AKAI PROFESSIONAL MPC BEATS

Quickstart Guide

English

Manual Version 1.1

Introduction

About MPC Beats

MPC Beats is the new software from Akai Professional that brings many of the most essential beat-making tools of the MPC software to anyone, without the need for dedicated MPC hardware. MPC Beats supports the following:

- Up to 8 MIDI tracks
- Up to 2 stereo audio tracks
- 4 Send channels and 8 Submix channels
- AIR FX Bundle insert effects
- AIR Bassline, Electric and TubeSynth plugins

For the complete MPC experience with up to 128 MIDI and audio tracks, additional plugins and more, you can upgrade MPC Beats to the full MPC software by clicking the **menu icon** (≡) in the software, selecting **Help** and clicking **Upgrade To MPC**. You can also visit **akaipro.com** to learn more.

This guide will get you started with making music in MPC Beats. See the ***Basic Setup*** section for more information on installing and configuring MPC Beats. See the ***Operation*** section for a tutorial on getting started with your first project. For an in-depth look at all the features and functions of MPC Beats, open the MPC Software User Guide by clicking the **menu icon** (≡) in the software, selecting **Help** > **MPC Beats Help**, and then clicking **MPC Beats Software Manual**. The User Guide covers the full MPC software, so some features or functions mentioned may not be compatible with MPC Beats.

System Requirements & Product Support

For the latest information about this product (system requirements, compatibility information, etc.) and product registration, visit **akaipro.com**.

Basic Setup

Installation

1. Go to **akaipro.com** and register your product. If you don't have an Akai Professional account yet, you will be prompted to create one.
2. In your Akai Professional account, download the MPC Beats software package.
3. Open the file and double-click the installer application.
4. Follow the on-screen instructions to complete the installation.

Note: By default, the MPC Beats software will be installed in [your hard drive]**Program Files\Akai Pro\MPC Beats** (Windows®) or **Applications** (macOS®). You can also create a shortcut on your Desktop.

Getting Started

1. On your computer, open the **MPC Beats** software.
2. When the software is opened for the first time, the Startup Wizard will launch to guide you through the setup with three simple steps:

   i. First, connect your MIDI device to your computer using a USB cable.

   ii. Next, select the MIDI map for your controller. If you own an inMusic MIDI controller with a supported MIDI map, such as some Akai Professional, M-Audio or Alesis devices, MPC Beats will automatically select it. Maps for many more of the most popular MIDI controllers are also available to make integration quick and easy.

   Note: When using MPC Beats as a plugin, MIDI mappings must be selected manually.

   iii. Finally, choose whether you want a **Simple** or **Advanced** workspace. These will display different parts of the MPC Beats software more prominently to maximize workflow. This setting can be changed at any time by clicking the **menu icon** (≡), selecting **View** > **Workspace**, and clicking **Simple** or **Advanced**.

   When you are finished, click **Start Making Beats** to exit the Setup Wizard. The Startup Wizard can be accessed at any time by clicking the **menu icon** (≡), selecting **Help**, and clicking **Open Startup Wizard**.

3. On the next screen, you can select a preloaded Project Template or Demo project to begin with. Select a Template or Demo and click Load Project, or click Empty Project to open a blank template. You can also load recent projects from this window.
4. In the MPC Beats software, open the **Preferences**:

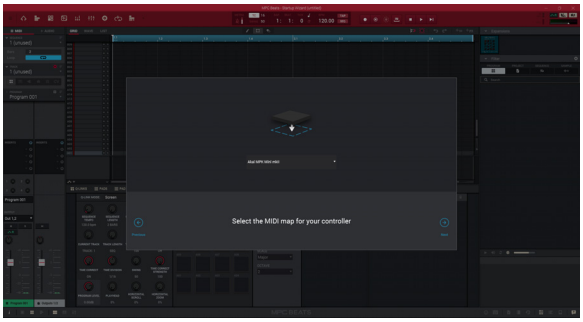
   Windows: Click the **menu icon** (≡), select **Edit**, and click **Preferences**.

