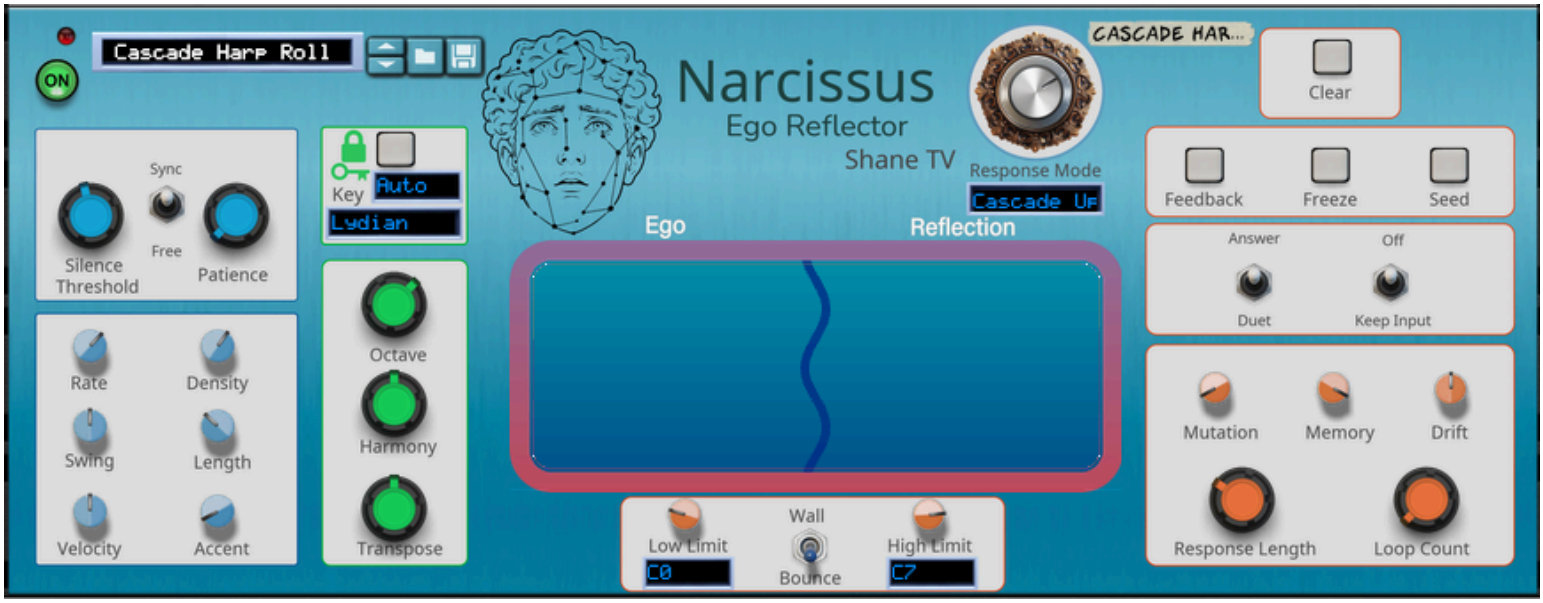
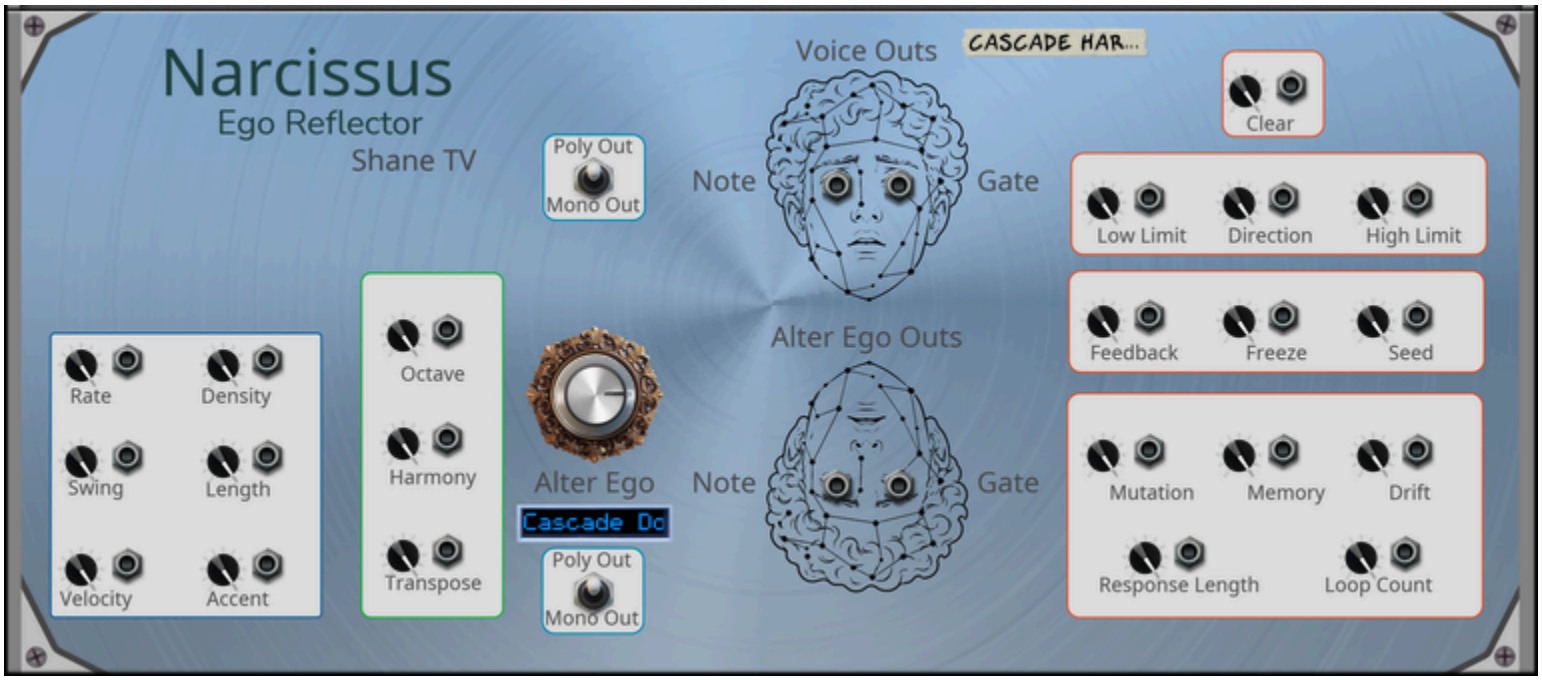
Narcissus Ego Reflector

