**The JS-5 JamStation**

**for**

**Geniuses\***

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\*Musicians are no dummies!

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# Introduction

## Purpose of this guide

When I bought a JS-5 JamStation, I was eager to learn all about it. When I opened the Owner’s Manual, I kind of went around in circles. I went back and forth between the manual, and just experimenting with the JS-5, and finally figured out just about everything. But what I really wanted was a guide that would explain the concepts and then walk me through something I would really want to do, the way that would be most natural and most likely I would use.

This guide is not a substitute for the owner’s manual. It is a companion to the owner’s manual, and will occasionally reference it. The owner’s manual has a lot of valuable information, good graphics, and reference data. I just don’t happen to like the way it’s organized.

## What the JamStation Does

The Jamstation is a powerful tool and you will love it if you have the appropriate expectations at the outset. It can:

* Create new songs based on 200 style templates in various genres
* Define measures using any of several forms available in each style
* Define chords for most forms, even those in jazz
* Define chord durations from sixteenth notes to whole notes, including triplets
* Define your own templates using MIDI input

## What the JamStation Does Not Do

Boss doesn’t point out weaknesses.

* The special effects apply only to the on-board instrument sounds—you cannot apply them to the tracks you record from your own instrument.
* You cannot mix forms from multiple styles in single song. For example, Green Dolphin Street has a swing section and a Latin section; you can’t do that on the JS-5 (unless you define your own style using your MIDI controller).
* Although you can define chord durations, that actual way that the chord is played is defined by the style. You might define a chord for a whole note but it might be played back as a half and two quarters.

## What I Can’t Tell You Yet

I have had no experience in the MIDI features of Jamstation, so I can’t discuss defining your own styles, or outputting MIDI files.

## How To Read This Document

The idea behind this book is to lead you through the functions in the order that you would naturally use them, going from the basic of building songs to more sophisticated usage. The owner’s manual serves as a better reference, being able to look up a term in the index (although the index is not nearly complete enough) and find a quick description of a specific topic.

Periodically there is a note.

quarter note A note provides a clarification, alternative method, or other parenthetical information related to the topic.

# A Quick Tour of the Buttons

The JamStation has 50 buttons! Your user’s manual has very good diagrams showing all the buttons. Most buttons serve two functions depending on what you are doing at the moment.

Row of round buttons: When defining chords, these select the chord root according to the letter name underneath the button. When defining forms, these select the form according to the form name printed on the button.

Bank of square buttons: When selecting a song or style, these select the style according to the large all caps word printed on the button. When selecting a chord type, these select the chord type in smaller type printed on the button.

Cursor buttons: These triangular buttons are used to move the cursor around the display

Instrument parts: Four buttons control the instruments parts that are playing, and also control specific drum pieces.

Value dial: For many functions, you can select a value by turning this dial. It can select various items depending on what you are doing at the moment. It is especially valuable when selecting a measure number within a song, such as begin and end points for a copy.

Volume knobs: There is one volume knob REC LEVEL that determines the input level for your instrument or microphone. When you are preparing to record, the display will show a level indicator similar to that on a tape deck in record mode. The VOLUME knob controls the overall volume of the output of the unit.

# Firing It Up

The first time you use the JamStation, you should learn how to use the connections, and hear what it sounds like. The connections are trivial for any musician that has ever used an electrical instrument or microphone, with a few caveats.

First, plug a pair of headphones into the headphone jack, or plug a cord from the mono output jack to an amplifier. (It provides stereo output if you use connect output jacks to separate channels on a stereo amp.)

Then plug a microphone or your electric instrument into the Input jack. The input jack has a selector switch to match the gain, but I have found the Guitar position to be inadequate and usually use the Microphone position even when plugging in a guitar.

Just to hear it, turn it on. It goes through a “boot up” sequence, the lights flash, and other displays, and then it finally settles down. Just hit the PLAY button and you will hear one of its preset songs play. Press STOP when you have heard enough, which will probably be rather soon. The preset songs provide a good foundation to build from but will never sell any records.

# Defining a Song

This section looks long with a lot of steps, but you will learn this quickly after setting up two or three songs, and it will go fast.

First, select a track for your new song. There are two banks of tracks where you can store your own songs: USER and CARD. The unit has a USER category built in, so you can select USER. If you have inserted a SmartMedia card, you can select CARD. The USER and CARD categories each have 100 song tracks you can use. Then use the VALUE dial to select a song track. The unused tracks are marked with a \* after the track number. (You can overwrite a track that is already used if you want.). Once the song track you want to use is displayed, you do not need to press any further buttons to select the track; all further work you do will be on that track.

Select a style. Each style has particular rhythms and comps. Press the STYLE button , then press a button for the genre (ROCK 1, JAZZ, LATIN, etc.), then use the dial to select the specific style within the genre. Selecting a style will cause all forms to be taken from that style (see the appendix for a list of styles). That is, you can’t mix and match forms—you can’t, for example, select “intro” from LATIN Salsa and then “verse 1” from JAZZ Latin.

quarter note This method allows you to define a song from scratch. You can also copy a style to a song track, which will copy all forms and chords for all measures. This is convenient if the song you are defining is similar to the style song. Copying is described later.