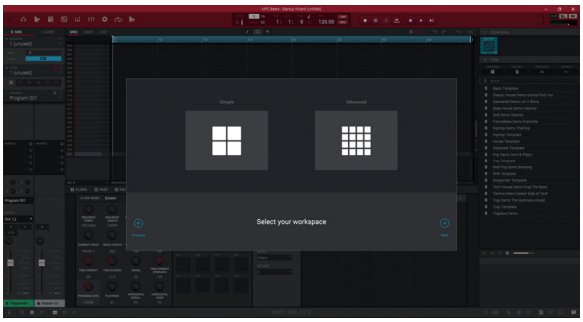
   macOS: Click the **MPC Beats** menu, and click **Preferences**.

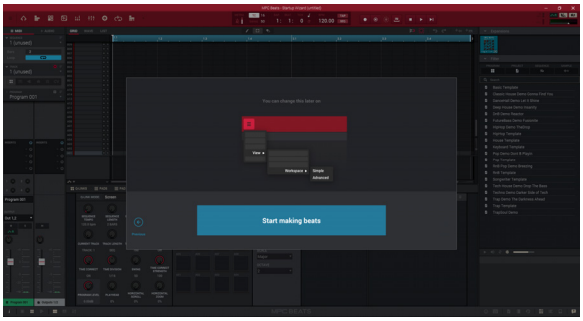
5. In the **Preferences** window, click the **Audio** tab and select the sound card you want to use. Click **OK** when you are done.

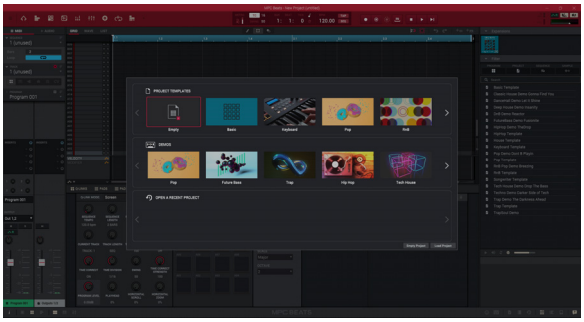
   Important: We recommend using an external audio interface when possible.

   Windows users only: If you need to use your computer's internal sound card, we recommend downloading the latest ASIO4ALL driver at **asio4all.com**.









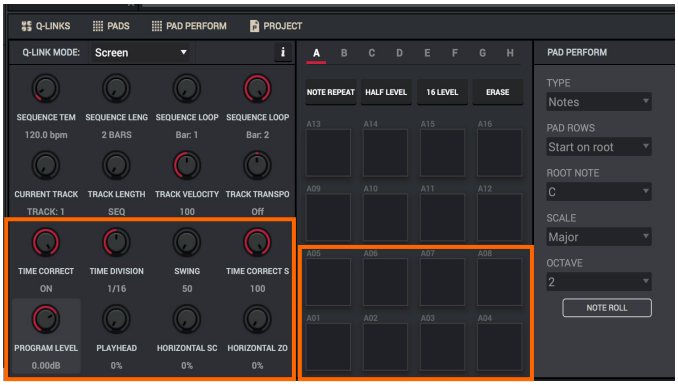
Operation

MIDI Control Maps

MPC Beats is preloaded with MIDI control maps for many of the most popular MIDI controllers available. During the Startup Wizard, you can browse the list of the supported MIDI controllers and select yours. This will allow you to easily control the MPC Beats interface and record using keys or pads.

For instance, the Akai Professional MPK mini mkII features 8 pads and 8 knobs, a common configuration with many MIDI controllers. When your MIDI controller is selected, the keys, knobs and pads will automatically be mapped to MPC Beats' keyboard, Q-Links, and pads, respectively.

The image, right, shows the Q-Links and pads in MPC Beats' Main Mode. The eight pads of the MPK mini mkII will control Pads A01–A08, and the eight knobs will control Q-Links 1–8. If your MIDI controller has multiple pad or knob banks, you can utilize those features to access additional pads and Q-Links in the software.