A listening looper, harmonizer, and canon engine

Shane TV





What Narcissus Is

Most arpeggiators and MIDI effects transform what you're playing *right now*. Narcissus does something different: **it listens.**

Play a phrase. Stop. Narcissus notices the silence, decides you're finished, measures what you played, snaps it to a musical grid, and answers you — with a reflection of your own phrase, run through a gauntlet of transformations. Then it loops that reflection, letting it evolve, mutate, and drift for as long as you like.

The mirror is the whole idea. Everything Narcissus plays is *derived from you*. It never invents material from nothing; it reflects, distorts, inverts, and reshapes what you gave it. The device has two faces on its panel for a reason — the **Ego**(what you played) and the **Reflection** (what comes back).

Narcissus operates in one of two fundamentally different modes:

Answer	The listening looper. Captures your phrase, waits, then plays a transformed loop of it. This is the deep, generative heart of the device.
Duet	A live harmonizer. No recording, no looping — it processes every note you play, in real time, and stacks a transformed voice alongside your own.

Nearly every parameter behaves differently in these two modes, so the manual flags which apply where.

Narcissus is a **note player**. It sits above an instrument in the rack and feeds it MIDI. It also carries two independent CV output pairs on the back — one for the main voice, one for the **Alter Ego**, a second, parallel reflection with its own personality.

Quick Start

1. Load Narcissus above any instrument.
2. Leave **Playback Mode** set to **Answer**.
3. Set **Silence Threshold** to about 1/8.
4. Play a short phrase — three or four notes — then take your hands off the keys.
5. After the silence threshold elapses, Narcissus locks your phrase and begins answering.
6. Turn **Loop Count** up to hear it repeat, and try **Response Mode** to change how it reflects you.

If nothing comes back, your Silence Threshold is probably too long — the device is still waiting for you to finish.

The Listening Cycle

Understanding this sequence explains almost everything about how the device feels to play.

