



Alien Pirate Radio User Guide

A practical guide to the unauthorised interstellar broadcast

Aliens have invaded your music library.

Contents

What this is	3
Credits and AI	3
First launch	3
Views	3
Schedule	4
DJ bios	5
AI Brain	5
Privacy and security	6
TTS voices	7
Music folders and playlists	7
Mood filters and metadata	8
Genre selection	9
News bulletins	9
Controls	9
Remote Listening	9
Troubleshooting	10

What this is

Alien Pirate Radio is a local desktop radio station hosted by orbiting aliens who play human music and are keeping several conquest options open.

The app plays music from your computer, speaks links between tracks, reads Earth news bulletins, and occasionally inserts station jingles.

The alien DJs are trying to understand humans and their music well enough to keep the population calm. They often misunderstand what they hear, and their attempts to sound reassuring sometimes reveal rather more than intended: references to fleet operations, cataloguing, subjugation, or the eventual use of the human population. The station prefers implication to explanation. Listen for the slips.

Credits and AI

Alien Pirate Radio uses local AI for optional DJ commentary. The app design, writing, station concept, and interface are human-directed. Your music stays on your computer.

Alien Pirate Radio logo and eye artwork by Ivan D.

Radio view photograph by Muhammed Ocal on Unsplash.

Alien Pirate Radio can optionally use local AI and text-to-speech tools to create DJ links and voices on your Mac. These include third-party technologies such as Ollama, Llama, Kokoro, Electron, music-metadata, and rss-parser, each provided under its own licence or terms. Ollama and Kokoro use permissive open-source licences that allow this kind of use, and the default Llama models are licensed for commercial use subject to Meta's terms and acceptable use policy. We use these tools to make the station work; we do not claim to own them. Your music files stay on your computer, and Alien Pirate Radio does not give anyone rights to copy, share, stream, or publicly perform music they do not already have permission to use.

In practice, the default local AI model's extra large-scale commercial threshold is far beyond normal indie-app use. If Alien Pirate Radio ever reaches roughly one in twelve humans, we will update this guide from a much fancier spaceship.

First launch

- Open Alien Pirate Radio.
- Choose your music folder.
- Wait for the library scan to finish.
- Choose a voice, speech engine, genre, or playlist if required.
- Press "Start".

After the first setup, the app remembers the library and your settings. It normally opens "Radio" view and starts transmitting automatically.

Your music stays on your computer. You can choose a folder on the internal drive, an external drive, a shared folder, or a NAS if it is available to your Mac.

The station works without AI setup, but the AI-generated style needs Ollama for fresh DJ commentary. News bulletins and the first download of speech or AI models need an internet connection.

Views

"Studio" is the full setup and monitoring view.

"Radio" is the medium-sized listening view.

"Mini Radio" is the compact player. The alien eye switches between the listening views and "Studio".

Schedule

Alien Pirate Radio follows a weekday schedule, with different Saturday and Sunday shows.

The Earth Chart Show is a Sunday chart-style show. DJ Spacedust adds pretend chart positions and countdown flavour while the station continues to choose music normally.

Weekday schedule

Time	Show	Presenter	Auto mood
00:00-02:00	Midnight Abductions	Commander Krell	Dark & Nocturnal
02:00-05:00	The Unquiet Orbit	Captain Venn	Dark & Nocturnal
05:00-07:00	Dawn Patrol	Commander Krell	Energetic
07:00-10:00	The Breakfast Show	Captain Venn	Energetic
10:00-12:00	The Morning Orbit	DJ Spacedust	Warm & Easy
12:00-14:00	Lunch Break From Humanity	Captain Venn	Warm & Easy
14:00-17:00	Afternoon Drift	Commander Krell	Calm
17:00-19:00	Galactic Drive Time	Captain Venn	Energetic
19:00-21:00	The Evening Side	Commander Krell	Warm & Easy
21:00-00:00	Night Encounters	DJ Spacedust	Strange & Exploratory

Saturday schedule

Time	Show	Presenter	Auto mood
00:00-03:00	Midnight Abductions	Commander Krell	Dark & Nocturnal
03:00-07:00	The Saturday Hibernation Pod	Captain Venn	Calm
07:00-10:00	Weekend Breakfast	Commander Krell	Energetic
10:00-13:00	The Spacedust Sound Explosion	DJ Spacedust	Energetic
13:00-16:00	Afternoon Cryostasis	Commander Krell	Calm
16:00-19:00	The Mothership Matinee	Captain Venn	Warm & Easy
19:00-22:00	The Saturday Night Signal	DJ Spacedust	Energetic
22:00-00:00	Night Encounters	Captain Venn	Dark & Nocturnal

