row handles plug-in operations, including update notification and download, access to MH online resources, GUI preferences, tooltip help, A/B parameter snapshots, snapshot Blend, plug-in Undo/Redo, Oversampling modes, Compare and soft Bypass.



Howies 179 Plug-in header

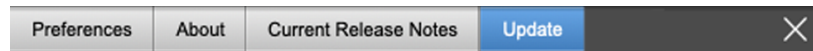
The lower row (with the 'hamburger' menu icon at the left) is all about preset management, with an added Output Gain control at the far right.

Plug-In Header: Top Row



Metric Halo Header Icon

Clicking the MH icon expands the entire plug-in window to the right and opens a multi-function control sidebar with the About tab in focus. This sidebar has context-sensitive tabs across the top for GUI **About** and **Current Release Notes**.

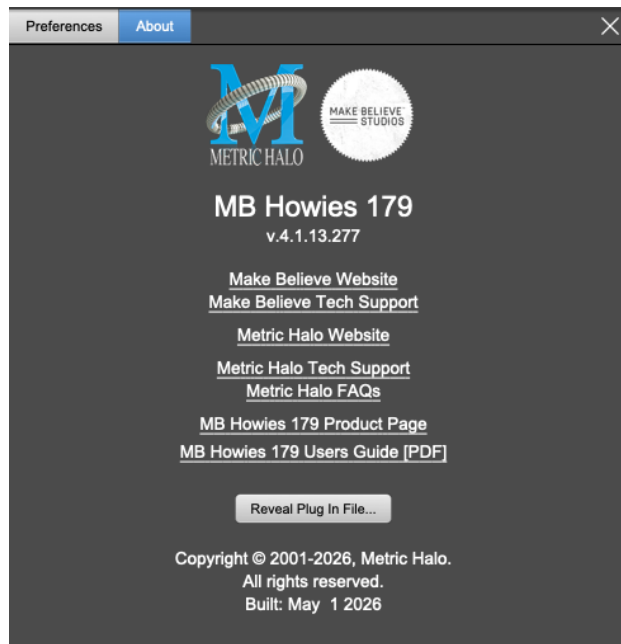


Plug-in control pane tabs

When updates are available for download from Metric Halo, the MH icon will sport a blatant red dot (shown in the header map at the top of this page) and an **Update** tab is added to the sidebar. These tabs are dynamic by design, and additional tabs may appear as new content becomes available.

To close the sidebar, click the MH icon again, or the "X" at the right edge of the tab bar.

About tab

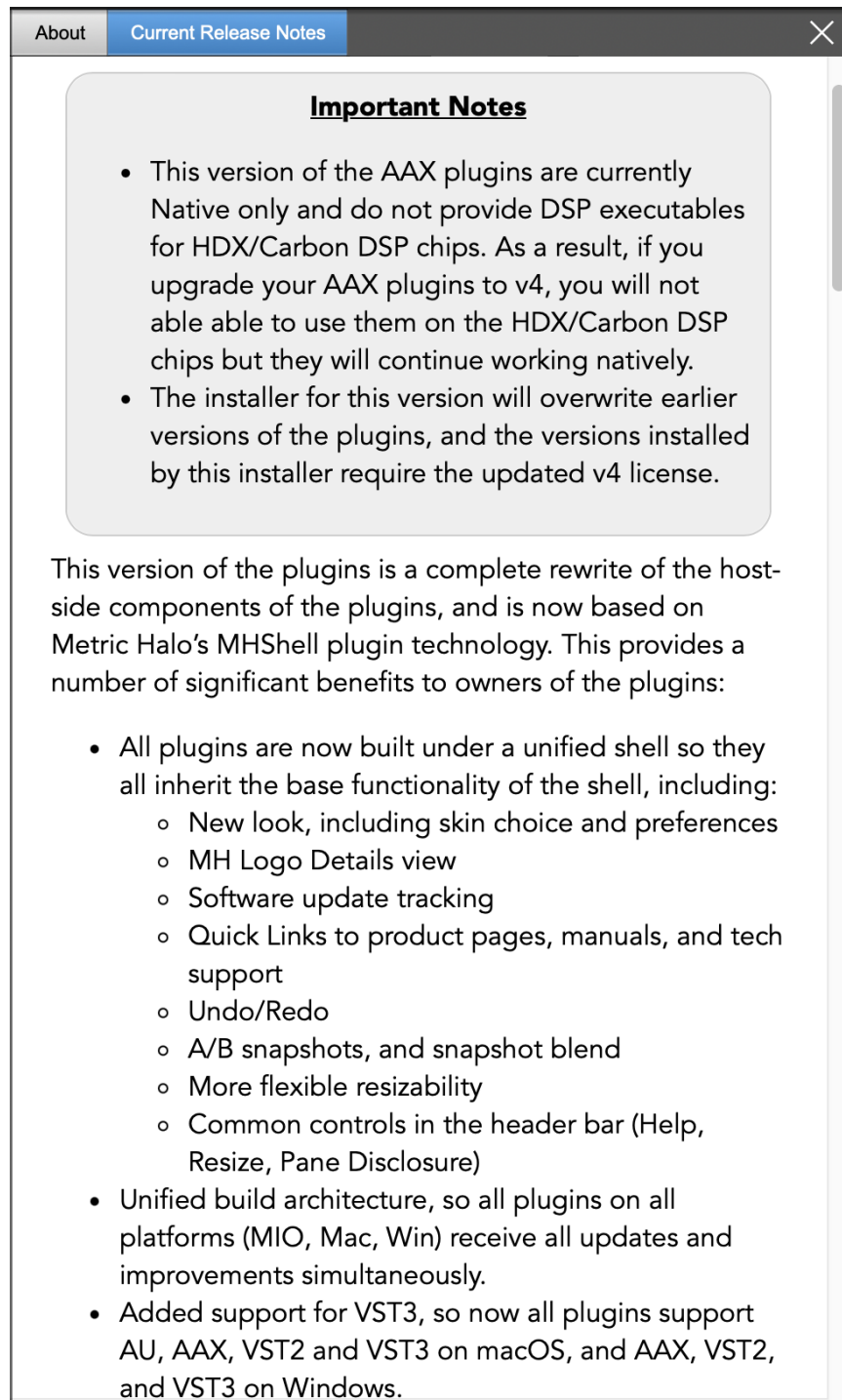


The **About** tab reveals the current plug-in version information and provides convenient web links to product info, support pages and the current manual on the Metric Halo main website.