1. Listening. The moment you press a key (from idle), Narcissus starts recording — pitches, velocities, and your exact micro-timing.

2. Evaluating Silence. When you release the last key, a clock starts. If you play again before **Silence Threshold**elapses, recording simply continues — your phrase grows. If you don't, the phrase is considered finished.

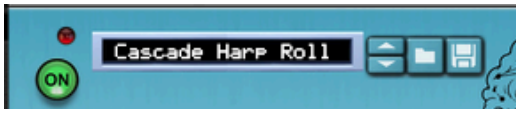
3. Locking. Narcissus measures your phrase and **snaps its length to the nearest musical grid** (Smart Phrase Quantization). A phrase you played slightly loose becomes an exactly musical loop length. This is why the loop stays in time with your song even though you didn't play to a click.

4. Patience. An optional silence *after* the phrase is locked but *before* the answer begins. Set to zero, the reply is immediate. Set to a bar, Narcissus waits a full bar before speaking — a genuine call-and-response.

5. Playing. The reflection loops for however many passes **Loop Count** specifies, evolving as it goes, then falls silent and returns to listening.

At any point during playback, playing a new note **chokes** the loop — it stops instantly and Narcissus starts listening to your new phrase.

Front Panel



Global

On / Off — Bypasses the device. All held notes are released.

Patch Name & Browser — Standard Reason patch handling.

Clear — Immediately kills the loop, empties the phrase buffer, and returns to idle. Your panic button, and the way to start a take from truly clean state. Clear also wipes accumulated mutation and direction state.

Playing Lamp — Lights while notes are sounding.

Key & Scale

Narcissus is a **diatonic** device. Its pitch transformations move notes by *scale degrees*, not semitones, which is why they stay musical.

Key Lock — Enables scale quantization of the reflection.

Key — The root note. Set to a specific root, or leave on **Auto**.

> **Auto is the recommended setting, and it is the device's secret weapon.** Narcissus tallies the pitch classes of everything you played and *guesses the key of your phrase*. Play in F minor and it works in F minor; modulate and it follows. All factory patches ship with Auto for this reason.

Scale — Major, Minor, Harmonic Minor, Melodic Minor, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, or Chromatic. On **Chromatic**, every note is "in scale," so the diatonic shifts become semitone shifts.

Sync & Timing

Sync / Free — Switches the two timing knobs between musical divisions (1/16, 1/4, 1 Bar…) and unquantized free time.

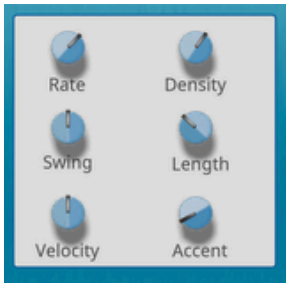
Silence Threshold — *Answer mode.* How long Narcissus waits after your last note-off before deciding your phrase is over.

This is the most important feel control on the panel. Short (1/16, 1/8) makes the device eager and conversational — it jumps in almost as soon as you stop. Long (1/2, 1 Bar) lets you play sprawling phrases with rests inside them without the device interrupting you.

Patience — *Answer mode.* A deliberate silence between the phrase locking and the response beginning. Zero for an instant reply; a bar or two for a genuine call-and-response that leaves space for the music to breathe.

> In **Duet** mode, Patience does something else entirely: it becomes the **delay time** of the harmony voice. At zero, the harmonized voice sounds in perfect parallel with your fingers. Turn it up and the harmony becomes a rhythmic echo, trailing behind you on the grid.

Rhythm & Dynamics



Rate — A slicer. Off leaves your phrase's timing intact. Any other setting chops sustained notes into a rhythmic grid — quarters, eighths, sixteenths, dotted and triplet variants, down to 1/64. A single held chord becomes a pulsing arpeggiated bed. This is how you turn a legato phrase into a sequence.

Density — A bipolar probability sieve, centered at 12 o'clock.

- **Below center:** randomly *drops* notes. Downbeats are protected, so the groove survives while the phrase thins out. Turn it down to sculpt a busy phrase into something sparse and minimal.
- **Above center:** randomly *adds* ghost notes — quieter ratcheting hits between the real ones. Turn it up for rolls, flams, and drum-fill energy.

Length — A gate-length macro. Center is your original note lengths; left is staccato, right is legato and overlapping.