Press RECORD. Now you are ready to define your song. There are two parts to defining a song: *forms* and *chords*.

quarter note You will be in record mode until you press STOP.

To define the chords, press the CHORD button. You have a choice of entering chords in STEP mode or REAL mode. REAL mode is for providing input using a MIDI device; for entering chords manually use STEP. Rotate the VALUE dial to select STEP.

The display will show you the current measure number in the red LED numbers. The LCD display shows several things. The upper left number is the beat number of the current measure. Each beat is subdivided into 96 *clocks*. The number to the right of the beat is the clock number. Below the beat is the "quantize" indicator. That indicates the duration of the current chord. The large letter is the letter name of the chord. There is a slash to the right of the chord. If you select a note other than the root to play as the bass note, then that note will appear after the slash (more later). Below that is the chord type.

chord root

clock

beat

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **-01-00**  beat  **Q=**quarter note | **. . .** | E | **/ —** | **⏵** |

quantize

First, select the duration of the chord. The rhythm that the chord is played is generally determined by the style, so you usually will get the same results if you play a chord for 2 quarter notes vs. a single half note. I have not yet figured out the logic here; I've put in triplets and sometimes hear triplets, but not always. Using the left and right arrow buttons, move to the Quantize field, then use the dial to select the duration. It goes from 16ths to whole notes, and includes 8th note triplets, maybe a couple of other flavors of triplets too.

Then select the chord. Use the row of round buttons with letters underneath to select the root for the chord

quarter note You can also use the CURSOR arrow buttons to move to the root letter, then use the dial to change it, but that is too slow. Use the round buttons.

Use the **#/b** button if you want the chord to be a sharp or flat (repeatedly pressing the button cycles through the choices of sharp, flat, natural though there is no natural symbol shown).

Then select the chord type. Most of the chord types are on the buttons. There are some more extensions and tensions available that aren't on the buttons if you use the VALUE dial. It is pretty complete, even for jazzers, although one glaring omission is the dim7. Here are the chords not seen on the chord buttons but available by dialing:

M9 7b5 7(13)

7b9 7#9 6/9

m6/9 add9 madd9

mM9 m9

For example, you want to play a D7#9 for a quarter note.

1. Use the CURSOR arrows to select the quantize field, then rotate the VALUE dial to select a quarter note.
2. Press the D button to select D as the chord root.
3. Use the CURSOR arrows to move to the chord type field.
4. Rotate the VALUE dial until you see D7#9 on the display.

quarter note Instead of rotating the dial from a blank chord type field, try pressing the 7 button first, then use the VALUE dial. That will put you closer to your target of 7#9.

Then press the FWD button to move to the next chord. If you do not enter anything, all of the information from the previous chord will be the default. You need only change what is necessary for the next chord.

Continue this way through the piece. If there are sections that are repeated, you can copy them. I will leave copying for later, since you will want to copy forms too.

## Forms

Now you need to set up your forms. Each form provides a description of the beat used in the drums, the chord voicings for accompanying instruments, the bass line for bass, etc. It defines the feel of a particular measure. There are two verse forms; they are generally very similar but with some differences. For example, one could be used as a verse and the other for a chorus or bridge. There are two fills, good to use as a transition measure at the end of a phrase or verse. There are two breaks: the first varies widely, and the second one is always dead silence for a measure, for all styles.

After you have entered chords, press the SONG button to switch to forms. You can use the VALUE dial to select REAL or STEP. REAL is for input from MIDI, or you can press the appropriate style button in real time as the song is playing back to change the form for the subsequent measure. You have to be pretty sharp to do it that way and know exactly what you want to do, so I use STEP. I will describe the STEP method here.

For each measure, you can select one of eight forms to use for the measure. You cannot split up a measure; the form applies to an entire measure. The forms are indicated on the row of round buttons. To change the form for a measure, press the desired button. Then press the FWD button to move to the next measure. Once you select a form, it will be in effect for all subsequent measures until you change it, although the display window will not show the form for a measure if you did not explicitly select it for that measure. However, the form button corresponding to that measure will be lit, so you will always know what form applies to a measure.

**Appendix: Styles** gives a list of all available styles, which the user’s manual does not include. I have added my comments on styles that I have listened to. Usually the verse1 and verse2 are very similar with only minor rhythmic differences. The intros and endings all vary, you will just have to listen to the intro for each style to see what it's like. The fills are usually little drum breaks. The break1 varies from quarter-note taps on a high-hat to lots of other stuff. The break2 is ALWAYS dead silence.

If you want to hear your song at any time during recording, select the measure to start playback using the RWD and FWD buttons. Then press START and STOP to start and stop playback.