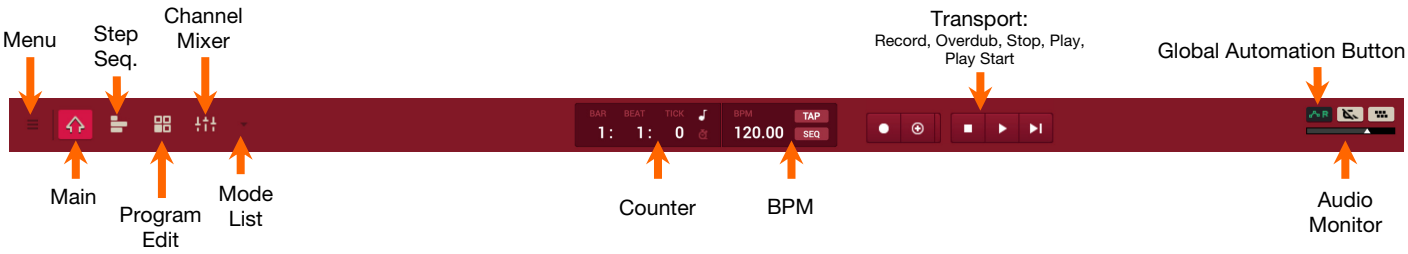


The MIDI controller's keys can also be used to trigger pads or notes in the piano roll, depending on the type of track selected.

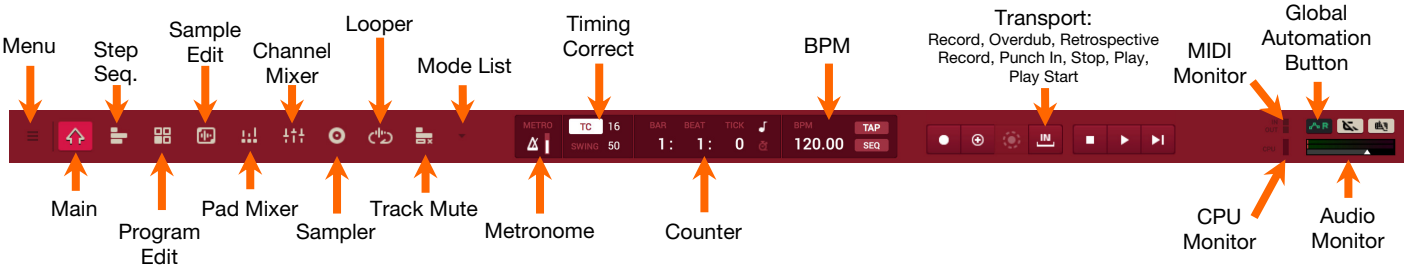
Simple vs. Advanced Workspace

During the Startup Wizard, you have the option of starting with a Simple or Advanced workspace. This will change what features are displayed prominently in the Toolbar of MPC Beats so you can tailor your workflow more effectively.

Toolbar – Simple



Toolbar – Advanced



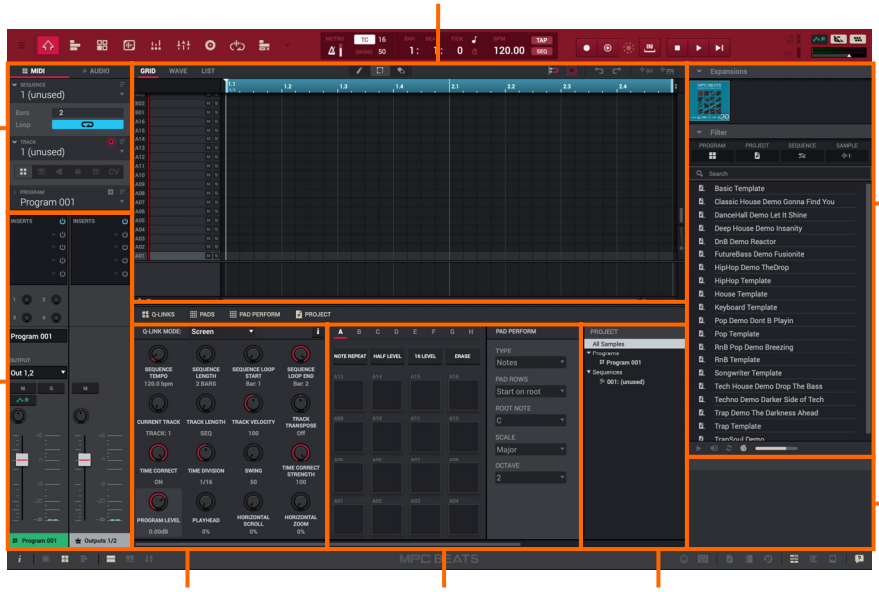
Main Window

Under the Toolbar is the main window of MPC Beats. The image below outlines some of the main features in MPC Beat's Main Mode, which can be accessed by pressing the **house icon** in the toolbar.