Swing — Bipolar, center is straight. Pushes off-beat 8ths and 16ths late (right) or early (left). Swing quantizes to the grid before it acts, so it works correctly **even when you play loosely** — you don't need to play to a click for swing to feel right.

Velocity — A flat offset applied to every reflected note. Center is neutral (your velocities pass through unchanged); left softens the whole reflection, right pushes it.

Accent — Emphasizes the metric pulse: notes on the beat get louder, in-between notes get quieter. At zero, Accent does nothing and your played velocities come through exactly. Turn it up to impose a groove on a phrase you played flat.

> **If your reflection's dynamics feel unpredictable, turn Accent to zero.** With Accent up, notes are boosted or cut according to *where they land in the bar* — that's its job, but it can be surprising if you were expecting your input velocities back.

Pitch

All three are **diatonic** — they move within the current key and scale.

Octave — Shifts the reflection by whole octaves, ±3.

Harmony — Shifts the reflection by **scale steps**, ±7. This is your harmonizer interval.

> Note the off-by-one: scale steps are not interval names. **+2 gives you a third** (C→E), **+3 a fourth**, **+4 a fifth**. Set +2 for the classic parallel-third harmony.

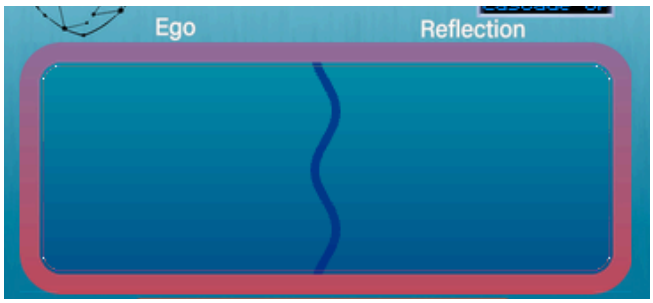
Transpose — A further diatonic shift, ±16 steps, for building counterlines that sit at an odd distance from the original.

Octave, Harmony, and Transpose stack. In **Duet** mode, they combine into the single harmony voice that sounds alongside your dry playing.

The Reflection Pool

The central display. Your input ripples on the **Ego** (left) side; the generated reflection ripples on the **Reflection** (right) side, with the mirror wave down the center. Ripple height tracks pitch and horizontal position tracks placement within the loop, so you can see the shape of your phrase and its answer at a glance.

When **Keep Input** is replaying your raw phrase, those notes correctly appear on the Ego side — a quick visual confirmation of which pass you're hearing.



Response Mode

The core mirror logic — *how* your phrase is reflected.

Mode	Behavior
Mirror	Faithful. Plays your phrase back as recorded (then pitch/rhythm controls act on it).
Upside Down	Inverts pitch. Ascending phrases descend; the melodic contour is turned on its head, but stays in key.
Warp	Nonlinearly warps time. Notes bunch toward the start and stretch toward the end — a rubato smear.
Retrograde	Reverses time. Your phrase plays backwards.
Shuffle	Randomly reassigns your pitches to your rhythm. The groove stays; the melody scrambles. Reseeded with **Seed**.
Pendulum	Alternates forward and backward on successive loops. A palindrome that only reveals itself over time.
Cascade Up	Re-sorts your pitches ascending, keeping your rhythm. Turns any phrase into a rising run.
Cascade Down	The same, descending.
Chord	Collapses every pitch you played into a single sustained stack held for the whole loop. Instant pad from a played arpeggio.

Shuffle, **Cascade Up/Down**, and **Chord** are the ones that most dramatically re-compose your material — they keep your notes but rebuild the melody. Try playing a simple chord and switching between them.

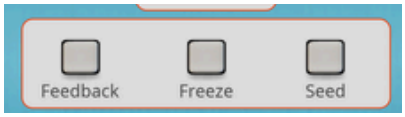
Playback Mode

Answer / Duet — The master mode switch described at the top of this manual.

Keep Input — *Answer mode only.* When on, the loop **alternates** between replaying your raw, unprocessed phrase and playing the transformed reflection. The effect is a genuine call-and-response with yourself: original, reflection, original, reflection.

This is disabled automatically when **Feedback** is on, since there's no longer a pristine original to alternate with.

