



# USING THE AKAI MPC WITH **ABLETON LIVE**

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## **Using The Akai MPC With Ableton Live**

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# Introduction

This book has been written as a guide for Akai MPC owners who wish to utilise the unique and intuitive music creation software, Ableton Live. Throughout this book I assume that you are already familiar with the general usage of the MPC, so have a basic grasp of the main sequencer functions, like sequence recording, STEP EDIT, and adjusting MAIN page parameters like track program assignments etc. This book is not intended as a complete beginners guide to using the MPC itself (we already have those at <http://www.mpc-samples.com/section.php/8/0/> ).

Similarly, this book is not intended to be a complete guide to using Live - that would require much longer book! In these 120 pages, we've concentrated only on the specific skills you need to learn to integrate Live into your MPC-based music creation processes; be it as a live performance tool, an intuitive song writing aid, or a more traditional DAW used to create polished, professionally mixed beats and songs.

I advise that you first locate the folder 'MPC Project Files' and transfer the project files for your MPC model to your MPC's disk (CF card, zip, hard drive etc). This means you can quickly load up the relevant MPC files when working through each tutorial. If you need help transferring files, please consult the file transfer FAQ on our site here:

<http://www.mpc-samples.com/transfer.php>

Enjoy the book, and happy beat making!

# Table of Contents

<b>001 Initial Hardware &amp; Software Set Up</b>	<b>6</b>
Basic Requirements	6
MIDI & Audio Basics	6
Choosing Your Audio Interface	8
Audio Hardware & Software Set Up	9
MPC Audio Connections	11
Live Channel Configuration	14
MIDI Hardware Configuration	16
Live MIDI Set Up	16
<b>002 Using Ableton Live As A Sound Module</b>	<b>18</b>
Overview	18
Live Software Setup	18
Creating Your Instrument Tracks	20
Setting the Audio Outputs	23
Setting the Receiving MIDI Channels	25
MPC Sequence Settings	27
Recording your MIDI Performances	38
Dealing with the Mix	38
Setting a project tempo	40
<b>003 MPC MIDI Control of Live</b>	<b>42</b>
Working with Clips	42
Using MPC pads to Launch Clips	43
MPC Set up	43
MIDI Mapping in Live	44
Clip Playback Options	47
Launch Modes & Quantization	48
Utilizing Follow Actions, Chances & Scenes	54
Controlling Live With Q Links (JJOS 2/XL & MPC4000)	57
<b>004 Syncing Your MPC With Live</b>	<b>60</b>
MIDI Sync Overview	60
Syncing with MIDI Clock (MPC as Slave)	62

Syncing with MIDI Clock (MPC as Master)	67
Adjusting MIDI Sync Delay	73
Syncing with MTC (MPC as Master)	74

## **005 Transferring MPC Audio into Live 79**

Why Do We Track?	79
Recording audio – initial steps	81
Audio tracking – ‘manual’ method	86
Audio tracking using MIDI Clock	91
Audio tracking using MTC	93
Recording Individual drum tracks	96
Multi track audio recording	98
Grouping Tracks	100
Importing Audio Into Live	101
Resampling your MPC outputs	102
MPC Audio Tracks (JJ OS)	105
MPC5000 hard disk recording export	106
Importing Audio as Live Clips	107

## **006 Transferring MPC Sequences into Live 110**

Importing MIDI into Live as MIDI Clips	110
Exporting MIDI From Your MPC	110
Creating your MIDI Clip	116
Recording MPC MIDI in ‘Real Time’	117

## **007 Final Word 120**

# 006 Transferring MPC MIDI Sequences to Live

## Importing MIDI into Live as MIDI Clips

In chapter 5, we ‘tracked’ out our MPC drum performances into Live, which not only created dedicated audio tracks like we’d find in a traditional ‘DAW’, but also gave us audio ‘clips’ which we can also use in clip slots in Session View. These clips used sounds assigned to MPC programs, and MPC-specific event data recorded to the MPC sequencer, but ended as pure audio within Live.

To completely remove the MPC from the equation and instead manipulate everything within the Live environment, we need to transfer the actual MIDI event data we’ve recorded on tracks 4, 5 and 6 in sequence 2 of our MPC ‘LIVE’ project – these are the MPC sequencer tracks that trigger the Live instrument sounds, as set up in chapter 2 of this book.

So, rather than have the MIDI data played within your MPC, we’ll simply shift that MIDI data directly to the relevant instrument track in Live in the form of a self contained MIDI clip; remember, a Live instrument track is just a MIDI track that outputs via an instrument plug in.

In Live, load up the ‘**MIDI Tracking.als**’ session file from the ‘**Live Project Files**’ folder; this is our 80 BPM project which contains three Live instrument tracks; bass, piano, and fx, and an audio track containing the stereo drum clip we tracked over to Live as pure audio in chapter 5.

In your MPC, load up the ‘LIVE’ project, and select sequence 2 – this sequence has bass, piano and fx MIDI events already recorded on tracks 4, 5 and 6, with drums provided on tracks 1-3 using an MPC drum sample program (PT-KIT.pgm).

## Exporting MIDI From Your MPC

So how do we transfer this MIDI data directly to Live? Well it’s actually quite easy. Live will let you import MIDI data from any sequencer as long as it is in **standard MIDI file format**, and luckily, all MPCs give you the option to save individual sequences in standard MIDI file format.

So what is standard MIDI file format? Well, it’s an MPC sequence file with all the MPC –specific stuff stripped out. So, no q-link events, no

filter/attack/tuning/decay events, no program or effect bank changes etc. Instead, you have just standard MIDI events, such as note value, velocity, duration, etc.

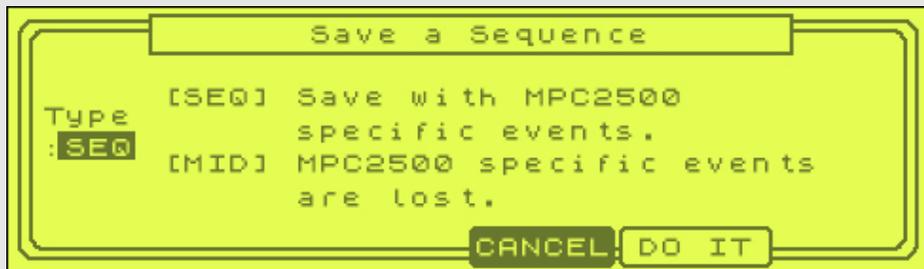
For this part of the tutorial, we'll create a standard MIDI file of sequence 2 of our 'LIVE' project – so load up that project and select sequence 2 (**PT-FINAL**). Depending on your MPC, now do the following:

### ***MPC1000/2500 (Akai OS)***

Go to SAVE (MODE and pad 3) and under 'type' select 'SAVE A SEQUENCE'. Under 'Item' select '02-PT-FINAL'. Under 'To:', save to the folder you currently have all your tutorial files for this book.



Hit DO IT (F6) to bring up the 'Save A Sequence' screen:



Use your jog wheel to change SEQ to MID. This will save your sequence as a standard MIDI file. Hit DO IT (F5).

### ***JJ OS***

Go to SAVE (MODE and pad 3) and in the top left of the screen, select 'Save: A SEQUENCE'. From the list, select 'Sq:02-PT-FINAL'.



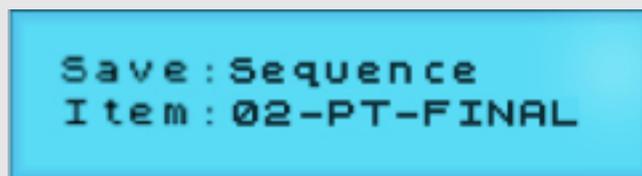
Hit DO IT (F6) to bring up the 'Save A Sequence' screen:



Use your jog wheel to change SEQ to MID. This will save your sequence as a standard MIDI file. Hit DO IT (F5).

### ***MPC500***

Go to SAVE (MODE and pad 3). Change 'Save' to 'Sequence', and 'Item' to '02-PT-FINAL'.



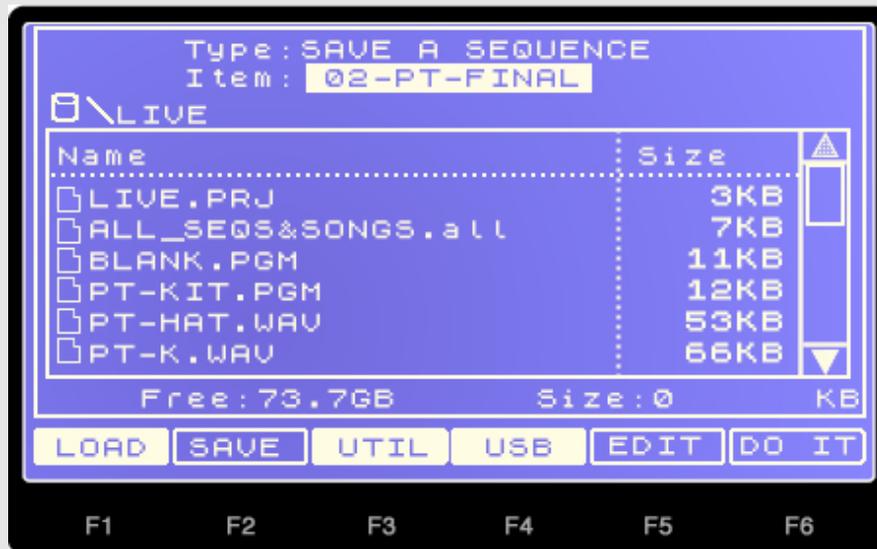
Press DO IT to show the 'save a sequence screen':



Select the save type as 'Mid', giving you a standard MIDI file. Press DO IT.

### ***MPC5000***

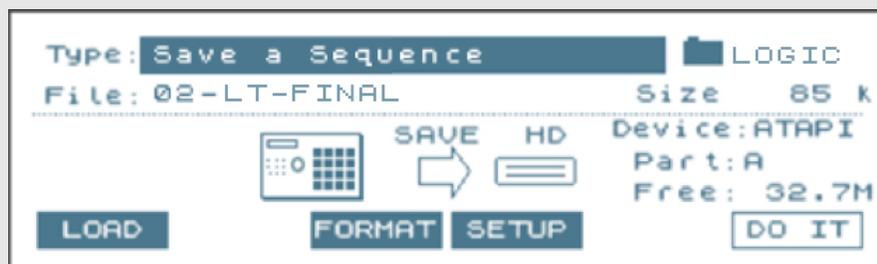
The MPC5000 only saves in standard MIDI file format. Go to DISK (MODE and pad 3), select SAVE (F2) and choose a location to save the file. Under 'Type', select 'SAVE A SEQUENCE' and under 'Item' select '02-PT-FINAL'.



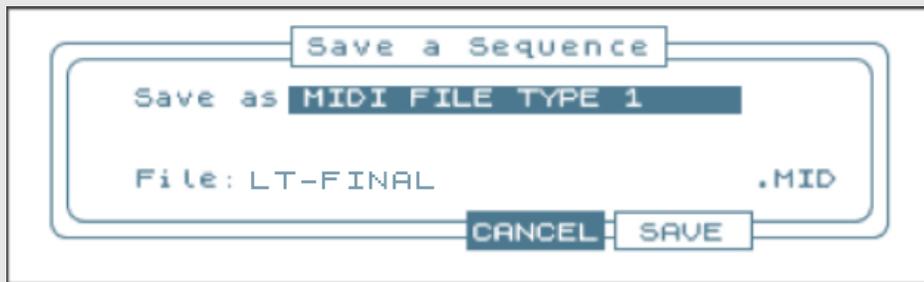
Hit DO IT and your MIDI file is saved.

### ***MPC2000/XL***

The MPC2000/XL saves all its files in standard MIDI format by default. Go to SAVE (SHIFT and ENTER) and under 'Type' select 'Save a Sequence', under 'File' select '02-LT-FINAL'.



Hit DO IT (F6) to bring up the 'Save A Sequence' screen:



Choose 'MIDI FILE TYPE 1' and hit SAVE (F5).

You'll now have a single MIDI file containing all the tracks from your MPC sequence.

### ***MPC3000/60***

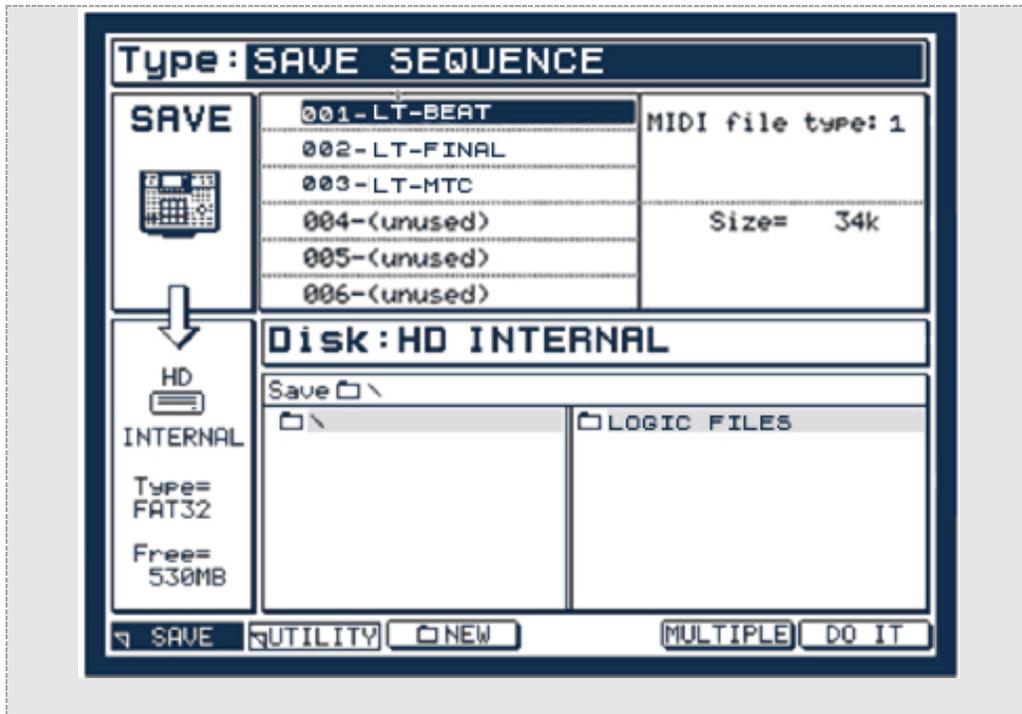
Press the DISK key, then 1 ('A Sequence').



Choose 'MIDI FILE TYPE 1' and hit <Do it>.

### ***MPC4000***

Go to [SAVE] > SAVE SEQUENCE. From the 'Sequence List', select sequence 2 (PT-FINAL) and MIDI File Type: 1. Hit DO IT.



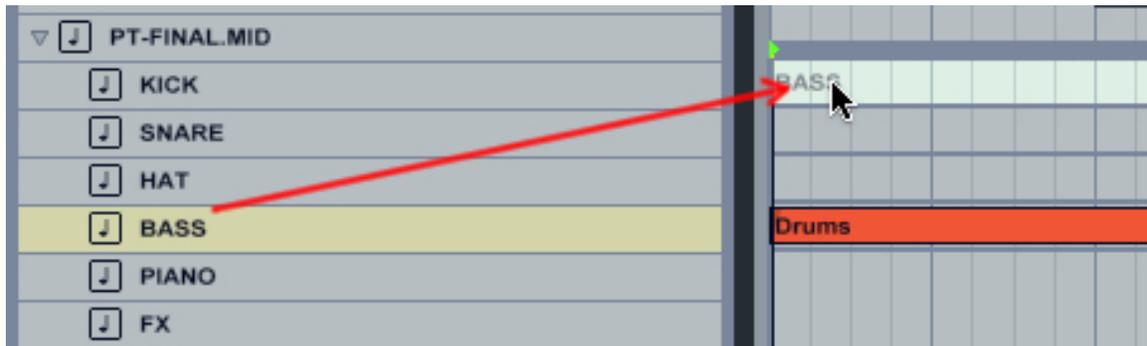
## Creating your MIDI Clip

You'll now have a single MIDI file containing all the tracks from your MPC sequence. To import this file into Live, we simply locate this MIDI file in the File Browser and drag it over just like we would with an audio clip – and just like audio, we can either drag the clip over in Session View, or directly into Arrangement View; again, I'll use Arrangement View as the example.

Go to 'Arrangement View', and locate the newly exported MIDI file in the Live File Browser. You should see an expanding triangle to the left of the file name – click on this and the MIDI file will expand to show all 6 tracks within it.



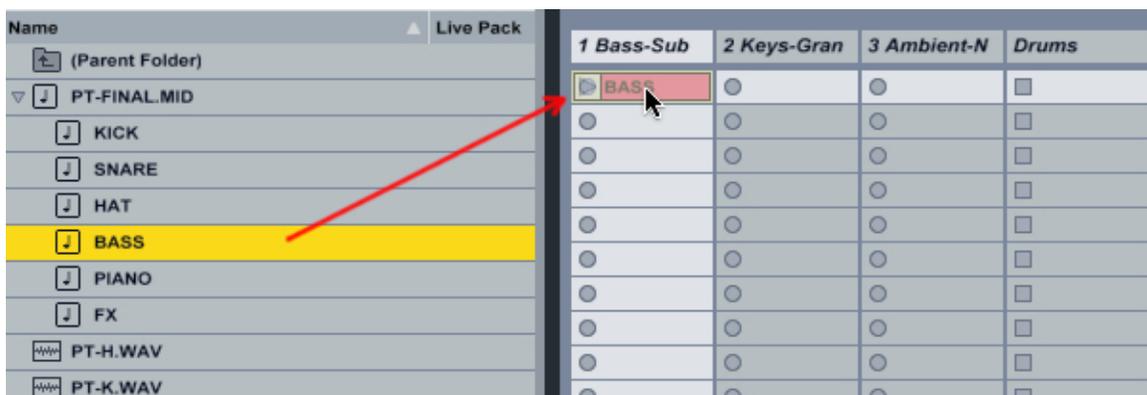
Now simply click and drag the 'BASS' MIDI track over to the beginning of the existing '1 Bass Sub' track:



Repeat this process for the PIANO and FX tracks, by dragging the MIDI tracks to the Live project tracks 2 and 3.



Hit 'Play' in Live and you should now hear your entire beat playing back with all instruments and drums provided entirely from within Live. That was pretty painless. You can alternatively do exactly that same process within Session View except this time, drag the individual MPC MIDI tracks into clip slots.



My version of this can be found by loading '**MIDI Tracking – Import.als**' from the '**Live Project Files**' folder.

# Recording MPC MIDI in Real Time

Many believe the MIDI output MPC has a unique 'swing' that changes the MIDI events slightly, giving them a unique vibe. This would not be replicated using the import method above, as all you are doing is transferring clear cut event information from one machine to the other.

To retain that mystical swing we can record our MPC MIDI data in real time into Live, just like we do with audio. We can do this as the sequencer resolution of Live is incredibly high, so it will pick up any nuances and 'quirks' that the MPC outputs via its MIDI port. Just be aware that this method may also introduce other irregularities, as there may be quirks introduced by your audio interface or computer. As with most aspects in audio production, experiment and judge which method works best for you.

Recording MIDI data is basically identical to recording audio, except instead of recording via your audio cables to an audio track in Live, you record via a MIDI cable to an instrument track in Live.

Rather than record single MIDI tracks, we can record 16 unique tracks at a time from the MPC, simply by assigning a different MIDI channel to each MPC track. Of course, we've already done this during the 'sound module' tutorial of chapter 2, so our bass is on MIDI channel 1, piano on channel 2 and fx on channel 3. Equally, Live is already set up to receive this MIDI data on each instrument track.

If you've already imported the MIDI data as per the previous tutorial in this chapter, you might want to delete the MIDI data, or just start with the original project file we used at the start of this chapter '**MIDI Tracking.als**,' which contains the three empty instrument tracks and a single stereo audio track (drums).