Use the *Grid* to insert or edit events. This will show the pads or piano roll on the left side, depending on the type of program. You can also use this area for *Waveform* and *List* views.

Use **Inspector** to quickly make changes to the Sequence, Track and Program.

Use the **Channel Strips** to make changes to the volume, panning, routing and inserts of programs, pads, tracks and master channel. Use the icons below to select which channel strips to view.
These are not shown in Simple view.



Use the *Browser* to load Expansions, samples, projects and more. You can also use this area to show Project Info, Project Notes, or Undo History by clicking the icons at the bottom of the window.

The *Quick Help* window provides tooltips when your cursor hovers over parts of the MPC Beats software. This can be enabled or disabled by clicking the question mark (**?**) icon below.

The *Q-Links* allow you to control various parameters. Use the Q-Link Mode to select the parameters you are controlling.

Use the *Pads* section to trigger notes, insert steps in the Step Sequencer, or manipulate samples in Sample Edit Mode.

The *Project* window provides an overview of your project, including the samples, programs and sequences contained within it.

Tutorial

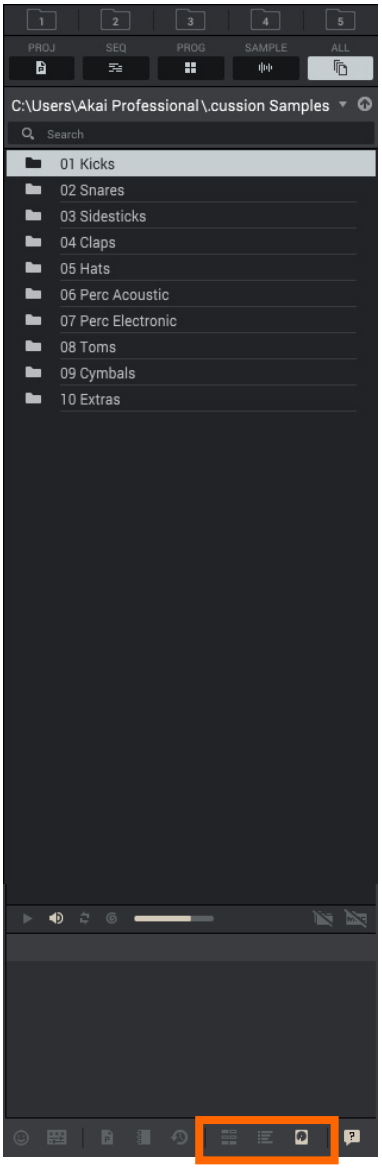
Now that you are more familiar with MPC Beats' graphical interface, the following pages will walk through creating a new song from a blank project to show you important aspects of the MPC Beats software. Let's get started!

Creating Tracks & Sequences

With MPC Beats, you can create up to 8 MIDI tracks and 2 stereo Audio tracks. Let's start by creating some tracks and recording a sequence.

Creating a Drum Track

First, let's make a simple drum kit. Use the Browser (see image, right) to locate some of your favorite drum samples, or start with some of the preloaded content from Akai Professional. You can double-click a sample from the Browser to load it into the project's sample pool, or simply click and drag the sample onto the pad where you would like to assign the sample. Start by loading at least a kick drum, snare drum and hi-hat.



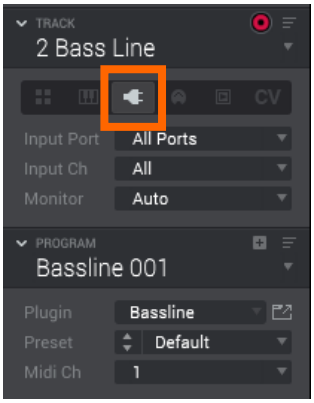
Now that your drum kit is set up, let's record a drum sequence:

1. In the MPC Beats software, click the **house icon** in the upper-left corner to make sure you're in Main Mode.
2. Use the **Tempo** field to set the speed that you want to record your sequence.
3. Click the **Rec** (●) button to activate Record Mode.
4. Click the **Play** (▶) button to start the actual recording. The pre-count will count one measure before the sequence starts to record. We recommend recording only one sound (pad) at a time, especially if you are not familiar with playing drums on the pads.
5. Play a simple kick/bass drum pattern using the pads or keys of your MIDI controller. The note events you just recorded will automatically be placed in the grid (in this case, on 16th notes). The initial measure length is two bars. After the two bars, the recording will enter Overdub Mode automatically; the sequence plays again from the beginning and keeps looping, allowing you to record further notes. Don't stop the recording!
6. Play the snare drum part, then a hi-hat part.
7. When you're done recording, click **Stop** (■). The Grid Editor in the software will show what you recorded.

If you start recording again on this sequence, keep in mind that the pads you play in your new recording will automatically replace existing notes. To prevent this, you can start again from Step 1 but press **Overdub** (⊕) instead of **Rec** (●). Overdub lets you record additional note events over the existing sequence.

The **Undo** button functions differently while in Record Mode. Normally, pressing **Undo** will undo just the last event. When there is an event to undo, the **Undo** button will be lit solid. While recording, the **Undo** button will flash. In this case, pressing **Undo** will erase **all** events from that recording (i.e., since **Play** (▶) or **Play Start** (▶|) was clicked).

Adding Tracks and Programs



Next, let's add a bass line to the sequence. This can be created in a number of ways: for example, you can use a Keygroup program to build a bass instrument from a sampled source sound, or use a plugin instrument such as the included AIR Bassline. In either case, you will need to create a new track and program to add to your project.

To select a new track, click the **Track** field in the Inspector, and click **Track 2** (**unused**) in the list of tracks that appears. Next, rename the track so we know what it is (e.g., **Bass Line**). Now let's add a plugin program to the track to record a bass line.

To create a new plugin program:

1. In the **Inspector** on the left edge of the window, click the **plug icon** below the **Track** field, which indicates a plugin program. A name for the new plugin program will appear in the **Program** field below.
2. Double-click the new program name, type a name, and press **Enter**.
3. Click the **Plugin** menu. In the list that appears, click **Bassline** under **MPC Plugins**, and then click **Select** to add it to the track.
4. Click the **Preset** menu to select a preset from the plugin.

Once you've found a sound you like, let's record that bass line. Prepare your recording as described earlier. If you are using a MIDI controller with keys, try playing along with your drum track to record your bass line. You can always edit your recording, which will be described in the next section.

So far, we've created a simple drum sequence and a bass line to go with it.

Recording an Audio Track

Finally, since we've already created some MIDI tracks, let's record some actual audio for our next track:

1. Click the **house icon** in the toolbar to enter Main Mode.
2. Click the **Audio** tab at the top of the Inspector. **Audio 001** will appear in the **Track** field.
3. Connect a microphone, guitar, synthesizer or other audio source to your external audio interface.
4. In the audio track channel strip:
    i. Click the input menu (**Input** __) above, and select **Mono** > **Input 1** or **Stereo** > **Input 1,2** (depending on your audio source) as the input source.
    ii. If the output menu (**Out** __) is not set to **Out 1,2**, click it and select **Output** > **Out 1,2** as the output.
    iii. Click the **Monitor** (**speaker**) button to cycle through its three states until it reads **Auto** (you will hear incoming audio while the track is record-enabled only).
5. Set the input level on your external audio interface while playing your audio source. You should see the level in the meter. Make sure it does not exceed the maximum level (the meter should not be "peaking" constantly).
6. In the audio track channel strip, click the **Record Arm** (⊙) button next to the **pan knob** to record-enable the track.
7. In the toolbar at the top of the window, click **Rec** (●) or **Overdub** (⊕) to record-arm it.
8. **To start recording**, click the **Play** (▶) or **Play Start** (▶|) button in the toolbar—then play your audio source! You should hear your existing sequence playing in the background.

    To stop recording, click the **Stop** (■) button in the toolbar.