## Finished

When you are done with all your song, press the STOP button. It will think for few seconds, saving the song. You can edit the existing song by repeating the above steps, although you don't have to select the style again unless you want to change it.

## Copying

To copy a section, press SHIFT + COPY (the COPY button doubles as the EFFECTS button), then you can select a block of measures to copy from, and select the measure to copy to. This will overwrite measures at the target location, so you if need to insert a section first, use SHIFT + INSERT (PART). This is useful if you want to define a song that has, say, two verses then a chorus or bridge; you can just copy the verse.

## Playback and Accompaniment

I use this two ways. One way is to set up a playalong song. In that case, you can use the LOOP controls to playback the song without having to copy big chunks of it. For example, I have Wave recorded. I have an intro set up, then two verses, bridge, and another verse. Then it vamps until ending. So I define loop 1 to start at the first verse and continue through the last verse. I set the second loop to be the vamp at the end. To set the loops, select your song (you do not have to go into RECORD mode to do this). Then use the arrow-shaped keys until you see LOOP 1 and LOOP 2. You can define the start and stop measures. Then when you playback the song, you can press the LOOP 1 and LOOP 2 buttons to repeat those sections until you release the buttons (you can buy optional footswitches to work the loops instead of using the buttons). So I can play “Wave” all day with the box as an accompaniment.

The second way is to use it for recording. Loops won't work when you're recording an audio track, so if you want to play three choruses you have to define the song that way, instead of looping over the song three times.

I have a 64M card. So I usually define the song bare bones on the USER tracks, then copy the whole song to the card, duplicate the verses/choruses/bridge how I want them, then record myself on top of that.

# Appendix: Styles

This section lists all the preset styles available for Jazz, Latin, and Blues, with descriptions of some. For every style, Break 2 is one measure of silence. I would be happy to add your description or example songs for any of these styles.

## Jazz

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Style Name | Description | Intro | Verse 1 | Fill 1 | Verse 2 | Fill 2 | Break 1 | Ending |
| DublTimeFeel | Very common jazz form: Impressions, Moondance |  | Straight 4 with walking quarter-note bass line |  | Same as verse 1 but double time |  |  |  |
| OrganJazz | Bossa nova |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5/4 Jazz | Light swing with a walking bass |  | Split into 3+2: Take Five |  | Straight 5 |  |  |  |
| Latin Jazz |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Soul Jazz | This is really closer to R&B, a piano comp with some horn accents; think Ray Charles |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Swing Jazz 1 | Big band sound |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Swing Jazz 2 | Duke Ellington or Sinatra backup big band sound; Take The ‘A’ Train, Lady Is A Tramp |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Swing 6/8 | This 6 is played as 4+2; emphasis on vibes, avant garde sound |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Big Band Jazz |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Combo Jazz | Like Swing Jazz 2 but a combo, drums are played with brushes |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Modern Jazz | Minimalist accompaniment, very “outside” sounding harmonically |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Jazz 6/8 | Bluesy progression |  | 3+3 feel |  | Straight 6 |  |  |  |
| Jazz waltz | Walking bass, drums with brushes; My favorite Things |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Jazz Ballad | Slow, sultry torch song; B-3 plus piano |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Latin

| Style Name | Description | Intro | Verse 1 | Fill 1 | Verse 2 | Fill 2 | Break 1 | Ending |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Latin Pop | Imagine if the Tijuana Brass played Disco |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Latin Pop 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Latin Pop 3 | Tito Puente sound, lots of timbales |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Latin Pop 4 | Smooth sound, similar to a bossa nova |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Electro Latin |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Contemporary Latin | Similar to a jazz latin |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Salsa Grunge |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Salsa 1 | Punchy, like Gloria Estefan (Do The Conga) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Salsa 2 | Similar to Salsa 1 but choppier |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bossa Nova 1 | Like most Carlos Antonio Jobim tunes (Girl From Ipanema) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bossa Nova 2 | Like Bossa Nova 1 but with some syncopation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Samba 1 | Hot tempo |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Samba 2 | Like a fast bossa but with a slow bass line |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Songo |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mambo | Like Buster Poindexter’s “Hot Hot Hot” only slower |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cha Cha |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Merengue |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Cumbia | Like Blondie’s “Tide Is High” |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bomba |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Blues

| Style Name | Description | Intro | Verse 1 | Fill 1 | Verse 2 | Fill 2 | Break 1 | Ending |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chicago Blues | Classic Chicago sound, like what the Blues Brothers captured |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Organ Blues | 12/8 feel; Allman Brothers’ “Stormy Monday” |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Shuffle Blues |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Boogie | Rockabilly |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Rockin’ Blues | Opens with a sound like Boston’s Tom Sholz |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| RckBeatBlues | A fast mambo |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Medium Blues |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Funky Blues |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Jump Blues |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Blues in Minor | Thrill Is Gone |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Blues Brass |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| AcGtrBoogie |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gospel Shout |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |