

Tutorial: Controlling MIDI-parameters via novation 61SL MkII and Blue Cat's Remote Control

Welcome to a short tutorial on how to control MIDI-parameters of plugins using a “novation 61SL MkII” and “Blue Cat's Remote Control”. This allows you to have **immediate MIDI-feedback** of the desired **controls** of a **vst-plugin**, although Forte itself doesn't support this kind of MIDI-feedback. Before you read this you should have a basic knowledge about Automap and Forte, of course.

1. General thoughts

Building a rack, you always have to think about the question: “What do I want to do?”. Starting with the whole topic “live keyboarding” I had the thought of having at least 64 controls with MIDI-feedback per song. You see the problem? This is - in most of the cases - nonsense. Very often, a single movement of the modwheel or expression-pedal can do the job - even better than assigning thousands of controls. Having this in mind, I created the following (more or less) simple and short steps.

2. Basic ideas on how to build a rack which works (most of the time)

Having tried a lot of things out, I came to the following setup which satisfies my needs so far:

- 1 instance of “Blue Cat's Remote Control” which is automapped and which is always “online”, in each scene, with every step you do in “Forte”. I chose the 64-version of “Blue Cat's Remote Control”.
 - A starting scene. In this scene, every plugin is set to “Yes: Set plugin configuration when changing to this scene”. Only in this “starting scene” you can change parameters of the plugin itself which are saved until the next time you open your rack.
 - Other plugins and other scenes, where the plugins are set to “No: Do not set plugin configuration when changing to this scene”. Simply: your rack.
- ➔ This is like Monopoly. You can change whatever you want throughout a show: going over “start”, everything is as it has been before.

But how can I change parameters in such a setup?

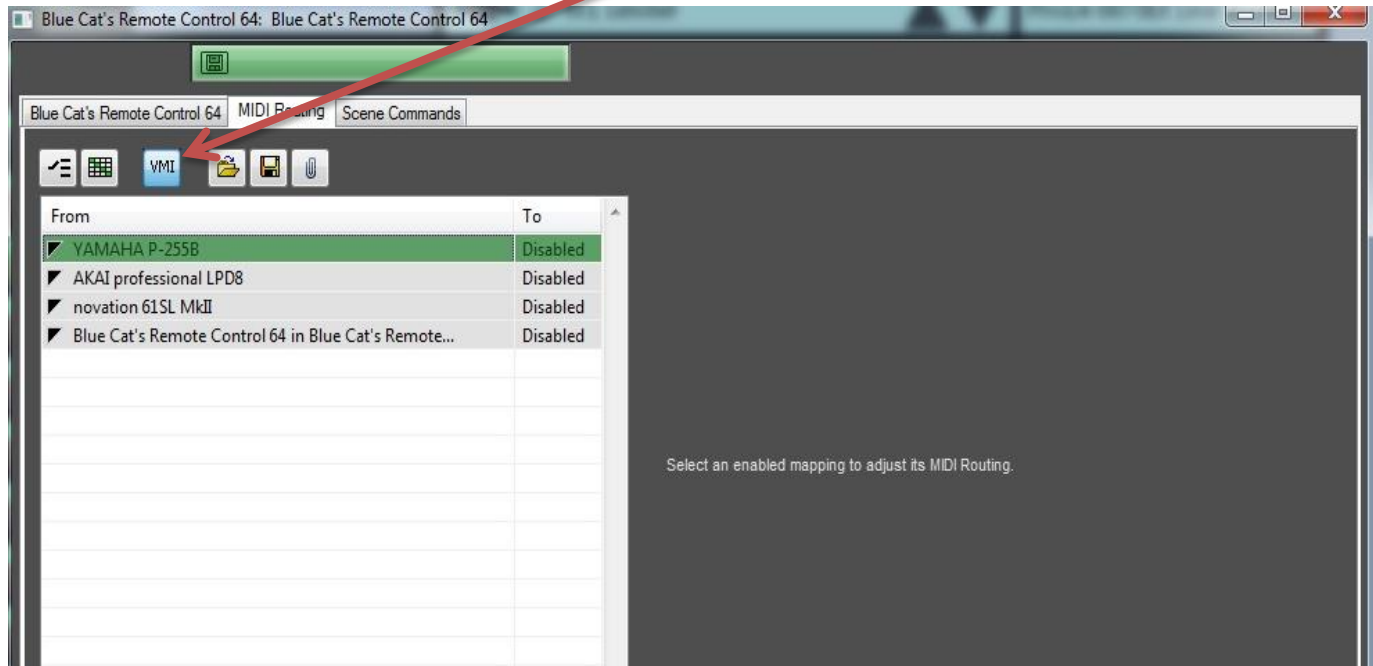
The point above was that the initial configuration of a plugin can only be done in a scene where those changes are saved (which only happens in the starting scene). The trick is now that the only plugin which can change its settings in **every** scene is “Blue Cat's Remote Control”. Here, you set the plugin to “Auto: Set plugin configuration if it is different from the previous scene”.