Sunday schedule

Time	Show	Presenter	Auto mood
00:00-03:00	Midnight Abductions	Commander Krell	Dark & Nocturnal
03:00-07:00	The Unquiet Orbit	Captain Venn	Dark & Nocturnal
07:00-10:00	Weekend Breakfast	DJ Spacedust	Energetic
10:00-13:00	Sunday Kitchen	Commander Krell	Warm & Easy
13:00-16:00	Sunday Time Slip	Captain Venn	Strange & Exploratory
16:00-19:00	The Earth Chart Show	DJ Spacedust	All moods
19:00-22:00	The Soft Landing	Captain Venn	Calm

Time	Show	Presenter	Auto mood
22:00-00:00	Night Encounters	DJ Spacedust	Dark & Nocturnal

DJ bios

Captain Venn

A warm, avuncular ship captain, former smuggler, and genial guide to human music. Venn is conversational, unhurried, wry, reassuring and gently irreverent, with affectionate teasing and self-deprecating deadpan humour. He tries to sound harmless, and usually nearly succeeds.

Commander Krell

A relaxed, knowledgeable and music-first commander with understated confidence and genuine curiosity about artists. Krell is culturally plugged-in, festival-savvy, sincere and calmly energetic. Her command background still slips out now and then, but she is here for the records.

DJ Spacedust

A bright, polished and relentlessly upbeat radio presenter with infectious enthusiasm, playful banter, shameless puns and the buoyant energy of classic pop radio. Spacedust is demonstrative, nostalgic, jingle-friendly, not especially bright, and has three dim brains that occasionally disagree.

Archivist Neral

The station's newsreader. Neral delivers the Earth bulletins with precision and restraint. Little more is known about them.

AI Brain

Alien Pirate Radio uses Ollama for local AI DJ links. This avoids a shared API key, an AI account, and a per-listener bill. Ollama runs on your own Mac; Alien Pirate Radio sends it track metadata, station context, and selected news headlines, never your music files.

Ollama is optional. Without it, the station still works with built-in DJ lines, and "Normal radio station" mode does not need it.

Until an AI model is installed and online, "Normal radio station" is the only available broadcast style. After the app installs a model successfully, it enables and switches to "AI-generated radio" automatically.

Broadcast styles

You do not need to install Ollama or use "AI-generated radio" to use Alien Pirate Radio. The app can run as a normal local radio player with spoken announcements, news, jingles, ducking, compression, and local music playback.

Feature	"Normal radio station"	"AI-generated radio"
Requires Ollama	No	Yes
DJ style	Simple presenter announcements	Alien personalities, jokes, mythology, and track reactions
Track links	Basic previous/next track and station-style phrasing	Fresh local AI commentary based on track metadata and station context
News	Available	Available, with alien handovers and occasional later references
Best for	Users who want the app without AI setup	Users who want the full Alien Pirate Radio character

Install Ollama and an AI model

- Open "Studio" and find "AI Brain".
- Choose "Light" or "Standard". "Light" is for older or lower-memory computers; "Standard" is the recommended choice for most modern Macs.
- Click "Install AI Engine".
- If Ollama is not installed, Alien Pirate Radio opens the Ollama download page. If it is already installed but stopped, the app asks you to open it instead.
- Download Ollama, drag Ollama.app to Applications, and open it once. Follow any macOS security prompts. Once Ollama's icon is visible in the Mac menu bar, its service is running; you do not need to keep an Ollama window open.
- Return to Alien Pirate Radio and click "Install AI Model". The app downloads the model you selected and displays its approximate progress. Keep Ollama's menu-bar service running while it downloads and while you use "AI-generated radio".
- Wait for the "AI Brain" status to show "Online". The transmission log will also confirm that the local AI DJ is online.

Ollama currently requires macOS 14 Sonoma or newer. On an older Mac, leave the "AI Brain" offline and use the built-in DJ lines or "Normal radio station" mode instead.

"Light" uses Llama 3.2 1B and is intended for older or lower-memory computers.