Clicking the “MB Howies 179 Users Guide [PDF]” link will open and display the latest manual in your default web browser.

Reveal Plug-In File... will open the folder containing the current plug-in file, with the plug-in file itself selected. Very handy for troubleshooting on the fly.

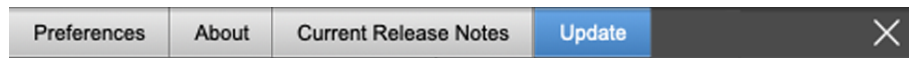
Current Release Notes

**Current Release Notes example**

Current Release Notes lists a synopsis of major changes (a snippet of which is shown above), with feature and bugfix revisions for the most recent software releases listed below.

Please note that on Windows, the release notes will not be displayed in the pane, and a link to the release notes will be displayed instead. You can click the link to view the release notes using your current default web browser.

Update notification tab



Update tab (only appears when an update is available)

The **Update** tab will contain a link to download the new installer package in the header at the top of the pane.

Below the download link header will be release notes detailing the major changes included in the update, with bugfix revisions for the most recent software releases listed further below. Windows users will see a link to view the release notes using your current default web browser.

Click the Installer link to download, unzip and run the installer manually, preferably when your audio software is inactive so it can properly scan the new versions at launch.

Plug-in Snapshot Registers: A/B



Plug-in Header: Snapshot Registers: A/B

The A and B buttons control the A and B state registers. The A/B registers are used to store modified parameter snapshots in addition to the original saved preset called up by **Compare**.

The Blend function can be used to smoothly morph between the parameters set in the A and B registers, and Blend is a mappable parameter so it can be operated with external MIDI control. Details of the A/B Snapshot Blend feature follow on the next page.

For each of the A and B buttons the visual display tells you the state of the register:

- Light Grey means the register is empty
- Dark Grey means it has settings, but is unselected
- Blue means it has settings and is selected

You can perform the following actions:

- Clicking on an empty register takes a snapshot of the current settings and saves them to the register.
- Clicking on an unselected filled register copies the register parameters to the current active plug-in settings.
- Clicking on a **selected** register toggles to the other register; this lets you toggle between the register settings without having to move the mouse.
- The Copy button will show **N/C** and remain inactive until one or both of the registers is in use. The Copy button will alternate between **A>B** (copy A to B) or **B>A** (copy B to A) depending on which register is selected. Clicking the Copy button then copies the settings from the selected register to the target register, overwriting the prior contents (if any).
- <Option> - clicking on a register snapshots the current settings and saves them to the register, overwriting the prior contents (if any).
- Changing settings when a register is selected will update the settings in the register to reflect the change.

Snapshot Blend

The Blend button allows you to interpolate (or morph) between the parameter snapshots stored in the A and B registers. It becomes active when both A and B have a parameter set stored.

Blend is a MIDI-mappable parameter so it can be operated in realtime with external MIDI control and/or automated in the DAW. This allows you to automate a transition from the A → B register, the B → A register or any setting between the two.



Plug-in Header: Snapshot Blend

The Blend button's visual display tells you the state of the register:

- Light Grey means it is empty
- Dark Grey means it has settings, but is unselected
- Blue means it has settings and is selected

Click on Blend to popup the blend control. Slide all the way to the left to apply the settings in the A register. Slide all the way to the right to apply the settings in the B register. Intermediate settings for blend will give you intermediate settings for any parameter that is different in register A and B. The blend control does not change the state of Bypass.

Note that the Blend is not a parallel processing mode where two instances of the processor are running the A and B settings and the output is a parallel blend of the two settings. Rather, Blend interpolates the parameter settings of the two registers to one instance of the processor. You can see the parameter controls move between A and B settings as you slide the Blend control.

The A/B and Blend settings are stored and recalled as part of the plug-in state, but are not saved as individual presets in the preset bar.

While you can use the blend with arbitrary A and B settings we find it works best when you craft the settings in the two registers in such a way as they are related to each other. Specifically, if an indexed (stepped) parameter is different between the two settings, the interpolated value will snap to one of the indexes between the two settings, which can be jarring.

It is best if the parameters that you blend are smooth parameters (e.g. gains, frequencies) and make sure the indexed parameters (enables, modes, band types) are set the same for both registers.

The easiest way to do this is to load the same setting into both registers and then tweak the settings of one of the registers.

This works especially well if you make one of the registers be the basic settings with all the gains or thresholds flattened out so that you can smoothly interpolate between a setting and effectively bypassed - we have found that this allows you to zero in a perfect configuration between too much and too little.

Plug-in Undo/Redo

All the plug-ins provide support for undo/redo from the plug-in header bar.



Plug-in Header: Undo/Redo

The left and right curved arrows represent Undo (Left) and Redo (Right). These arrows are grey when there is nothing to Undo or Redo.

The arrows are white when it is possible to Undo (Left) or Redo (Right). Clicking the left arrow when it is white will undo the last action you made in the plug-in. When you undo something that change is placed on the redo stack, and the Redo button will turn white.

Clicking the Redo button (when it is white) will restore the state that the last Undo changed.

If the Redo button is white and you make a change in the plug-in, the Redo button will go grey as the redo buffer will be cleared.

Help Button



Help Button

This button toggles the tooltip display. When enabled, tooltips will be shown when the mouse hovers over a control. When the tooltip display is disabled, you may still see tooltips by holding down the ? key and hovering over a control.

UI Size Selector

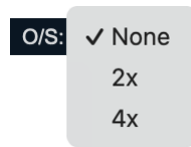


UI Size Selector

This pull-down menu lets you set the plug-in UI size to taste.

The size is remembered and applied the next time you insert a Howies 179 plug-in.

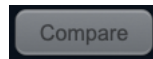
Oversampling Selector



Oversampling Multiplier Selector

2x or 4x oversampling may be selected for each plug-in instance. The default Oversampling setting is **None**.

Compare Button



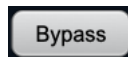
Compare Button (inactive)



Compare Button (active)

To use the compare button, a preset must first be loaded. The compare button will be lit up when the current settings differ from the selected preset. If you click this button while it is lit, the preset settings will be restored, but you can still return to the changes you made by clicking on the button again. It is important to note that any changes you make to activate the compare light are always for comparison to the last loaded preset.

Soft Bypass



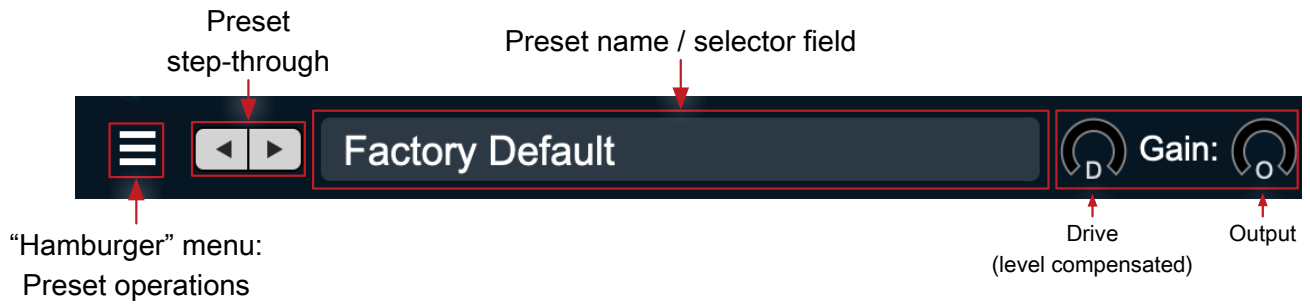
Soft Bypass Button (not bypassed - plug-in is processing)



Soft Bypass Button (bypassed - plug-in is *not* processing)

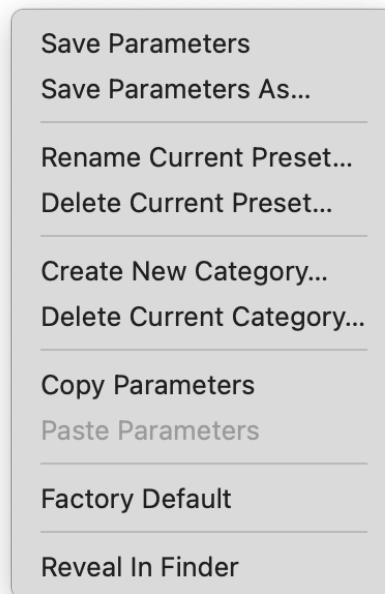
When glowing yellow, this button will maintain the time delay through the channel and will continue to show metering, but will cleanly disable the processing.

Plug-In Header: Preset Row



Plug-in Hamburger menu

The preset and parameter functions within the hamburger menu break down as follows:



- **Save Parameters** saves the current plug-in parameters to the current preset.
- **Save Parameters As...** opens a dialog box where you can name and choose a category to save your current plug-in settings.
- **Rename Current Preset...** lets you rename the current preset.
- **Delete Current Preset...** deletes the current preset.
- **Create New Category...** lets you create a new preset category for the current plug-in type.
- **Delete Current Category...** deletes the current preset category.
- **Copy Parameters** copies the current parameter set so you can paste them to another instance of the same type plug-in.
- **Paste Parameters** pastes the copied parameters. Note that pasting a parameter set over an existing named preset will change the preset name field to: **[No Preset]**.
- **Factory Default** loads the factory default settings for this plug-in.
- **Reveal In Finder** opens the folder in which the current preset is saved.

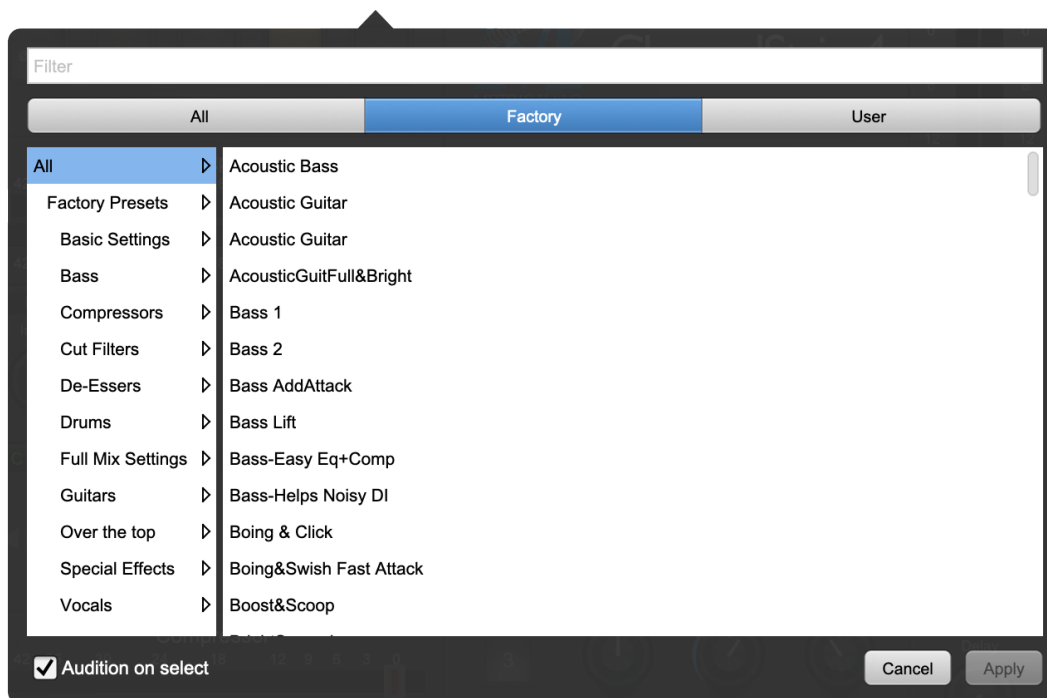
Preset Step-Through Buttons



Preset Step-Through Buttons

These buttons step through Factory and User Presets in succession, as they are listed in the Preset Selector window. The left arrow chooses the previous preset. The right arrow chooses the next preset.

Preset Name/selector menu:



Plug-in Header: Preset selector menu (ChannelStrip shown)

The Preset selector will open to show all the available preset categories, and the presets within those categories.



Preset selector menu: Audition on select

With “**Audition on select**” enabled at the bottom of the window, selecting a preset will temporarily load those parameters so you can hear the effect on the audio you are playing, without actually committing to the preset.

Click **Cancel** to revert to your previous settings and close the selector window.

Hit **Apply** to commit the new preset parameters and close the preset selector window.

Input / Output Gain



At the far right of the Preset Bar, Howies 179 includes Drive and Output gain controls.

Output Gain is the final stage of the plug-in for optimizing Howies 179 levels to the next stage of your signal chain.

The Output control has a range of $\pm 24\text{dB}$, with the default at 0.00dB .

Drive is a level compensated control to adjust the saturation drive effect without altering the relative Input and Output gain settings for Howies 179. Drive has a range of $\pm 12\text{dB}$. See [Drive and Output Gain controls](#) for further details.

Command-drag the knobs for fine adjust mode.

4. Installation

For both Mac and Windows, there is a single standard installer for White Room containing all formats that allows you to decide which formats you would like to use.

Mac

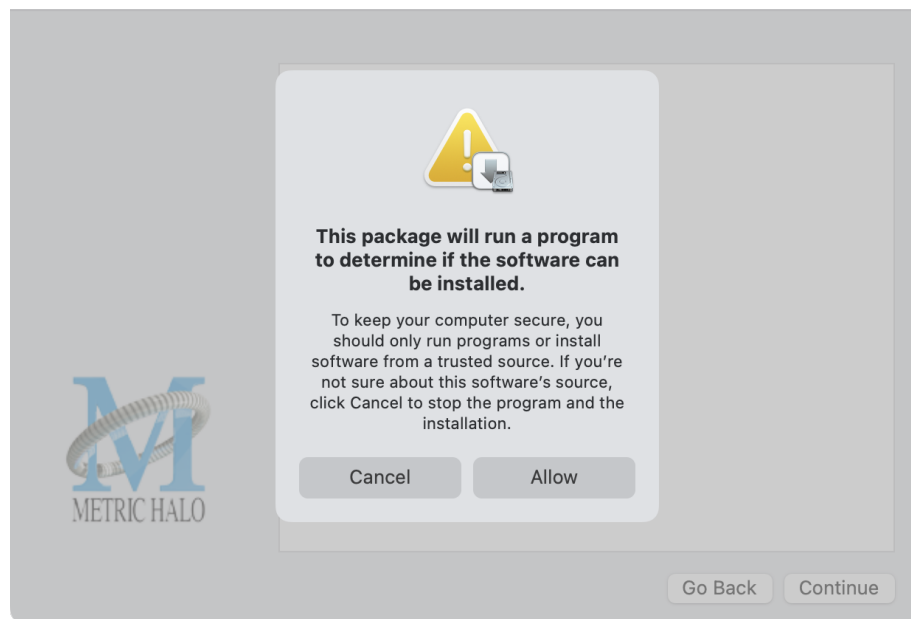
Please note– The following graphics show installation on a macOS 15 system; the process may be slightly different in other versions of the OS, but the basic concepts are the same. Small details such as file sizes shown may vary with subsequent releases.

- Double-click the “MBHowies179.pkg” application



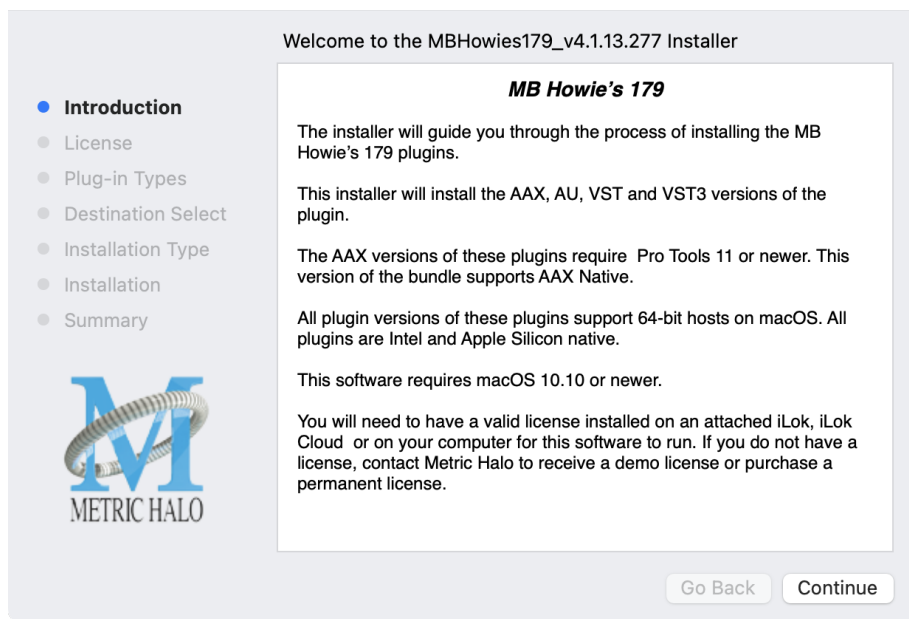
MBHowies179.pkg

- The first window requests permission for the installer program to scan for the presence of earlier versions of Metric Halo plug-ins. Clicking “Cancel” will quit the installer. Click “Allow” to proceed:



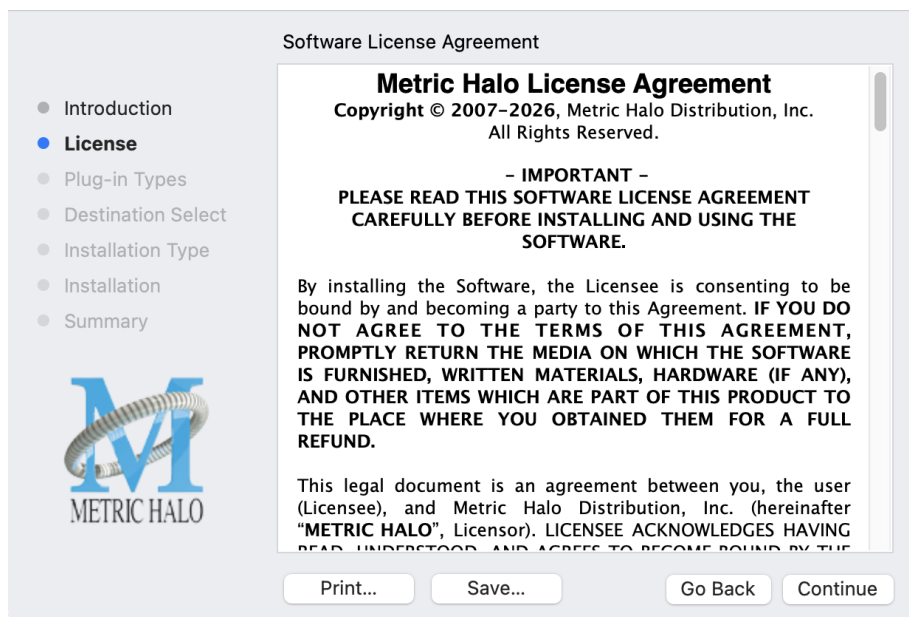
Click “Allow” to proceed...

- The installer dialog will appear:



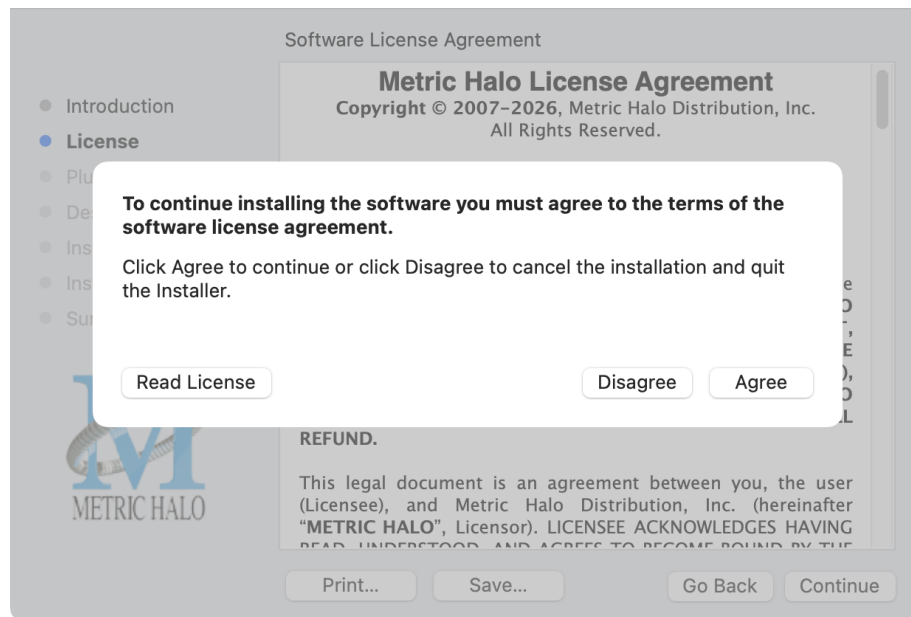
Click "Continue"...

- Now you will see the Metric Halo License Agreement:



After you have read it, click "Continue"...

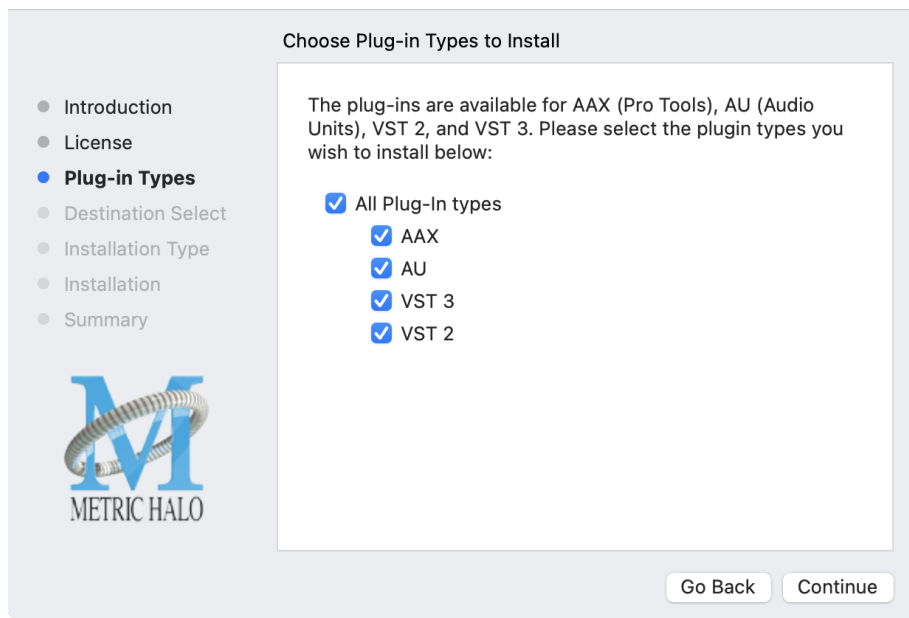
- Next, click "Agree" to accept the License Agreement:



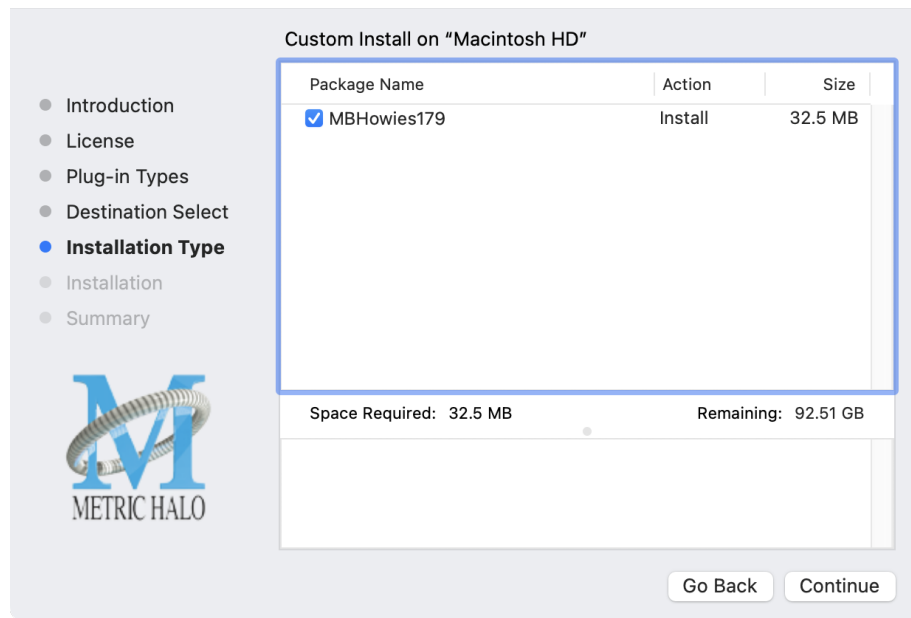
- The default installation will install Audio Unit, VST2, VST3 and AAX plug-ins to their respective folders in the root Library directory:
 - AU to **/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components**
 - VST2 to **/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST**
 - VST3 to **/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3**
 - AAX to **/Library/Application Support/Avid/Audio/Plug-Ins**

Selecting any one or more specific plug-in types will install or upgrade only those formats, leaving older plug-ins in unselected format types untouched.

Your plug-in format selection will be saved as a preference and pre-set automatically for future Metric Halo family plug-in installations on this computer. Of course you may change your selections at that time.

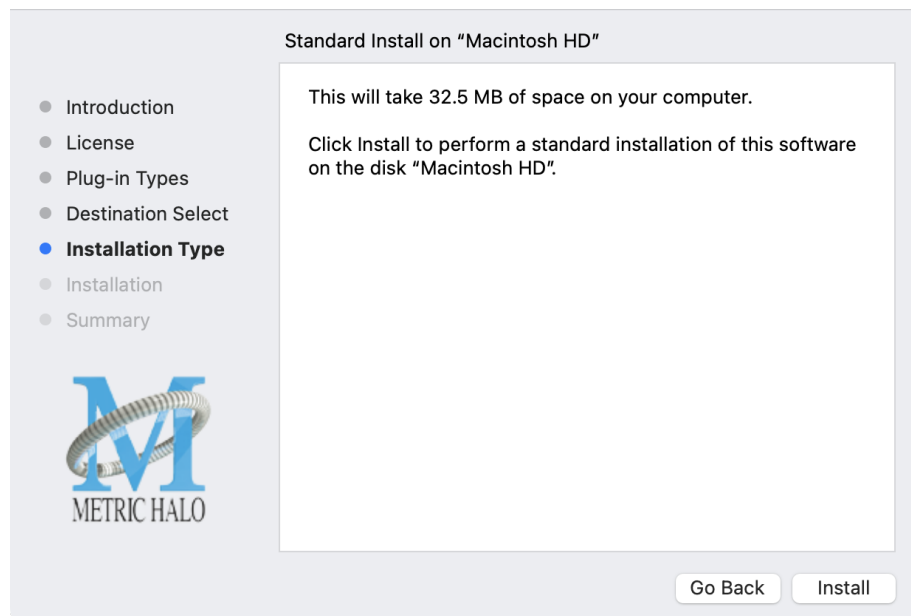


- Since there is only one plug-in to be installed, the “Custom Install” page really only serves to verify whether you are installing or updating Howies 179.

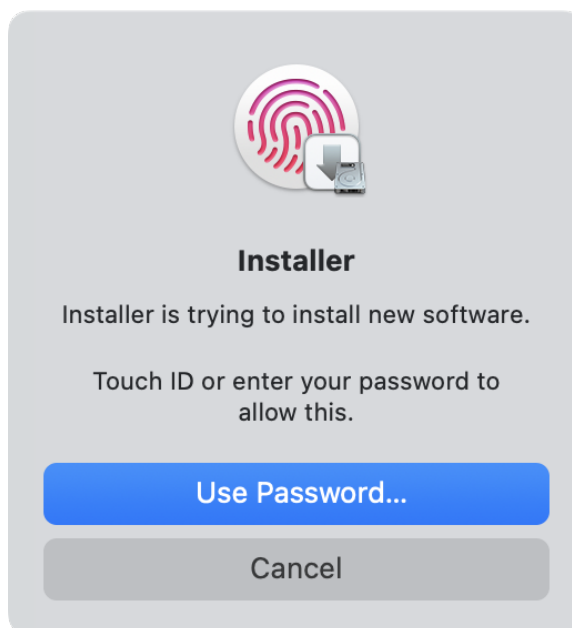


Click “Install” to proceed.

- The final confirmation window displays the total size of the selected installation. Hit “Install” to proceed.

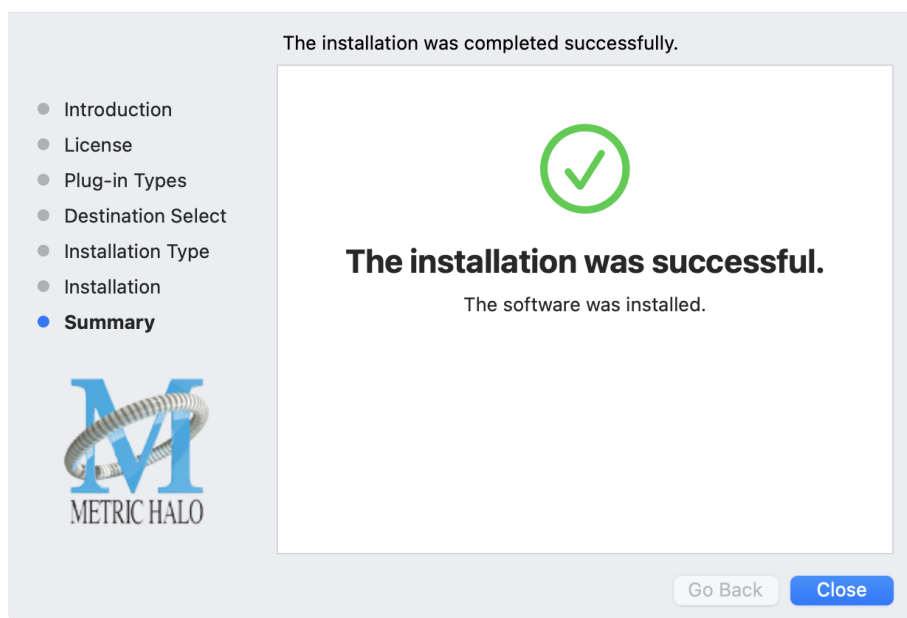


- If present, Touch ID/Face ID will execute the installation once it recognizes your biometrics:



Otherwise, enter your login password as usual and click "Install Software".

- Once the installer has finished, you'll see this dialog:



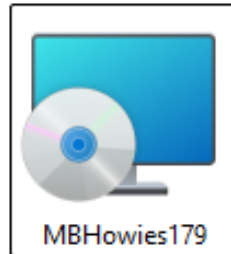
If you do not see the "Installation Successful" message, contact [MH Support](#).

That's it! Enjoy using MB Howies 179!