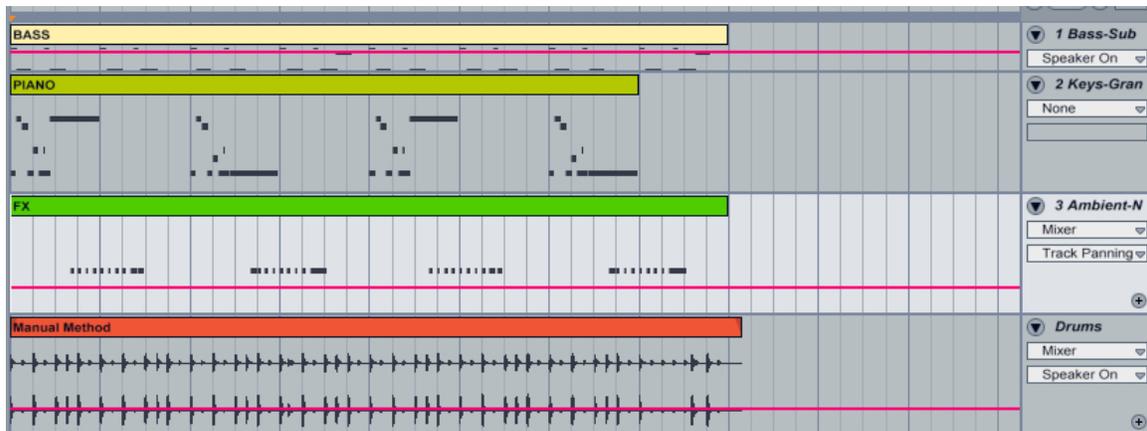
Now decide on which method you'll use to record the MIDI data. As with audio, you can choose 'manual' (where you manually press PLAY on both devices), or use MIDI sync – either MIDI Clock or (if you have it) MTC. Once decided, check your MIDI connections and make all the software/hardware settings as per chapter 4.

In your MPC, load up the '**LIVE**' project and select sequence **2** (or sequence **3** if you are using MTC as this has the blank bar at the beginning).

In Live, double check to make sure you have 'Record Enabled' all instrument tracks in the project. To record your MIDI tracks:

- **Manual method:** press the 'Stop' button in Live so the project timeline returns to the beginning, press 'Global Record' and then 'Play'. After the count-in, hit PLAY START in your MPC. Press STOP in Live after recording.
- **MPC as MIDI slave:** press the 'Stop' button in Live so the project timeline returns to the beginning, press 'Global Record' and then 'Play'. Your MPC will start playback after the count-in has finished. Press STOP in Live after recording.
- **MPC as MIDI Master:** press 'record' in Live and then press PLAY START in your MPC.

When you've finished recording, you should see MIDI data recorded for all three tracks:



Press 'Play' in Live to hear your recorded MIDI tracks and the MPC drums play together. You can listen to each track individually by hitting the 'solo' (S) button, and click on each MIDI track to perform further edits to it via 'Clip View', just like you would with an audio clip. As with audio, you may experience MIDI delay issues when recording, so remember to check each recorded clip for any unnecessary gaps at the start of the recording, and edit it if required.

You can load up my complete version of the entire audio and MIDI transfer to the MPC by viewing the '**Tracking Complete.als**' project file. Inside, you'll find audio tracks for the drums (both stereo and individual mono tracks) and the instrument tracks with their MIDI data transferred.

I've also included another Live Set called '**Tracking – Session Clips.als**'. In this, I've included all the clips we've created in the entire book, including all the short variations and riffs from chapter 3, and have also set up MPC pad MIDI

mappings on MIDI channel 16 (assuming a 'BLANK.pgm' chromatic 36 program layout), so you have start playing around with some arrangement ideas using the techniques discussed in chapter 3 – click on the MIDI Map Mode Switch for a breakdown of all the pad assignments for this project. Have fun!

That's the end of this free preview of the '**Using the Akai MPC With Ableton Live**' – you can purchase the full book at MPC-Tutor.com:

<http://www.mpc-tutor.com/product/using-the-akai-mpc-with-ableton-live/>