Editing & Mixing

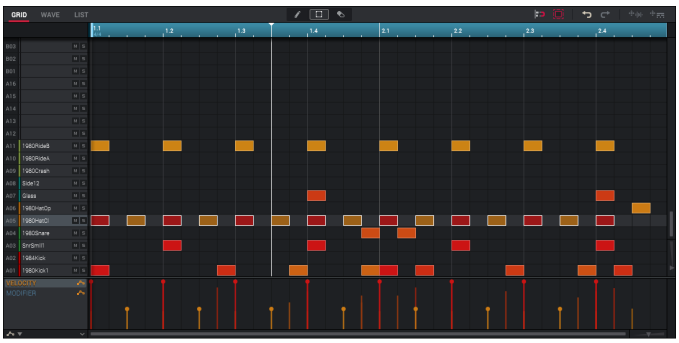
When you have completed recording, you may want to edit the note events or audio you have added to the sequence.

Editing

MIDI events can be edited using the Grid Editor in Main Mode. The Grid Editor has three different appearances: one for drum and clip programs; one for keygroup, plugin, MIDI, and CV programs; and one for audio tracks.

To enter the Grid Editor, click **Grid** under the mode icons in the upper-left corner of the window.

When the **MIDI** tab in the **Inspector** is selected, the Grid Editor lets you view and edit the note events of each MIDI track of a sequence and their velocities.

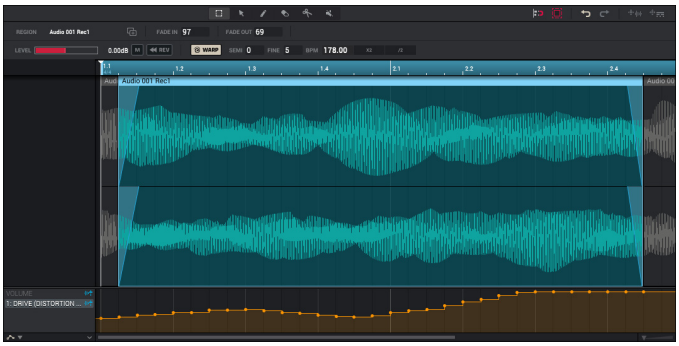


For drum programs, the left column shows you all available pads in a vertical view with their corresponding data.

For keygroup, plugin, MIDI, and CV programs, the left column shows a vertical “piano roll” keyboard.

Use the **pencil**, **marquee** and **eraser** tools to insert, select and delete notes, respectively.

When the **Audio** tab in the **Inspector** is selected, the Grid Editor lets you view and edit the audio waveform of each audio track of a sequence.



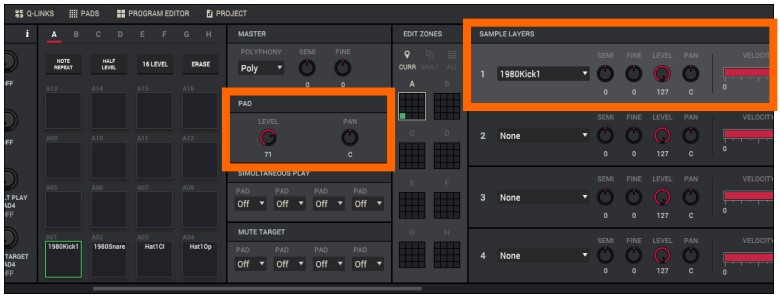
Use the **marquee**, **arrow**, **pencil**, **eraser**, **scissors** and **mute** tools to edit the audio waveform.

You can also use the additional tools below these icons to edit the waveform level, tuning, and BPM, as well as apply fades and warp the audio waveform.

MPC Beats' Program Edit Mode contains all parameters for editing your programs. You can also use this to make sure your samples are properly tuned and have good levels, edit keygroups, apply effects or adjust plugin presets.

To open Program Edit Mode, click the **four-pads icon** in the toolbar. The upper half of the window can display the Grid Editor, Wave Editor, or List Editor. The lower half of the window can display the **Q-Links** panel, **Pads** panel, **Program Editor** panel, and **Project** panel. Click the corresponding selector to show or hide each one.