State Controls

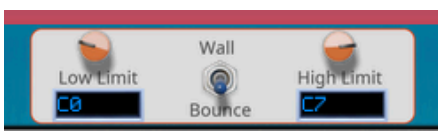


Feedback — The response feeds back in as the new input. Each pass re-processes the previous pass, so transformations compound: pitch shifts stack, mutations accumulate, and the phrase evolves away from what you played. Combined with **Loop Count = Infinite** and the pitch limits, this is the device's generative engine.

Freeze — Holds the current state. The loop keeps its place internally but stops advancing, then resumes in sync when released. Useful as a performance stutter or to suspend an evolving loop at a moment you like.

Seed — Reseeds all randomness. Density drops, ghost notes, Shuffle order, and Mutation jumps are all *deterministic*for a given seed — the same loop plays the same way every time. Hit **Seed** to roll a different, equally repeatable variation. If nothing seems to happen, nothing random is engaged: turn up Density, Mutation, or use Shuffle mode.

Pitch Limits & Direction



Low Limit / High Limit — Define the pitch window the reflection lives in, displayed as note names.

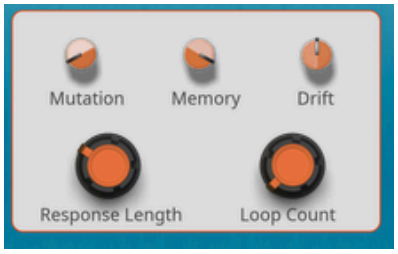
Direction — What happens when the reflection hits a limit.

Bounce	The direction of travel **inverts**. Octave, Harmony, Transpose, and Mutation all reverse as a group. A loop climbing toward the ceiling turns around and descends. Over many passes this produces a slow, musical pendulum within your window.
Wall	The phrase is **pinned against the limit**, transposed in-key so its extreme note butts right up against the wall — *with its contour intact*. It does not collapse into one repeated note; you still hear your phrase, just pressed up against the ceiling or floor.

These rules apply to **every loop that hits a limit**, whether or not Feedback is on.

Narrow the limits to about two octaves, turn on Feedback and Infinite loop, and the two Direction modes give you completely different generative characters: Bounce oscillates endlessly, Wall crawls up and holds.

The Engine



Mutation — Permanent DNA drift. Each loop, this is the probability that a note steps *permanently* up or down a scale degree. The change persists into the next pass, so the phrase genuinely evolves and never returns. At zero, the loop is stable forever.

Memory — How faithfully notes hold their pitch. Fully clockwise means perfect recall. As you turn it down, notes increasingly jump to random diatonic intervals — but only *temporarily*, snapping back next pass. Where Mutation is permanent evolution, Memory is momentary unreliability.

> **Mutation vs. Memory:** Mutation is a phrase slowly forgetting itself over minutes. Memory is a phrase stuttering and misremembering in the moment. Use both together for controlled chaos.