"Standard" uses Llama 3.2 3B and is the recommended choice for most modern computers.

The model download is separate from the Alien Pirate Radio installer. Light is about 1.3 GB and Standard is about 2 GB, though the active model also uses additional memory while running. Leave enough free disk space for the selected model.

The app can display models already installed in Ollama. You can change models later, then click "Install AI Model" again. Your choice is remembered.

If Ollama is installed but the status says "Model not installed", click "Install AI Model" to fetch the selected model. If the status says "Engine stopped", open Ollama.app until its icon appears in the Mac menu bar, then try again.

Recommended Ollama settings

Ollama's Settings window includes a few options that can affect Alien Pirate Radio.

Keep "Cloud" off if you want the station to remain fully local.

Keep "Auto-download updates" on unless you prefer to manage Ollama updates manually.

Keep "Expose Ollama to the network" off. Alien Pirate Radio only needs Ollama on the same Mac.

Leave "Model location" at the default unless you need to move large model files to another disk.

Set "Context length" to 8k. This gives the AI enough room for presenter personality, show context, track metadata, news references, and station rules without making responses unnecessarily slow. Very large context settings, such as 32k or higher, may increase memory use, battery drain, heat, and timeout errors.

Privacy and security

Local Ollama models run on the same computer as Alien Pirate Radio. The app sends track metadata, station context, and selected news headlines to the local Ollama service; it does not send the music files themselves.

Ollama normally listens only on the local computer. Do not expose its service to your network unless you understand the security implications. Ollama also has cloud features; use Ollama's local-only setting if you want to disable them.

TTS voices

Kokoro is the preferred local speech engine and is selected by default. You do not need to download or install a separate Kokoro app.

The first time Kokoro is used, Alien Pirate Radio downloads and prepares its local speech model automatically. Keep the app online for that first use and allow a little time before judging the first announcement. Later launches use the saved local copy.

If Kokoro cannot download or load, the app automatically falls back to the macOS "System" speech engine so the station keeps running. You can also select "System" yourself from "Speech engine". Try Kokoro again later once you are online.

Voice choices are remembered separately for Captain Venn, Commander Krell, and DJ Spacedust. The picker shows compatible male, female, or neutral voices for the presenter currently on air; "Auto persona voice" follows the presenter automatically.

Jingles may use a different voice from the main DJ. This is intentional.

Music folders and playlists

Supported audio formats are MP3, FLAC, WAV, AAC, OGG, and M4A files that contain AAC audio.

Apple Lossless files use the ALAC codec, often inside an M4A file. They may play normally in Finder or Music, but Alien Pirate Radio's playback engine does not currently support ALAC reliably, so Apple Lossless tracks are skipped during a full library refresh.

The app scans nested folders. After first setup, use "Refresh Library" to update the current music folder. This picks up added albums, new tracks, changed metadata, and updated M3U or M3U8 playlists while preserving the rest of the station setup. If the station is already playing, the current track keeps playing and the refreshed library is used from the next selection.

Use "Update Playlists" when you have only changed M3U or M3U8 playlists. This re-reads playlist files without rescanning track metadata. If the active playlist changes, the current track keeps playing and the next track uses the updated playlist. If the active playlist has been removed, Alien Pirate Radio logs the change and continues with the normal show or manual filter selection.

Use "Change Music Folder" if the library has moved, been renamed, or you want Alien Pirate Radio to use a different folder.

Tracks shorter than one minute 30 seconds are skipped because they do not leave enough room for normal radio handoffs.

M3U and M3U8 playlists are supported. Put a playlist inside the music folder or one of its subfolders, then use "Update Playlists" or "Refresh Library". Apple Music exports may work when their paths point to files in the selected library.

"Use playlists for shows" lets a playlist take over automatically when its name matches the current show. For example, a playlist named "The Earth Chart Show" will be used when "The Earth Chart Show" starts, if the setting is switched on and the playlist was decoded during the library scan. While a show playlist is active, manual genre, mood, artist, and playlist controls are paused but left visible. "No classical", "No spoken word", "No explicit tracks", "No repeats", and "Play playlist in order" still apply. If no matching playlist is found for the next show, the paused manual filters apply again automatically.

Use the "Artist" field to search for an artist and limit playback to that catalogue. Suggestions prioritise artists with three or more tracks, but smaller catalogues can still be found by typing the exact artist name. A few obvious artist-name variants are grouped together, such as Cockney Rebel and Steve Harley.

