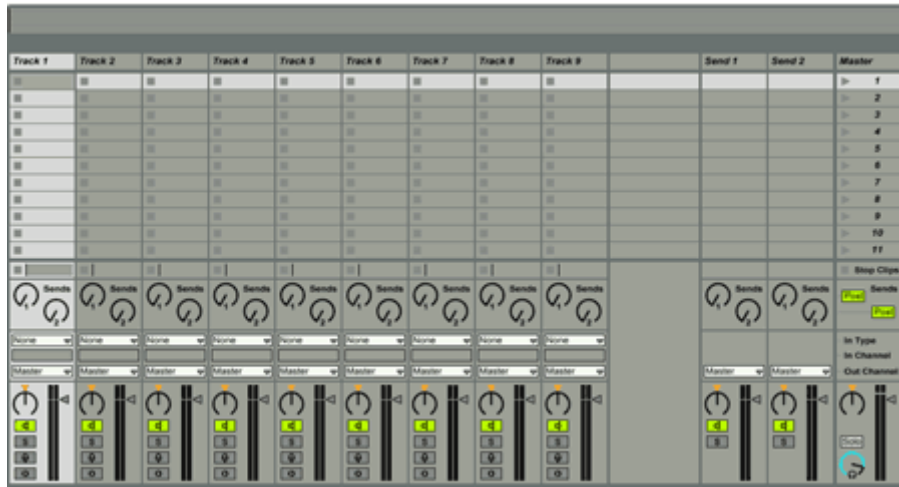


Tips and Tricks #3 for Ableton Live 3

By Dave Hill Jr.

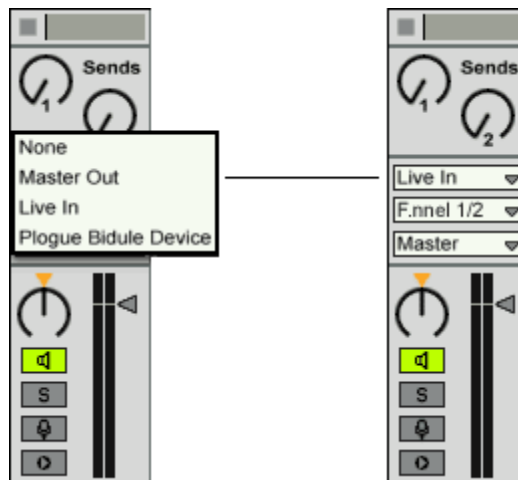
Live 3: The Ultimate Songwriting Companion

No I'm not a real keyboardist, but I play one in my virtual studio. More specifically, Live 3's Session View empowers composers with one of the most flexible and dynamic song sketchpads around. To see what I mean, grab your favorite keyboard (or guitar), open Live to Session View (as shown below), and get ready to make tracks.



Prep and Play

Next take a minute to prepare Live for recording by selecting your track's input: Choose Live In (shown right) from Track 1's Input Type menu. Or, you can choose your favorite ReWire-enabled application (more on this in a minute).



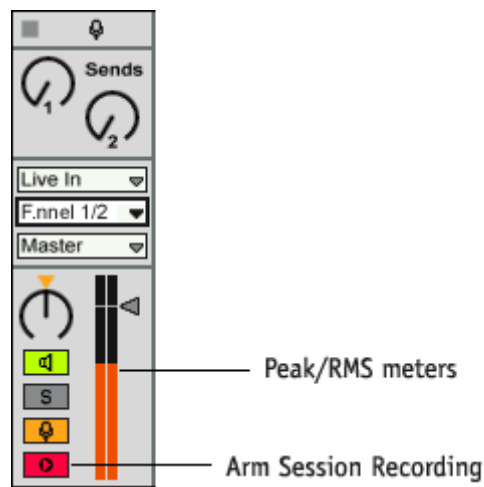
Note If you do not see "Live In" in Live's Input Type menu, you will need to open Live's preferences and configure your system so that Live can look for input.

Here is what my Apple PowerBook's preferences look like when using an M-Audio FireWire 410 audio interface.



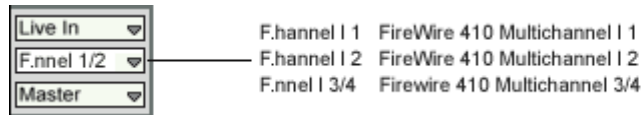
Arm Recording

Once you have selected an input, activate Live's Arm Session Recording button shown below. Live will then automatically monitor the chosen input so that you can quickly record multiple takes. Go ahead and test that Live is receiving signal by playing your guitar or keyboard and watching Live's Peak/RMS meters dance.



If you don't see a signal, don't panic. Check your connection to your interface and be sure to note which input you're using.

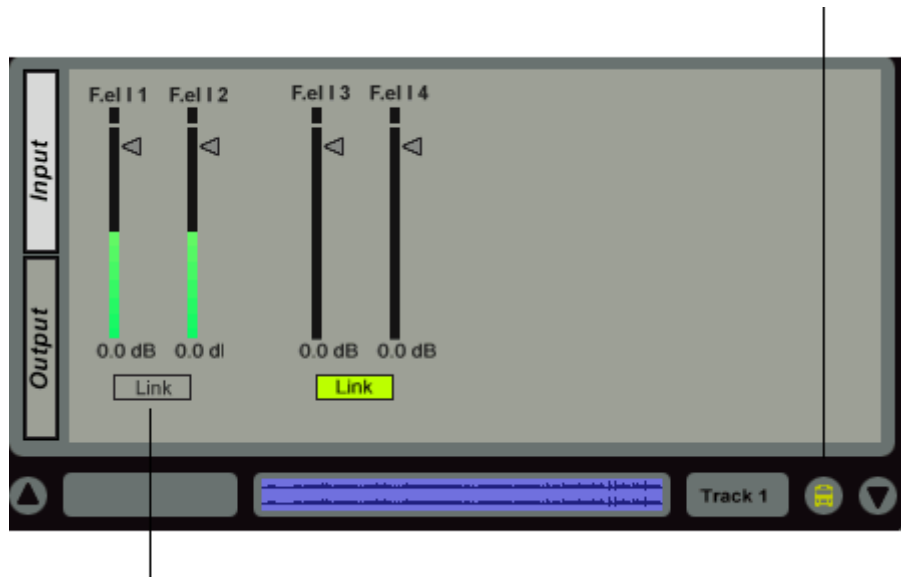
Then verify that you are monitoring the correct inputs on your audio interface. First click into the Input Channel menu (shown below) and double check that the input number is correct. Here is my setup monitoring "Input 1" on my FireWire 410 audio interface.



You also have the option of monitoring through the software itself, but this can create additional latencies. To do this go to the Audio tab in Live's preferences, and switch "Monitor through Live:" to Yes.

Busing Options

Generally, engineers prefer to track instruments like guitars, basses, vocals, and some synthesizers in mono. Instruments such as synthesizers, drum machines and samplers can be tracked effectively in stereo. To configure either of these options, click on the small school bus in the lower right-hand corner of your screen to take a peek at Live's bussing.

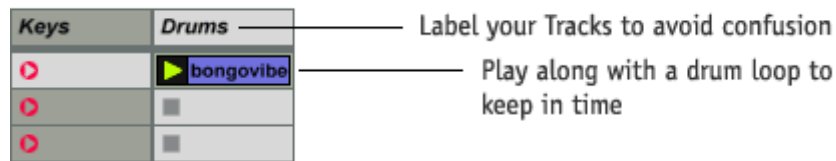


By deactivating the link button, you can record in mono. Otherwise Live defaults to record in stereo.

Time To Make Tracks

Now that you are ready to begin recording, you will want some kind of rhythmical reference to play along with. This may be part of a song that you are working on, a

drum loop that feels good, or Live's click track. In the following screenshot, I have added a drum loop on track 2 and labeled both tracks accordingly.



You will notice that each empty clip slot on the active recording track (Track 1) has a small red triangle-shaped record button. Go ahead and click on one to begin recording and commence playing your instrument. To stop the clip's recording, press the red square. You can also immediately play your new recording as a loop by launching the recorded clip. Or if you want another take, or to track a variation, simply repeat the clip recording process.

I recommend recording multiple takes, one after the next, and then listening to your performances later. Whether you are tracking a series of overdubs, or long improvisations in search of the "right" idea, Live serves as the ultimate sketchpad and studio partner.

Now that you have mastered the basics, here are a few power-user recording tips to consider.

1. Set Live's Global Quantization to Bar, 2 Bars, or more to ensure that Live's punch-in and -out times are always done evenly. This makes recording instant loops automatic and simple.



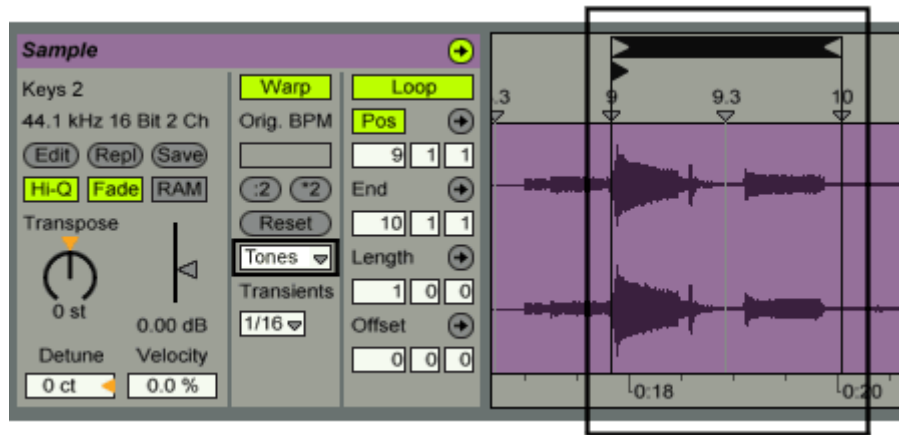
2. If you are not recording to a drum loop, then you should always use Live's metronome (circled below). This way you will ensure that Live is operating at the same tempo that you are.



3. You can adjust the metronome's subdivisions by changing your project's time signature. In the above screenshot, I have selected 4/8 so that the metronome will play an 1/8-note pulse. 4/4 will give you a standard 1/4-note pulse. Note: you will not hear the metronome until you press Play or launch a clip.
4. Should you record a loop or section that you like, go ahead and drag it into a fresh track as shown below. As this newly recorded loop plays, you can compose complementary parts or track other instruments.



If you are recording long tracks, rather than short loops, you may need to constrain your new recording's clip/loop region. In the following screenshot, I have selected the best four measures of my two-minute performance. I have also set the clip's Warp Mode to Tones, since this is a keyboard part and not a Beat or Texture.



Hint: I often record long improvisations and then make multiple copies of the single clip with different clip/loop region constraints. It's like chopping up a longer recording, but done non-destructively and in real-time! Even better, you can always go back and fix your performance's timing by using Live's Warp Markers.

Note: If your newly recorded clips sound delayed, or later than you remember playing them, refer to page 82 in the Live 3 manual outlining steps to "Adjusting the Overall Latency." These nine quick steps explain a one-time setup procedure that can make all the difference in your new recordings.

Hopefully you are now discovering that Live's Session View is the perfect place to track and audition new ideas for a given piece of music. Of course you can always record in Live's Arrangement window for a more traditional multi-track audio approach. But the Session View in Live offers an excellent window to get your palette of sounds together and to capture inspired recording without ever pausing your workflow. After all, the reason many artists use Live is to keep the music rolling, and minimize the setup time. Wait, did somebody say Reason? Next month, we will look at how ReWire-enabled applications (such as Propellerhead's Reason) can be recorded seamlessly inside Live. In the meantime, have fun making tracks in Live.