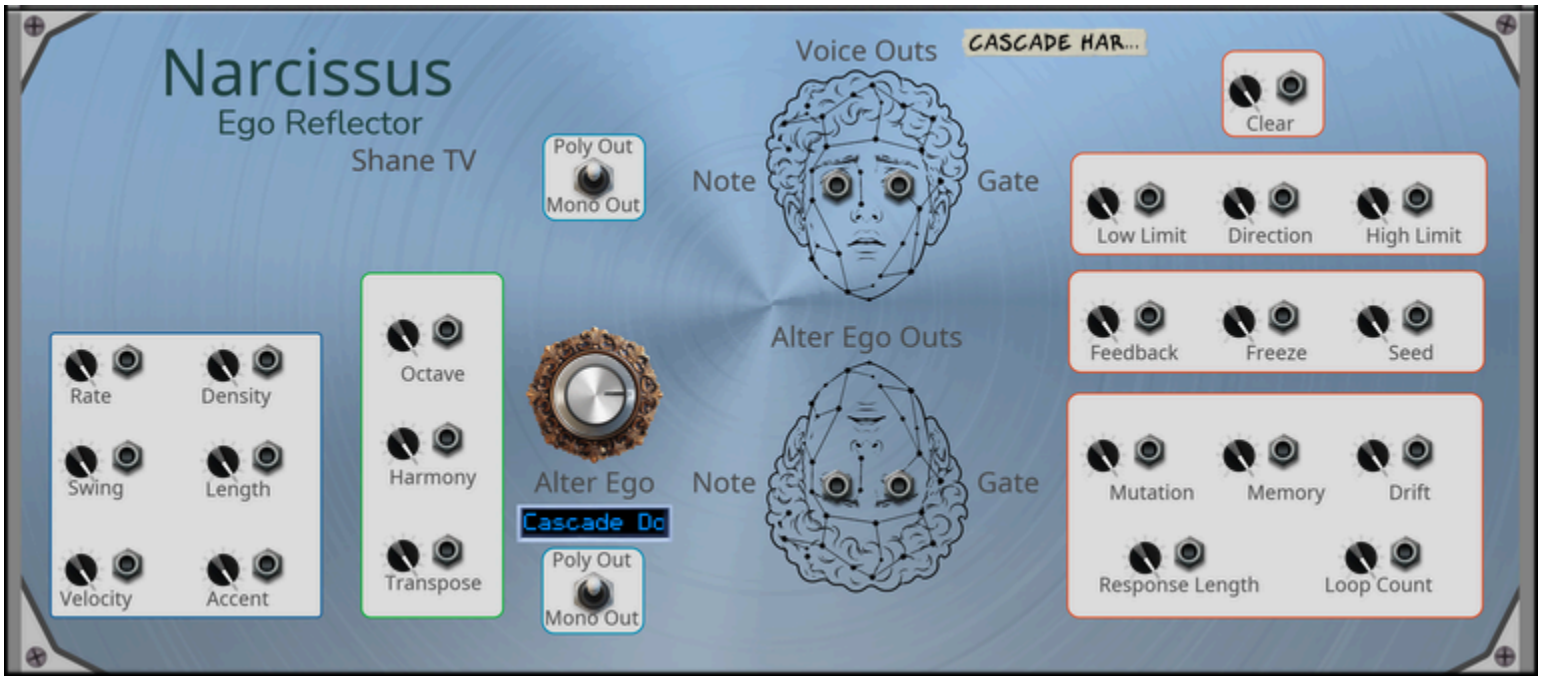
Drift — A bipolar tape-loop read offset, center is off. Turning it shifts *where in your recorded phrase the loop starts reading* — right winds the tape forward, left rewinds it, up to half the loop each way. The whole phrase rotates as one coherent unit and wraps around inside the loop, so groove and intervals survive intact.

Crucially, Drift is a **fixed** offset, not a creeping one: the loop plays with the same timing every pass, including the first. It re-frames your phrase rather than destabilizing it. Use it to discover the other melodies hiding inside a phrase you already played — a line that started on the downbeat can be rotated so it starts on the "and."

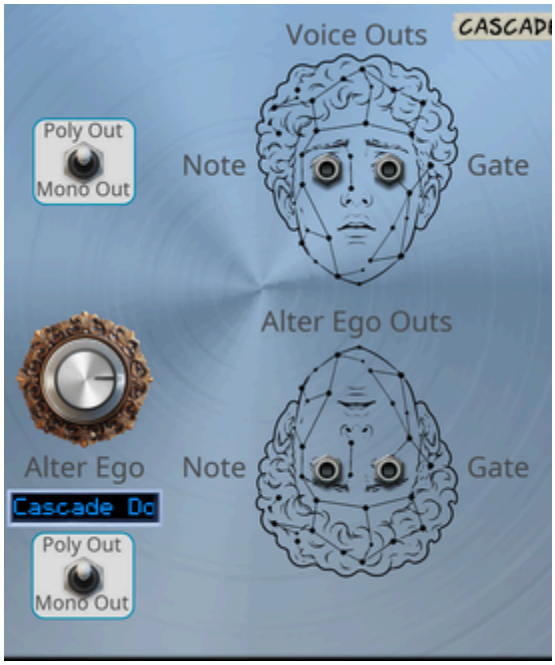
Response Length — Multiplies the playback window, 0.25× to 4×. At 0.5× the phrase replays twice as fast; at 4× the loop window stretches to four times its length, leaving vast space around your notes. A great way to make a phrase into a slow pad, or a stuttering double-time burst.

Loop Count — How many times the reflection repeats before the device falls silent and returns to listening: 1×, 2×, 3×, 4×, 8×, 16×, 32×, or **Infinite**. Infinite plus Feedback is where Narcissus becomes a self-playing instrument.

Back Panel



Voice Outs & Alter Ego Outs



Narcissus feeds the instrument below it via MIDI as normal. In addition, it offers **two independent CV output pairs**, each with Note and Gate.

Voice Outs carry the main reflection — the same material going out over MIDI.

Alter Ego Outs carry a **second, parallel reflection**: the same phrase you played, but run through a *different* Response Mode, set by the **Alter Ego** knob and display on the back panel. Its pitch, rhythm, and scale settings follow the front panel, but its mirror logic is its own.

This is the device's most powerful and least obvious feature. Set the front panel to **Mirror** and the Alter Ego to **Upside Down**, patch the two outputs into two different instruments, and you have an instant two-part invention — your phrase and its inversion, playing against each other, both derived from a single performance.

Poly Out / Mono Out — Each output pair has its own switch.

- **Poly Out** transmits up to 15 simultaneous voices over the note/gate pair using the **PolyCV** protocol. Patch this into a PolyCV-compatible instrument to hear real chords.
- **Mono Out** sends conventional monophonic CV — one note at a time — for driving any standard CV instrument.

  Both cables (Note **and** Gate) must be patched for PolyCV to work. If a poly output is silent, check that both are connected and that the receiving device understands PolyCV; otherwise use Mono Out.

CV Inputs

Every CV input has its own attenuverter trim. All of them are bipolar offsets applied on top of the front-panel knob:

- **Rhythm & Dynamics:** Rate, Density, Swing, Length, Velocity, Accent
- **Pitch:** Octave, Harmony, Transpose
- **Limits:** Low Limit, Direction, High Limit
- **State:** Feedback, Freeze, Seed
- **Engine:** Mutation, Memory, Drift, Response Length, Loop Count
- **Clear**

Seed and **Clear** are edge-triggered — they fire on a rising gate, so an LFO or clock pulse will retrigger them rhythmically.

Direction and **Freeze**, when patched, take over from the front-panel switch entirely.

Tips & Tricks

Leave Key on Auto. It reads the key of your phrase and adapts. It is almost always better than picking a root by hand, and it means one patch works in any key you feel like playing in.

The Silence Threshold is your conversational tempo. It alone determines whether the device feels like an eager duet partner or a patient listener. Tune it before you touch anything else.

Turn Accent to zero if the dynamics feel wrong. Accent shapes velocity by metric position; at zero, your own velocities come through untouched.

Play a chord, then explore the Response Modes. Chord, Cascade Up, Cascade Down, and Shuffle all use the same handful of pitches to build wildly different results. A four-note chord becomes a rising harp run, a descending waterfall, or a sustained pad, without you playing anything different.

Feedback + Infinite + narrow limits + Direction = a generative machine. This is the deep end. Set the limits to a couple of octaves, feedback on, loop infinite, and a little Mutation. Bounce gives you an endless pendulum; Wall gives you a slow climb that pins and holds. Walk away and let it play.

Use Drift to find hidden melodies. You already played the notes. Drift rotates the loop's starting point, so the same material re-frames itself against the barline. Sweep it slowly on a loop you like and you'll hear two or three completely different melodies emerge from one performance.

Response Length 4× turns phrases into pads. Stretch the loop window and your notes float in space with room around them. Combine with Chord mode for instant ambient beds.

Response Length 0.25× turns phrases into stutters. The same phrase, four times as fast, becomes a rhythmic burst.

Mutation is slow, Memory is fast. Want the loop to genuinely become a different piece of music over five minutes? Mutation. Want it to feel unstable and alive right now? Memory.

Seed makes randomness repeatable. Anything random is deterministic per seed. If you get a variation you love, don't touch Seed. If you don't, hit it and roll again — as many times as you like.

Keep Input is a duet with yourself. Alternating raw and reflected passes makes the relationship between your phrase and its transformation completely explicit — great for making the effect audible to a listener.

The Alter Ego is a second musician. Give it a contrary Response Mode to the main voice, route them to different instruments, and one phrase becomes counterpoint.

Choke to re-take. You never need to hit Clear mid-performance. Just play — a new note during playback instantly stops the loop and starts listening again.

Duet mode is a different instrument. Don't think of it as "the looper turned off." With Octave and Harmony set, zero Patience, and Rate off, it's a live diatonic harmonizer that follows your key automatically. Turn Patience up and it becomes a rhythmic canon that trails your fingers.

Narcissus Ego Reflector — Shane TV