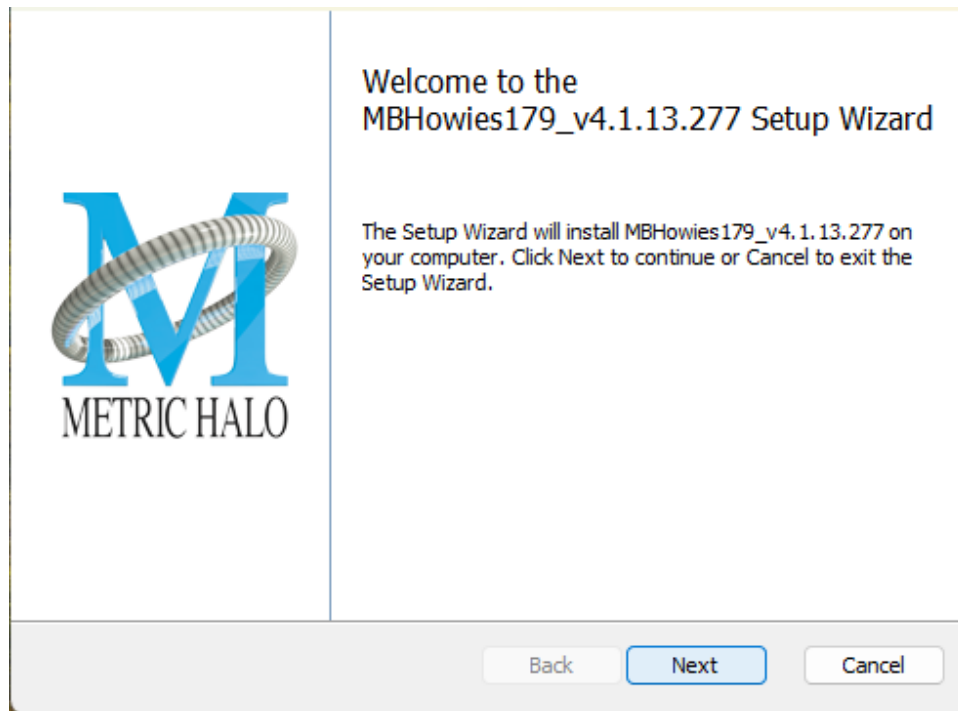
Windows

Please note – The following graphics show installation on a Windows 11 system; the process may be slightly different in other versions of the OS, but the basic concepts are the same. Small details such as file sizes shown may vary with subsequent releases.

- Double-click the “MBHowies179” installer application.



- The installer dialog will appear:



Welcome Dialog

Click “Next” to proceed.

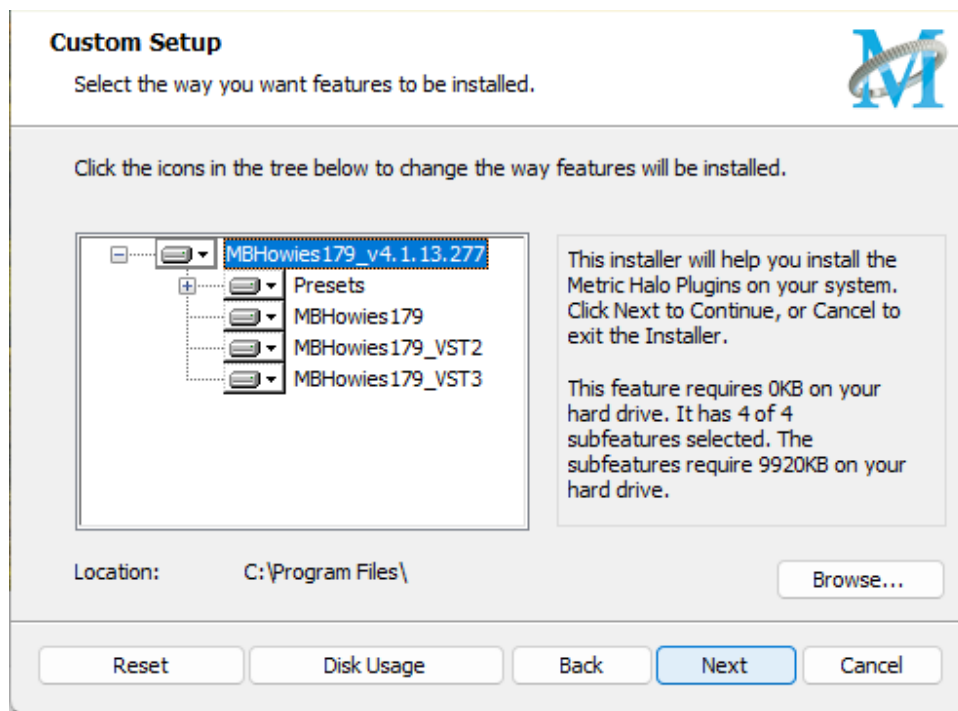
- Read the Metric Halo License Agreement:



License Agreement

After you have read it, click next to "I accept the terms of the License Agreement" and click "Next".

- Custom Setup Options



Custom Setup

The Windows installer **Custom Setup** page allows you to refine the features to be installed and their location.

By default, VST2, VST3 and AAX will be selected for installation to the C:\Program Files\ folder. Specifically:

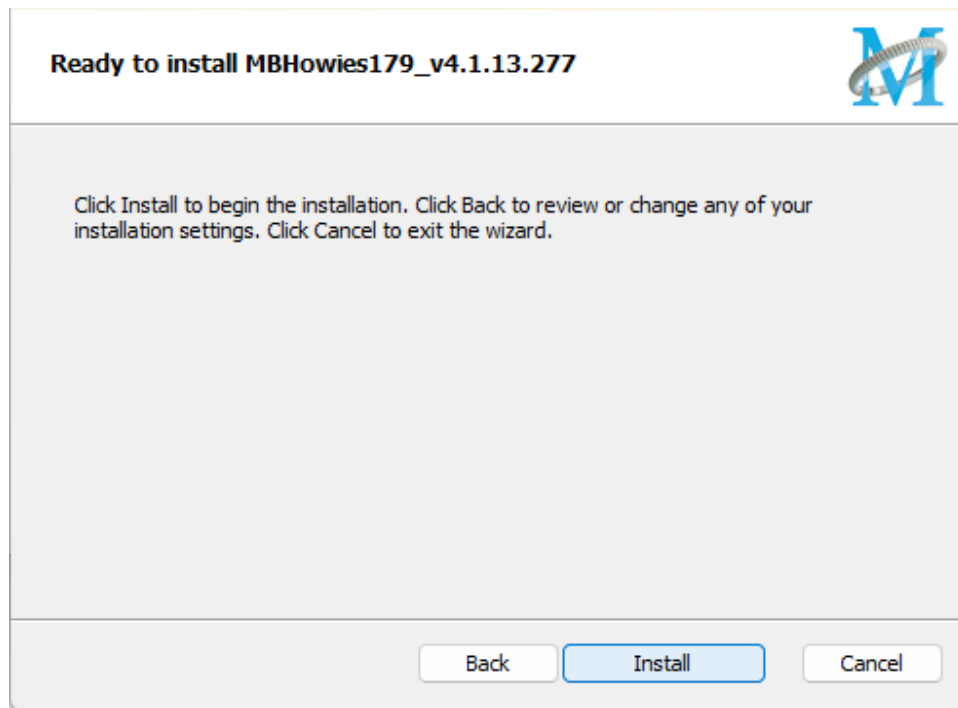
- VST2 to C:\Program Files\Common Files\Steinberg\VST2
- VST3 to C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3
- AAX to C:\Program Files\Common Files\Avid\Audio\Plug-ins

These default locations are the most commonly used and should be recognized automatically by most DAWs. See your host DAW software Plug-Ins Location Preferences to verify the above directories are in your DAWs Plug-In Locations list.