Use the "Albums" field to search for albums and limit playback to one or more album chips. If "Play selected albums in order" is switched on, Alien Pirate Radio plays the selected albums in the order their chips were added, with tracks inside each album following disc and track-number metadata where available. A full library refresh may be needed before older cached libraries have enough metadata for exact album track order.

"No repeats" tells the station to use eligible tracks before repeating them where possible. This history is remembered across app restarts. If you want to start a fresh no-repeat cycle, use "Clear Repeat History"; this keeps "No repeats" switched on but forgets what has already played. If the current genre, mood, artist, album, or playlist selection runs out of unplayed tracks, the station may repeat within that temporary selection without clearing the wider history.

Useful music library tools

These tools are optional, but can help if your music library needs tidying before Alien Pirate Radio scans it.

Tool	What it helps with
MusicBrainz Picard	Looking up and improving album, artist, track, year, and genre metadata. Available for macOS, Windows, and Linux.
Mp3tag	Editing music metadata such as title, artist, album, year, genre, and compilation tags. Available for Windows and macOS.
M3U Edit	Creating and editing M3U playlists on macOS.

Mood filters and metadata

"Mood" offers broad choices such as "Energetic", "Calm", "Dark & Nocturnal", "Warm & Easy", and "Strange & Exploratory". Where your music files contain Mood tags, those tags also appear in the list and take priority over the broad genre-based matching.

Broad moods are inferred from genre-style metadata when no embedded Mood tag is available:

Mood	Typical matches
Energetic	Rock, punk, metal, power pop, new wave, dance, dance pop, disco, house, techno, trance, dubstep, drum & bass, jungle, hip-hop, rap, grime, trap, drill, ska, dancehall, ragga, funk, Afrobeat, highlife, salsa
Calm	Ambient, new age, downtempo, chillout, lounge, folk, country, Americana, roots, acoustic, singer-songwriter, soft rock, mellow rock, yacht rock, dream pop, chamber pop, baroque pop, easy pop, soft pop, adult contemporary, chamber, classical, orchestral, baroque, jazz, reggae
Dark & Nocturnal	Goth, darkwave, coldwave, punk, post-punk, new wave, indie, college rock, hardcore, industrial, metal, dark ambient, ambient, drone, doom, trip-hop, downtempo, chillout, leftfield, post-rock, shoegaze, dream pop, slowcore, emo, grunge, blues, soundtrack, score, film, noir, minimal, electronic
Warm & Easy	Soul, neo-soul, funk, R&B, Motown, gospel, reggae, roots reggae, rocksteady, ska, folk, singer-songwriter, Americana, country, soft rock, pop, bossa nova, samba, jazz, cool jazz
Strange & Exploratory	Progressive, psychedelic, krautrock, experimental, avant-garde, art rock, post-rock, IDM, glitch, leftfield, noise, minimal, electronic, dub, fusion, world, soundtrack, score, library music, spoken word, field recording, ambient, drone, classical, orchestral

"Follows the mood of the current show" is optional. It changes the broad mood at each show handover and temporarily disables the manual "Mood" selector. If the current filters contain no tracks for a show's mood, the

station keeps those filters and temporarily falls back to all moods. Turn "Follows the mood of the current show" off to restore your previous manual mood selection.

"No classical" excludes the "Classical & Orchestral" category from a mixed library. It is unavailable while "Classical & Orchestral" itself is selected. "No spoken word" excludes spoken-word-like tracks such as poetry, audiobooks, comedy, interviews, lectures, and radio drama. "All Music" clears genre, mood, artist, album, playlist, "No classical", "No spoken word", "No explicit tracks", and "No repeats" filters.

Genre selection

Genres are grouped into broad radio categories with optional subgenres. A subgenre is shown with a leading " - ". Select a genre to add it as a chip, and use the x on a chip to remove it. Multiple genre chips can be active at once, so the station can draw from any of the selected genres. Selecting a category includes matching tracks in that category; selecting a subgenre narrows that part of the selection.

If a selected genre contains only one track, the app will play that track once and will not invent more tracks.

News bulletins

Choose a regional preset or enter custom RSS feeds in "Studio". News is read by Archivist Neral, while the current DJ handles the handoff.

The app treats sensitive headlines plainly and avoids comic commentary about subjects such as abuse, sexual violence, death, serious injury, and disasters.

