ABLETON LIVE
MUSIC PRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE
ONLINE COURSE INFORMATION PACK
12 WEEKS
MIDISCHOOL.COM
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to online learning at Manchester MIDI School. Thanks for taking the time to download and look through this information pack.

It details what you can expect from enrolling on our 12 week Ableton Live music production and performance course.

My name is Tom Lonsborough - I’m the Certified Ableton Trainer at the school. I’ve put together this 12 week course which I’ve designed for people like myself: people that want as small a gap as possible between musical inspiration, and realising those musical ideas. Ableton Live is a great piece of software for this - it’s intuitive drag and drop mentality, and simple, uncluttered layout means you’ll be making music in no time.

I am hugely passionate and excited by Ableton Live. Even after a day’s teaching, I’ll use it to work on my own projects after hours, which I think speaks volumes about how user friendly and compulsive it is!

I really want to convey this passion in the course I have created. Therefore, in addition to all the course material I have prepared, I’ll look forward to helping students whenever they need help, with any aspect of the software, hardware, music production or performance in general.

Don’t hesitate to give me a shout, any time. My email address is: tom@midischool.com.

First of all, for those of you who are not familiar with Ableton Live, let’s answer a few questions......

JUMP STRAIGHT TO:

► What is Live?
► What to expect from enrolling on this course
► How the course is delivered
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► Kit you’ll need for the course
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► A breakdown, chapter by chapter, of the course material
What is Ableton Live?

Ableton Live is a piece of software, which, in general terms, allows the creation and sequencing of music and the real-time performance of that music.

What sort of things can you achieve with the software?

You can write your own original music, remixes, re-edits, mashups and record DJ mixes. Simply put, it is a very versatile piece of software. All this can be done in real time, or step by step, taking as much time as you need.

How is it different to other pieces of sequencing software on the market?

It allows musical ideas to be combined at will in real time, without limiting you to a set musical structure - it is this aspect of the software that lends itself to live performance and DJing.

System requirements for running the software:

Ableton Live runs on Mac or PC. Generally speaking a minimum of 1 GB of RAM and a decent sized hard disk for storing Live project folders and audio samples should be sufficient, although please check the Ableton website for exact system requirements.

Is Ableton Live 8/Suite 8/Intro on its own sufficient to start making music?

Live comes with a variety of instruments and effects (which varies slightly depending on which version you buy - Live 8, Suite 8, Intro etc.). There is more than enough boxed with the software regardless of which version you buy, to get you started. If you want to extend your sonic library, Live supports third party VST/Audio unit instruments and effects - a selection of which come with the course materials (see page x).
WHAT YOU CAN HOPE TO EXPECT FROM ENROLLING ON OUR ABLETON LIVE COURSE...

Our 12 week Ableton Live music production and performance course, has 2 main aims:
- To give the student a full working knowledge of Ableton Live
- To equip the student with general transferable music production skills

The course is taken from a beginner level upwards, no prior knowledge of music production, Ableton Live, or even music theory is required. The course builds over 12 weeks covering intermediate and advanced techniques during the latter part all of which is detailed over the next few pages.

It is aimed at people who want to get making music as quickly as possible: the course is designed to get students making noise first, then asks questions later about the more complex aspects of production and performance.

How is the course delivered?
The course is principally video based. Each week, a new set of video tutorials are made available to the student, to stream via our online learning site, (the previous week’s tutorials remain unlocked as the course progresses).

Each video introduces techniques to practice, and with each week comes a set of leaning outcomes/objectives to check off, and tasks to complete, before moving on to the next week’s material. Subsequent weeks will build on the knowledge gained from previous weeks.

How much time should I spend on the course?
Each week, there will be approximately 1 1/2 hours of video tutorials to watch. How much time you spend practising the techniques we show you is up to you, however we would recommend a minimum of 2 hours practice per week on top of the 1 1/2 hours of tutorial time. The more time you spend above and beyond this, the more you will get from the course, and the more confident you will be using Ableton Live.

What learning materials come with the course?
There is supporting material to download in the form of written notes, which can be added to with your own personalised notes taken during video playback and downloaded in the format of a branded PDF at the touch of a button.

Included in the learning resources are a load of royalty free audio samples from Loopmasters to get your sample library started, and also a carefully selected pack of samples from our tutor which can be loaded into a selection of Live’s instruments.
There are a number of excellent free virtual instruments and effects from TAL to extend your creative possibilities: details of how to install these instruments are provided in the course.

These include the TAL bassline which accurately emulates the classic Roland SH-101 synthesiser and the TAL-U-No-62 which emulates the classic Roland Juno 60 synthesiser.

We’ve included Live set templates geared towards making specific genres of music. Each template has musical ideas to experiment with and accompanying notes detailing how to attain the sound of your chosen genre.

Finally, there are MIDI files included to get you started making some noise with Live’s virtual instruments- ideal for those not yet confident playing the keyboard or programming.

What equipment will you need to complete the course?

Fundamentally, you will need a computer running Ableton Live. It doesn’t matter which version you are using, however if you are using a slightly older version of Live than Live 8, you might be lacking some minor functionality demonstrated during the course, (for example, the groove functionality which is covered was only introduced in Live 8, but this is a minor addition to the software). The core principles of the software remain the same however, regardless of the version you are using.

Optional extras used during this course:

1. A MIDI controller.
   Although this is an optional extra, we’d really recommend getting yourself one, because the software really comes into its own when you take remote control of it using a control surface. The mouse is only so much fun!

2. Headphones/speakers
   In short, some way of hearing the output of Ableton Live from your computer. Your computer might have built in speakers in which case speakers/headphones are not absolutely necessary.

Advanced optional extras talked about during this course (contact Tom with any questions):

1. Audio interface
   You would need one of these if you want to split the output of Ableton Live down something like different channels of a DJ mixer.
2. Microphone and XLR lead
   If you want to record samples into Ableton Live
3. MIDI interface
   You would need one of these if you wanted to control a hardware synthesiser using Ableton Live.
4. Hardware Synth
   The alternative to using software synthisisers for generating sounds.


Examples of MIDI controllers - a recommended option extra for the course
WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED FROM OUR ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT?

The ethos behind our online tuition is to provide accredited teaching to people who live too far away from the MIDI School to attend a course in person. Our online learning environment is designed to make students feel like they are part of a two way interactive learning process - a feeling which can sometimes be absent from online learning.

When you enrol, you will become part of a class of students that will progress through our course at the same pace. You will be able to create yourself a personalised profile, sharing knowledge and tips with other students enrolled on the course through online chat, and forums.

You can also interact with your tutor, who will be online to chat and answer any questions at various times during the week. Should you miss these sessions, there will be an inbox you can send any questions to which will be regularly checked throughout the week.

There will also be opportunity to obtain feedback on several tasks we will ask you to submit at various stages of the course, and we are introducing the option of screen-sharing where you can interact with the tutor in real time to iron out any difficulties you might be having with your productions.

Who can I contact with any questions regarding the course before I enrol?

You can contact the tutor Tom Lonsborough directly, at any time by e-mailing tom@midischool.com. This can be absolutely anything from how the online learning works, to stuff you might need for the course, to general advice about anything to do with Ableton Live!
WHAT WILL YOU COVER DURING THE COURSE?

**Week 1 Ableton Live basics**

1.1 The Interface
A basic introduction to what you are looking at when you open the software.

1.2 The Browser
An in depth look at how to get the best out of Live's browser section which is used to organise your virtual instruments, effects, audio samples, MIDI files, device presets and grooves.

1.3 Clips
What is a Clip and what does it do?

1.4 Tracks and Scenes
What do they do and how do they behave?

1.5 Launch Quantisation
A look at one of the fundamental controls for altering the launch behaviour of a Clip.

1.6 Good housekeeping
How to edit the appearance of the interface to suit your needs.

1.7 Adjusting lengths and looping
More fundamental parameters for controlling the behaviour of your Clips.

1.8 Follow actions
An introduction to the possibility of automating the launching of Clips.

**Week 2 Manipulating the Audio Clip**

2.1 What is Warping?
Live's ability to change the tempo of audio playback in real time is covered here.

2.2 Analysis files
An explanation of the file type that allows Live to behave as it does.

2.2 Corrective Warping
Using the time-warping capabilities of Live to tidy up an out-of-time recording.

2.3 Creative Warping
Using time-warping to creatively mess-up musical time within a sample.

2.4 & 2.5 Which Warp mode?
Two videos detailing the different ways Live can time stretch audio.

2.6 Clip envelopes
First look at drawing envelopes and breakpoints, to automate Clip parameters.

2.7 Using REX files
A quick introduction to Live’s handling of REX files.

Live's Clip view - used for manipulating the playback of your Clips
Week 3 Manipulating the MIDI Clip

3.1 Recording and editing your own audio Clips
Resampling Clips already present in your Live set and also recording in new Clips from an external source.

3.2 What is MIDI?
An explanation of the language sequencers use to control instruments and effects, both software and hardware.

3.3 Setting up a MIDI keyboard for use with Live

3.4 Loading an Instrument
Loading a virtual instrument into your Live set.

3.5 Recording a MIDI Clip
Recording a MIDI Clip freehand using a keyboard.

3.6 Tidying up your recording

3.7 Overdubbing
Add MIDI notes to an existing Clip.

3.8 Drawing MIDI Clips
In the absence of a MIDI keyboard, techniques for MIDI Clip creation.

Week 4 Playing instruments

4.1 Impulse
An in depth study of Live's basic drum machine/sample player.

4.2 Simpler
An in depth study of Live's basic sampling instrument.

4.3 Live's other instruments
A quick look at some of the other instruments available to Live users.

4.4 Third party instruments
Installing and playing TAL's Bassline instrument.

4.5 Playing hardware instruments
A look at what you will need to make use of a hardware synthesiser, how to connect it to your computer, and how to manipulate it using Live.

4.6 Importing MIDI files
Making use of pre-existing MIDI files in your set.
Week 5 Using effects & taking remote control of Live

5.1 Loading an audio effect
Loading effect devices onto tracks.

5.2 Insert or send and return effect?
The differences between these two methods for applying effects.

5.3 Setting up a send and return effect

5.4 MIDI effects
Where and when a MIDI effect should be applied, and a brief look at the available MIDI effects in Live's devices.

5.5 Saving a Live Clip
Saving Clips with effects devices attached.

5.6 Routing workshop
A study of different uses of Live's flexible signal routing.

5.7 Merging ideas from other Live sets

5.8 MIDI control surfaces
A look at various controllers on the market, and how to set them up for taking remote control of Live.

5.9 MIDI map mode
Making manual mappings to your control surface.

5.10 Using a computer keyboard as a MIDI controller.

Week 6 Jamming in Session View & recording arrangements

6.1 Hidden buttons
A look at some of Live's controls which aren't immediately apparent.

6.2 Improvising in Session view
Improvising song structure, and planning song sections in Session view.

6.3 What is an arrangement?
An explanation of what makes an arrangement, and what we are looking at in the Arrangement view.

6.4 Recording an arrangement
How Live behaves when we record a Session view improvisation.

6.5 Fine tuning structure
A look at all the editing tools available to you when fine tuning your recorded arrangement.

6.6 Adding new clips to an arrangement.

6.7 Recording and editing new Clips directly into Arrangement view.

Live's Arrangement view
Week 7 Structure & Synthesis

7.1 Automation
An explanation of what can be achieved when automating device parameters.

7.2 Back to arrangement
The relationship between Session view and Arrange view.

7.3 Listening to structure
An exercise in analysing song structure to learn about arranging.

7.4 Layout
Laying out a blank song structure using blank MIDI Clips.

7.5 & 7.6 Synthesiser basics
A look at all the basic components of a synthesiser.

7.7 Synthesiser techniques
The creation of some basic sounds from Analog.

Week 8 Mixdown workshop 1

8.1 Grooves
Applying Live 8's groove functionality to Clips.

8.2 Setting up your mix environment
Looking at good housekeeping, volume balance, and sub-grouping.

8.3 Stereo field
Positioning each sound within the stereo field.

8.4 Mono to stereo
A Timbaland production technique turning mono sounds into a pseudostereo sound.

8.5 EQ
The controls of a parametric equaliser, with examples of how to apply.

8.6 Compression
A look at the controls of this dynamic range processor, and how to apply it in different situations.

Week 9 Mixdown workshop 2

9.1 Sidechain compression
A very popular production technique is looked at here.

9.2 Other sidechain effects
Using some of Live's other devices, you can achieve some interesting sidechain effects.

9.3 & 9.4 Creating depth
The use of reverb and delay devices to create depth and atmosphere in your mix.

9.5 Mixing a full song
An extended tutorial on applying everything we have covered to mix the track you have produced.

9.6 Managing resources
Action plans for managing your computers available CPU.
Week 10 Mixdown, mastering, & an introduction to Racks

10.1, 10.2 & 10.3 Rendering
A look at all the available rendering options and which situations to use them in. We also cover scoring music to film in this section.

10.4 Mastering
An overview of the type of processors used during the mastering process, and basic mastering techniques.

10.5 Project management
Managing audio files contained in your Live set/Project folder, and creating Live packs.

10.6 What is a Rack?
A look at what constitutes a Rack, and the building of a simple audio effects rack.

10.7 What is a chain list?
Ways for you to control which chains process the incoming signal.

Week 11 Racks continued, and preparing files for DJing

11.1 Instrument racks
A look at the powerful devices for use in the studio or live performance.

11.2 Drum racks
The advanced drum/sample machine is picked apart here.

11.3 Slice to new MIDI track
The automatic way to slice audio and manipulate it using a drum rack.

11.4 Rack examples
Here we show some examples of practical uses for Live’s Racks.

11.5 Importing and organising
What file type should you import for DJing, and where should you keep it?

11.6 & 11.7 Warping full songs
Applying Warping skills to full tracks in order to sync them with Live.

Week 12 Performance techniques

12.1 DJing with Live
An extended tutorial on how to use Live for DJing, including on the fly hot cues, looping and cueing.

12.2 Dummy Clips
An advanced use of Clip envelopes to control device automation.

12.3 Legato Mode
Play audio samples as if they were instruments!

12.4 Acapellas
Methods for time-warping acapellas.

12.5 Mashups/Re-edits
How to put a mashup together in Arrangement view.

12.6 DJing with Live part 2
How to integrate Live into an existing DJ setup. Hardware required, routing in Live, and methods for beatmatching Live to a piece of vinyl or a CD.