If not, then you can either click **Browse** to change the installation target folder (the Browse button is in the lower right of the installer Custom Setup window), or add the locations listed above to the DAW Plug-Ins Location Preferences.

When you have made your selections, click "Next" to continue.

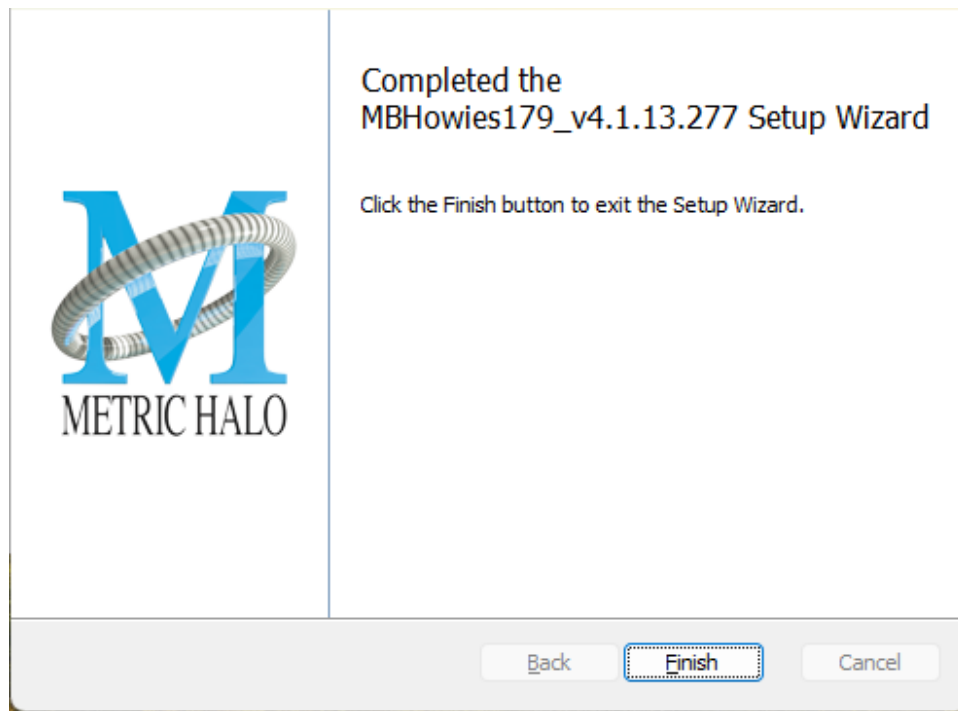
- The next page is a confirmation to continue, offering a last chance to go back and review your selections from the previous window:



Ready to Install

Click "Back" to return to the Setup page, "Cancel" to cancel the installation, or click "Next" to continue.

- Once the installer has finished, you will see this dialog:



Installation Complete

If you do not see the "Installation Successful" message, contact [MH Support](#).

That's it! Enjoy using MB Howies 179!

Suggested practices and troubleshooting tips

For best results, make sure your DAW is set to scan your audio plug-ins at every launch. This may add a bit of time at launch, but it helps make sure that new and updated plug-ins will be properly registered.

When making changes to DAW Preferences Plug-in Locations, make sure to quit the DAW, finish your installations and restart the DAW so the plug-ins will be properly scanned and ready for you to use.

If new plug-ins do not register, open your Plug-Ins Preferences and clear or reset any plug-in caches, 'ignore' or 'block' lists, then quit and relaunch the DAW to scan and re-register all your current plug-ins. Periodically clearing the plug-in caches is a common studio maintenance practice, especially after installing or removing audio software.

The easiest way to check that your plug-ins have been properly installed is to open C:\Program Files\ and type **vst** in the search field. This will show a list of all your installed VSTs and their locations within nested Program Files sub-directories for comparison against your DAW preferences.

Update Notification (all platforms)

Howies 179 will automatically check for newer version availability (if your computer is connected to the internet).



Plug-in Update Alert

If a new version is found, the Metric Halo icon in the plug-in header bar will sport a lovely red dot. Click on the dotted icon and check the Update Notification tab for release notes and download instructions.

5. System Requirements

Hosts:

- *Pro Tools™ (Mac)*: Pro Tools 11 or higher running on a Macintosh computer. The v4 software currently supports Native AAX operation only.
- *Pro Tools™ (Windows)*: Pro Tools 10 or higher running on a Windows computer. The v4 software currently supports Native AAX operation only.
- *Native (Mac)*: Any Intel or Apple Silicon-native Mac DAW (64-bit) that supports AU, VST2, VST3 or AAX plug-ins.
- *Native (Windows)*: Any Intel Windows (64-bit) DAW that supports VST2, VST3 or AAX plug-ins.

Operating System:

- *Mac*: Any Apple Silicon (ARM) or Intel-based Mac running Mac OS X 10.9 or newer
- *Windows*: Any Intel-based Windows PC running Windows 10 or newer.

Licensing:

- A PACE iLok.com account. You can authorize your v4 license to your computer, iLok Cloud or any 2nd or 3rd generation iLok USB key.

The first generation blue-green iLok USB keys are no longer supported by PACE for new product authorizations.

Please note that prior v2 and v3 licenses are separate and remain valid: you do not have to trade in your old iLok license. Production Bundle v3 and earlier plug-ins will continue to serve on older systems in addition to the v4 installations on newer platforms, with full preset compatibility between v3 and v4.

- One license authorizes the software on any platform.
- The most recent iLok License Manager installer can be found here: [iLok License Manager application and driver installers](#).

Older operating systems may require a specific version of the iLok driver, which can be found here: [Legacy iLok application and driver installers](#).

6. Service and Support

Make Believe Studios takes great pride in the reputation for customer service and support that we have built. If you have any problems, questions, or suggestions please get in touch with us at: your_friends@makebelievestudio.com