Et voila - now you have everything you want to have. On the one hand, you have plugins which produce sounds and which wait for MIDI-CCs. And you have a plugin (“Blue Cat's Remote Control”) which can send those MIDI-CCs to plugins and which saves the state of a certain CC in each scene. So - ready to go. I'll show you the steps from where you can start experimenting with your own rack.

I'll show you the steps based on one control in the Synthesizer “Omnisphere 2”.

3. Setting up “Blue Cat's Remote Control” as a VMI (virtual MIDI input) in “Forte”

Since you want “Blue Cat's Remote Control” to control other plugins later, you have to tell “Forte” that “Blue Cat's Remote Control” can be used as MIDI-input for any virtual instrument. This is done here:



Open the plugin “Blue Cat's Remote Control” in “Forte” and under “MIDI Routing”, enable “Blue Cat's Remote Control” as a VMI (result: button turns blue).

Don't forget to enable “Blue Cat's Remote Control” in the “MIDI Routing”-Tab as a MIDI-input in the plugin which you want to control!

4. Defining the parameter which you want to control in the desired plugin

In the example here, open your desired plugin (here: Omnisphere 2). The steps to enable automation for a parameter might vary, depending on the plugin. In “Omnisphere 2”, you just do the following steps:



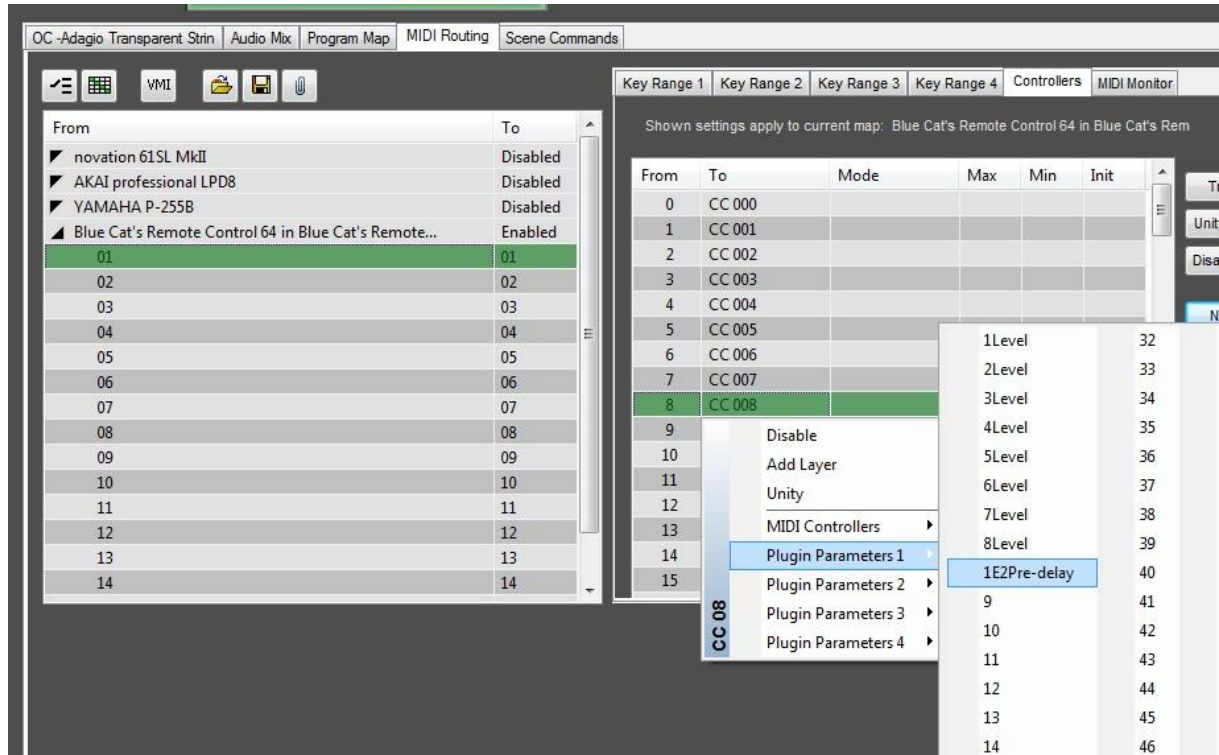
In the plugin, go to the parameter which you want to control, right click on it and click on “Enable Host Automation”. Again, right click on the parameter to see the result:



The “Host Automation ID: 8” was assigned to the desired parameter.

5. Telling the parameter to which MIDI-CC it should react

Now it's time to tell our parameter: "Hey! Nice that you're here! Let's automate!". Those steps are basically true for every plugin you have.



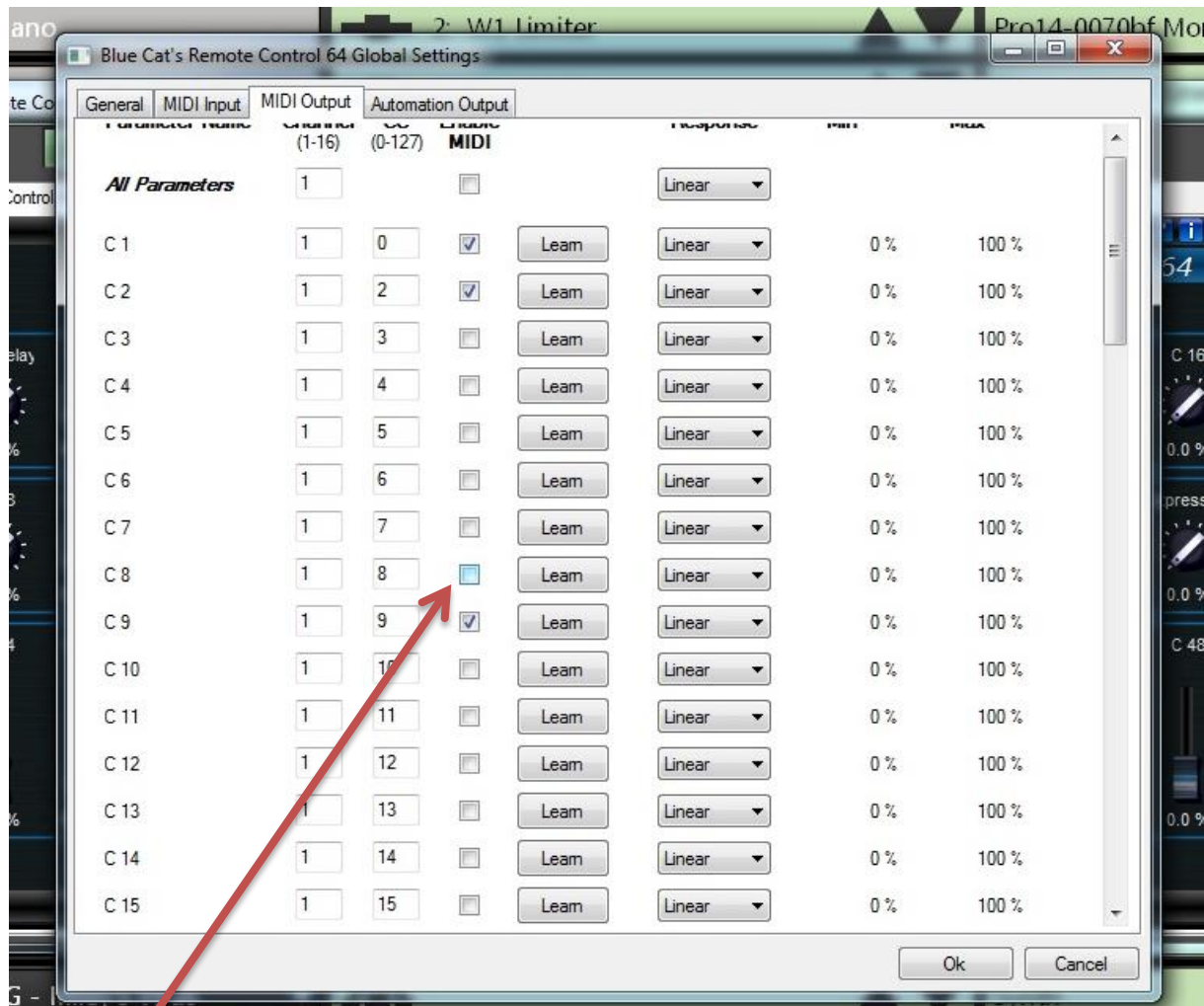
In the **plugin**, click on **"MIDI Routing"**. Open the Input **"Blue Cat's Remote Control"** and click on **MIDI-channel 1**. Then, you have the possibility to click on **"Controllers"**. In this tab, you will have to **choose the CC** to which the parameter should react (this is up to you). To do this, **right click on the desired CC** and **assign the parameter which you defined earlier**. **Remember: in our example this is automation ID number 8.**

Omnisphere 2 users: Don't be confused! The counting of the parameters is a bug! "1Level" is Automation ID 0, and so on. I will have to choose "1E2Pre-delay" in my example (right, this is Automation ID 8).

6. Configure “Blue Cat's Remote Control” to actually send MIDI-CCs

Now we have nearly reached the final step. We'll have to tell “Blue Cat's Remote Control” to send MIDI-CCs. Let's see how this works.

At first, open “Blue Cat's Remote Control” and in the “Menu”, click on “Global Settings...”. There, go to “MIDI Output”.



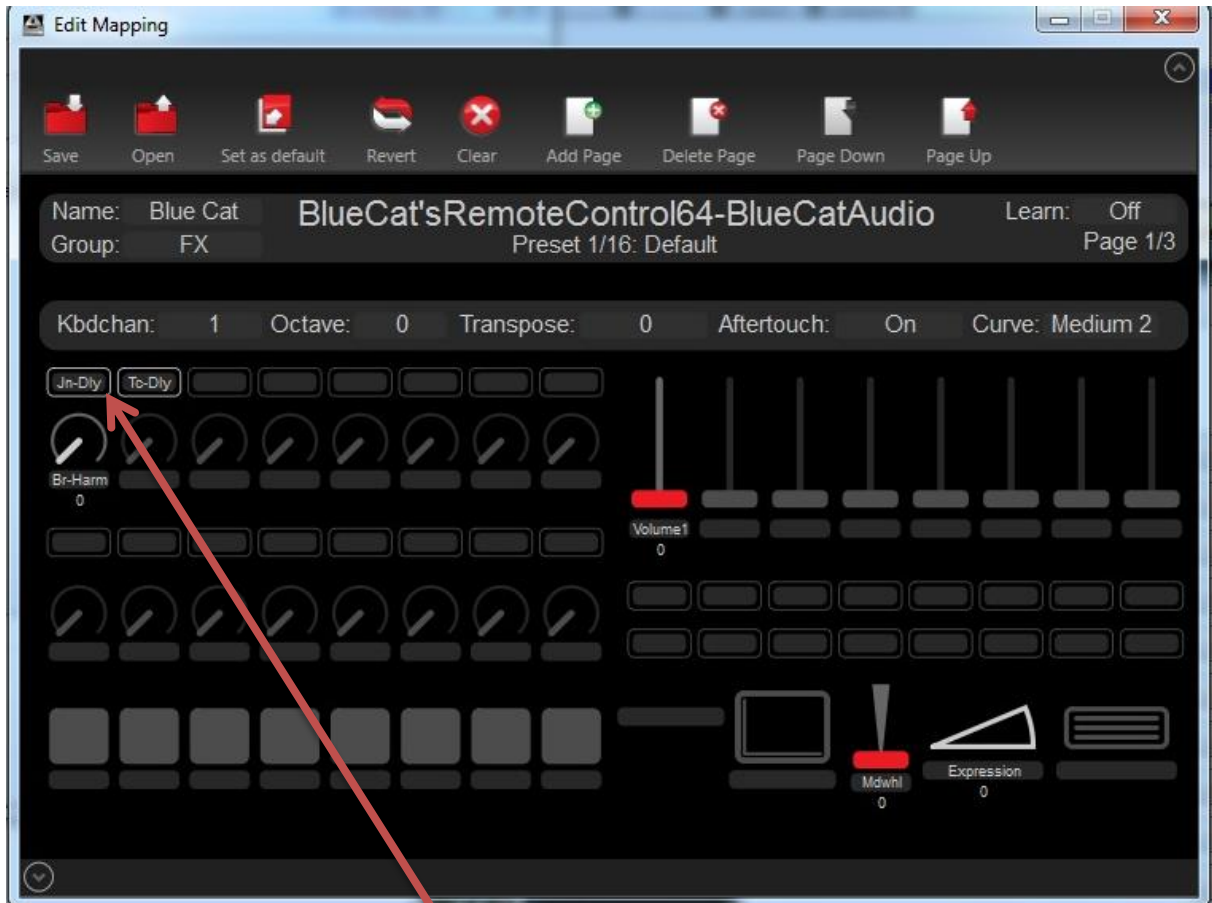
On this page, you can choose which of the controls of “Blue Cat's Remote Control” send which MIDI-CC. In our example, we could enable the control “C8”. The result? The knob “C8” will send MIDI-Data in form of CC8 on channel 1. Moving the knob, you can now alter the values of your vst.

If you now move the knob in “Blue Cat's Remote Control”, the value of your desired parameter should change while playing in your vst.

Here, everything is quite time consuming - we're in the global settings of "Blue Cat's Remote Control"! To avoid confusion, you should apply the new global settings in each scene in "Forte" also on the level of the "Preset settings". Here, I should also try to fasten things. Having 100 scenes, this takes time. But always working on the level of preset settings, my surface of "Blue Cat's Remote Control" would look different in each scene. This is also something which I want to avoid.

7. Bringing together “Blue Cat's Remote Control” and “Automap”