Controls

"Music" controls the normal music level.

"Duck To" controls how far music lowers while speech is playing.

"DJ Rate" controls speech speed.

"Compression" controls the final broadcast compressor. The default setting is the normal Alien Pirate Radio station sound; lower it for a more open sound, or raise it for a denser radio-style signal.

"Shortwave Signal" makes the whole station sound like a distant analogue broadcast heard on a small radio under the bedclothes at night. It smoothly narrows the station to mono, adds a narrow tone, gentle saturation, tuning drift, noise, and stronger interference to music, DJs, and jingles.

"Signal Interference" adds occasional brief static and carrier effects during playback. It is off by default. It is switched on and locked while "Shortwave Signal" is enabled.

"Broadcast style" switches between "AI-generated radio", with alien commentary, alien DJ personalities, and station mythology, and "Normal radio station", with sober DJs and simple announcements.

"Play playlist in order" follows the selected M3U playlist sequence instead of shuffling it. It is available when a manual playlist is selected, or when "Use playlists for shows" has found a matching show playlist.

"Use playlists for shows" checks the current show name against decoded M3U and M3U8 playlist names. Matching show playlists temporarily pause manual genre, mood, artist, and playlist filters, while still obeying "Play playlist in order" and the exclusion controls.

"Mute" silences the station without stopping the transmission. "Unmute" resumes the sound.

Remote Listening

Remote Listening lets Alien Pirate Radio broadcast privately from the computer running APR to another device, such as a phone, tablet, or computer on your own private network.

This feature is intended for personal listening on your own devices. Alien Pirate Radio keeps Remote Listening deliberately small, with a limit of three direct stream listeners. It is not a public broadcast server, and it does not give you permission to share, rebroadcast, or publicly perform music. Keep it to normal private household-style use and remember that your music licences still apply.

For listening around the house, start Remote Listening in "Studio", copy the Phone Page URL, and open it in a browser on the listening device. The page shows the current track and has a "Listen Live" button. Mobile browsers usually require one tap before audio can start.

For listening away from home, Alien Pirate Radio uses Tailscale. Tailscale creates a private connection between your own devices rather than publishing APR to the open internet. Install Tailscale on the computer running APR and also on your phone or other listening device, sign in on both, then use the same Phone Page URL while Tailscale is connected.

You do not need Tailscale for home-only listening if the computer running APR and the listening device are on the same Wi-Fi or local network. If you leave home without Tailscale on the listening device, the stream will stop when that local network is no longer reachable. If APR shows a 100.x.x.x address, that is a Tailscale address, so the listening device needs Tailscale too.

Tailscale is available for macOS, iOS, Windows, Linux, and Android. On Apple devices it is available from the App Store; macOS users can also download it directly from tailscale.com. Android users can use Google Play or the Tailscale download page. Windows and Linux users can download it from tailscale.com.

Alien Pirate Radio also provides a VLC stream URL. Use this in VLC if you want a dedicated player, or for CarPlay listening through VLC. VLC for iOS supports network streams and CarPlay audio. The VLC "Private Playback" option is separate from APR's private stream; it only affects VLC's own playback privacy/history behaviour.

The app keeps the remote listening URL stable where possible, so you should not need a new address every time you start the stream. If the computer running APR is closed, asleep, disconnected from Tailscale, or Remote Listening is stopped, the phone page may show "No live stream available" until the stream returns. If a mobile browser gets stuck after APR has been quit and reopened, refresh the phone page and tap "Listen Live" again.

Shortwave Signal, Signal Interference, DJ links, jingles, and broadcast compression are included in the remote stream. Muting APR only mutes the local speaker output; it does not stop the private stream.

Troubleshooting

If clicking "Install AI Engine" opens a browser, install and open Ollama from the download page, then return to the app and click the button again. Once its menu-bar icon appears, click "Install AI Model" to download the selected model.

If the "AI Brain" is offline, check that Ollama.app is installed and its menu-bar icon is visible, then return to "Studio" and press the appropriate "Install" button.

If the first Kokoro announcement is slow, allow time for the local speech model to download and load. The app falls back to "System" speech if Kokoro cannot load.

If music is missing after adding files, use "Refresh Library" to rescan the current folder.

When reporting a problem, include the app version, operating system, current show, TTS engine, AI model, and the relevant transmission-log message.