

Mudpeople again with another tutorial, perhaps better called an outline, as I'm going to focus on outlining my Ableton live set, more as an example of what I do that others can take whatever they like from, cuz in my experience everyone has their own way that works best for them, their style, and their approach to performance, so the best way to learn how to play a live set isn't going to be something you can get from one single person's approach, its more about figuring out the possibilities, testing them, discovering for yourself what works best for you. And most importantly which way is the most fun to play!

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT;

- A tutorial on how to play a live set
- a tutorial on how I play my live set
- a tutorial on how to use Live
- a tutorial on how to use *step sequencers* in a live set
- a tutorial on how to route MIDI
- a tutorial on how to map MIDI controllers

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT IS

A quick outline of my current live setup for individuals already familiar enough with the concepts outlined, as a potential source of ideas and/or inspiration

To start with, I'll talk a bit about the history of my live setup. I began just outputting studio tracks as 8-bar stems, looping them and pretty much just going down the main Scene column pressing enter, maybe changing the order of some elements, and sorta blending them together more like a DJ set when I changed the tracks. This was fun and all, but the main problem to me was that was pretty much all I could do with it, it felt robotic and became somewhat monotonous to play (even if it sounded cool). I always wanted to learn how to make a live set that never sounded the same, that was more about improvising all the elements in real-time than simply triggering loops.

When I realized that my main producing program, Renoise, could be ReWired into Live I thought it would be interesting to use it to sequence bass and kick samples, its familiarity allowed me to sequence the kick and bass the way I do in my studio work and write them quickly enough to be able to write an 8 bar pattern in less than 8 bars of real-time. Then I added some loop channels, and a MIDI channel or 2. I felt very proud about actually implementing live synthesis. Again this was too rigid, too much of it was pre-recorded audio that couldn't really be changed. But the seed was planted, I had a taste of live synthesis.

Lots of experimentation later and I ended up with the subject of this text.

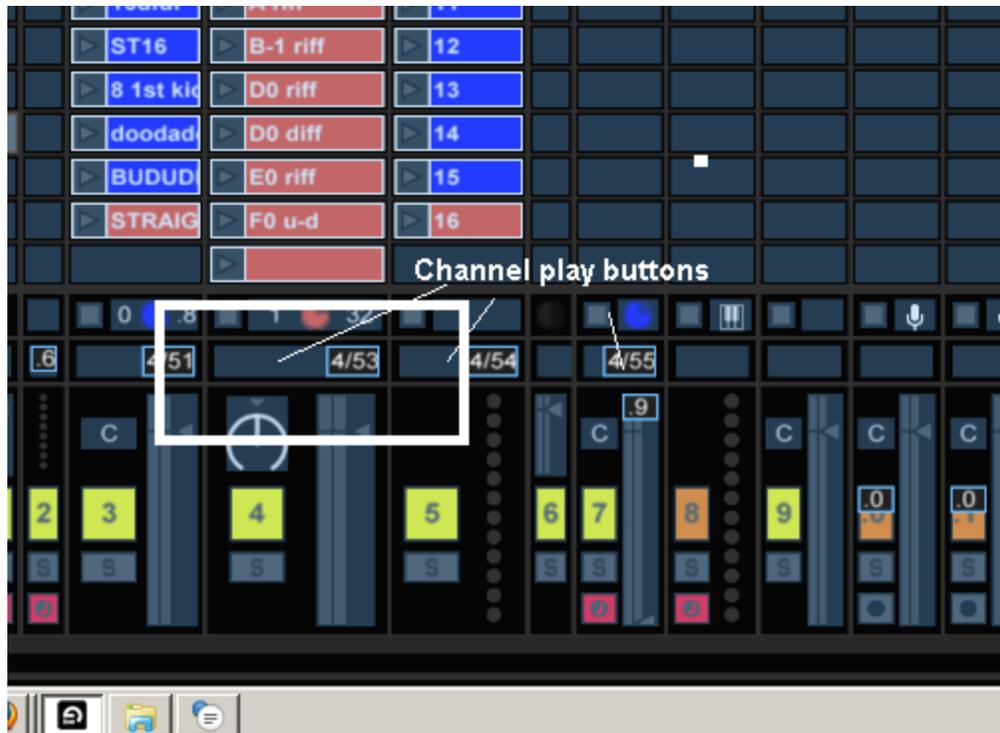


I guess the best place to start would be; navigating to and triggering clips. To do that I have these controls (only visible



when MIDI Learn is active) mapped to 2 pads on the controller. This allows the horizontal scene highlighter to move up and down. However, this doesn't do much unless either the main scene play button on the master channel, which is the blue-gray box to the left of the ^ button, which in the picture above is the one with the ..0 mapping inside the oval. As you can see I don't use that button.

Instead I have individual channels' play buttons (also only visible with MIDI Learn active) mapped to other controller pads in the same scene.



The play button triggers whatever clip, or stop button, in that channel currently highlighted by the horizontal scene selector. With this combination of mapping its pretty easy to trigger the clips I want to trigger without touching the mouse or computer keys, with one hand and 6 microKONTROL pads.

These controls are part of the main scene in the Korg's preset mapping file along with bass/kick and percussion return channel mutes and 8 effect triggers, so I don't have to leave the scene to be able to trigger clips, mute the foundation elements, and activate effects, which makes it much quicker to do any or all of those without having to change to another scene.

Controller Scenes

The microKONTROL allows 12 different scenes to be mapped with any combination of CC, NRPN, RPN, or Note data. A scene one complete set of the mappings assigned to a physical control. This allows much more controls to be mapped than there are actual physical controls. I only know the Korg's details, so I can't say if 'scene' is a general term or Korg-specific, so if your controller doesn't call them scenes, you get the idea anyway. Here's the outline:

ClockWOrK	Main	Tattoo	ML-185
Thesys	program changes	audio rack	perc chan mutes
Tyrell N6	Synth1	Sylenth1	Kairatune

The bottom row selects individual synths' mappings that allow key parameters to be altered and modulated in realtime.

The sequencer scenes control each sequencer plug sufficiently to be able to tweak and fiddle with their sequences, speed, note data and step mutes when possible.

The Main, Tattoo, program change and audio rack scenes are essentially all the same mapping except for the pads, which control the various triggers as well as Tattoo's individual channels' mutes.

That's essentially how I control everything. Let's return to the first image, this time with labels.



Read the individual plugs' manuals for details on how to properly route their MIDI and/or audio.

The MIDI channel to the left of Tattoo's main channel records all the MIDI sent by Tattoo, this allows everything sent to the audio channels to be recorded as MIDI instead of audio, then when finished recording the MIDI clip in Arrangement view can be dragged onto Tattoo. This way when rendering to audio, Tattoo along with everything but the audio channel will be synthesized, rather than rendering from recorded audio.

The eSLine clips are mostly unlooped, >32 bars, and are automated so the strings/pads can be triggered pretty much at will and do their thing on their own while I continue on to other stuff. For fun I made a clip of the Shepherd Tone for the eSLine to play.

Program Changes

Program change is a type of MIDI control message that tells instruments that receive PC which preset, or program, to change to. This is how to change the sounds without changing synths.

You can do this just using Ableton. MIDI clips have this dropdown;



Make a dummy MIDI Channel, send its MIDI to the synth you want to send PC to, then make a clip for each preset you want to be able to change to.

Funny note; the general MIDI naming protocol for program change starts at 0 and goes to 127, but Ableton instead starts at 1 and ends at 128, so program 23 in general MIDI terms is 24 in Ableton terms.

This way is cumbersome and requires more MIDI channels than I personally like to deal with.

Max for Live to the rescue!

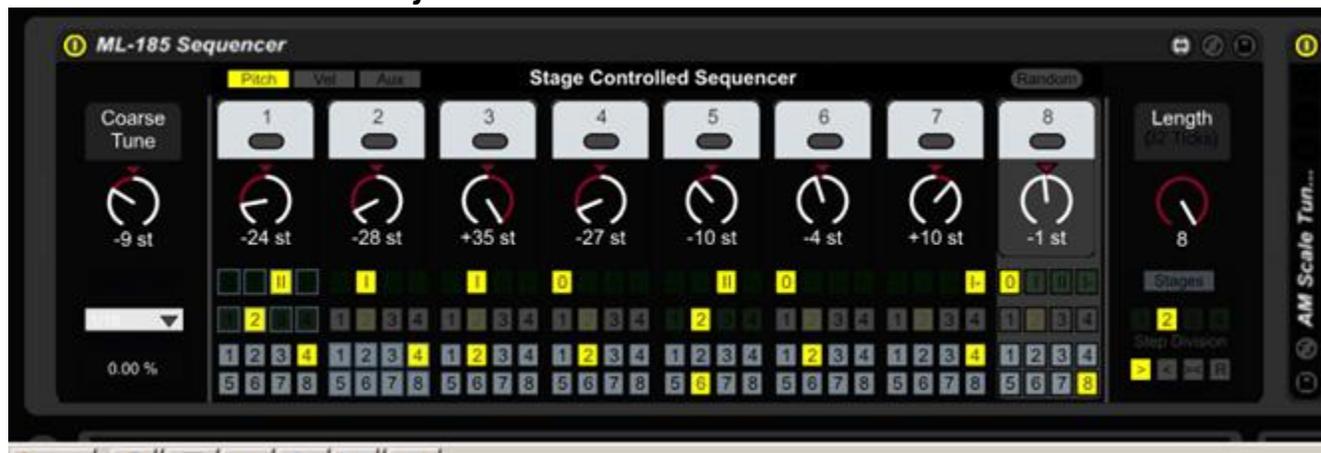
This device is called Dial to Program Change, freely available for Max for Live users from maxforlive.com. You can map either the knob or increase/decrease buttons to your controller. With the Korg its easiest to use the buttons.



I don't use very many m4l devices other than this one, and the wonderful ML-185 stage controlled sequencer (check out the RYK M-185 analog sequencer module for the Roland 100m modular system, the ML-185 is basically the same thing).

Its not necessary to use this device or Max for Live, or even program changes, you can get by just fine using the mouse to select presets from the dropdown menus if you like. Its just that much quicker to change around your instruments' voices without having to fumble with the mouse, deal with extra channels, and most of all, easier than making 128 different MIDI clips for EACH SYNTH. Id even venture to say that the Dial to Prog Change and ML-185 just in themselves are worth the Max for Live pricetag.

Here's the ML-185 just for those who are curious:



Its also freely available from maxforlive.com.

Thats about the long and short of it, as they say. As I said, its not really a tutorial but an outline. Hopefully this will be useful information to anyone developing their own live setup, or failing that, an interesting read.

This document is a first draft, but freely available in PDF and ODT format, and may be distrubuted, cut, mangled, debased, debauched, rode hard, put away wet, whatever. It would be cool to mention that I wrote it, but if not thats fine too.

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