In the final step, we'll bring together “Blue Cat's Remote Control” and “Automap”. This is quite simple. Just push the button “learn” on your hardware and move the control - in our example C8 - in “Blue Cat's Remote Control”. Then, move the hardware knob which you want to use to control C8. Et voila.



Here, it gets tricky again. You have just chosen a hardware-knob and a corresponding control in “Blue Cat's Remote Control”. But on your display of the “novation 61Sl MkII” you still see the name “C8”. This is not very intuitive. You can change the display name only if you simply click on the name of the control in “Automap” and give it another name. But since this surface remains the same throughout your rack, you can't change the name on a per-scene basis. So think carefully about how you want to use your knobs and endless controls. If you want to see their names which you specified, you are limited. If “C1” is enough for you to read in the display, your possibilities are endless 😊

I hope that I gave the interested users an impression of what to do if you want to have real time access on parameters with MIDI-feedback. It is really a lot of things to do and I hope that this is just a “bridge” to a point where MIDI-feedback is implemented in “Forte” with one or two simple clicks without starting at least 7 actions for only one parameter.

That’s where I come back to my introduction words: very often, a well-configured modwheel or expression-pedal can also do the job 😊

Many many thanks to the user evilantal here in the forum. Without him, this article wouldn’t exist and I would still be playing the recorder 😊

90% of the ideas here are in fact his ideas. I simply put them together.