For our project, let's start by selecting the **Drum** program and opening Program Edit Mode as described above. Adjust the level of each pad to suit your taste. We recommend spreading the panning of the bright sounds (e.g., cymbals, snare drum) a little. Additionally, you can tune the bass drum sound—in the **Sample Layers** section, adjust the **Semi** and **Fine** knobs next to the sample name.



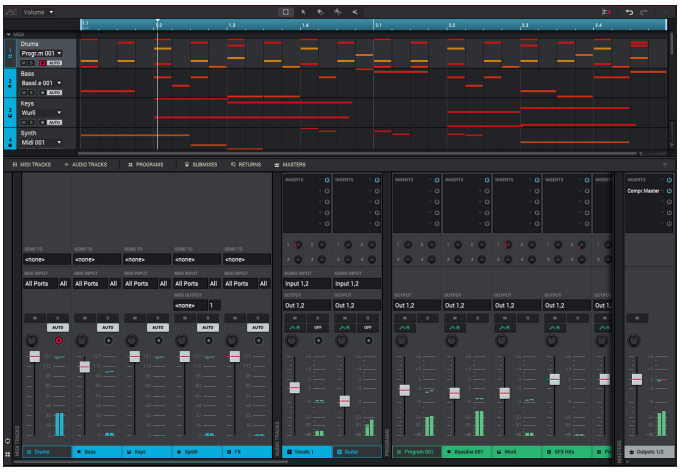
Next, select your plugin track and use Program Edit Mode to adjust some of the **Bassline** plugin parameters.

Program Edit Mode is not used for Audio tracks.

Mixing

In addition to the Channel Strips in Main Mode, you can use other modes such as Channel Mixer and Pad Mixer to mix your pads, programs and tracks.

To open the Channel Mixer, click the **sliders icon** in the toolbar.



The **Channel Mixer** displays channel strips for all MIDI tracks, Audio tracks, Programs, Submixes, Returns and Master tracks and works like an audio mixer for the currently selected sequence. From here, you can set levels, stereo panning, routing, effects, and other settings for your tracks, programs, returns, submixes, and masters. The upper half of this window displays the Track View, an overview of the tracks and programs of each sequence. You can use this to edit multiple tracks at once in the current sequence.

Select a sequence to view its channel strips. There will be no program strips shown for MIDI programs or CV programs, though channel strips will be shown for any MIDI tracks that use those programs.

To open the Pad Mixer, click the **pad-and-sliders icon** in the toolbar (if shown), or click the **down arrow** (▼) next to the other mode icons in the toolbar, and click **Pad Mixer**.

The **Pad Mixer** works like an audio mixer with various settings for each pad. From here, you can set a program's levels, stereo panning, routing, and effects. The upper-half of the window will display the Grid Editor, Wave Editor, or List Editor.

Select a track to view the channel strips for its program and pads. When a MIDI track is selected, the **pad channel strips** or **keygroup channel strips** for that program are grouped together on the left. The corresponding **program channel strip** will appear on the right. (When an audio track or a track using a plugin program is selected, there will be no pad channel strips. When a track using a MIDI program or CV program is selected, there will be no pad channel strips or program strips.)

Saving & Exporting

As you work on your project, it is important to Save your work.

To save your project, click the **menu icon** (≡), click **File**, and click **Save Project**. In the Save window, you can select the location where you would like to save your project.

You can keep creating sequences using the methods above, and then use MPC Beats' **Song Mode** to arrange those sequences into a song.

To enter Song Mode, make sure playback is stopped, click the **down arrow** (▼) next to the other mode icons in the toolbar, and click **Song**.

In Song Mode, each of the sequences you've created in this project assigned to a pad in the **Pads** panel. The **Sequence List** panel is to the left of the pads, showing the song's structure. The upper half of the window will show "blocks" representing each sequence of the song's structure.

As a song plays, it moves through each step shown in the **Sequence List** panel. Each step contains a sequence you assign in its **Sequence** menu. Each step can be repeated, determined by the value in the **Rpts** column (a value of **1** means the sequence will play through only once). The **Bars** column on the right indicates the length of that sequence.

Each step can be set to play its sequence at an independent tempo, determined by the value in the **BPM** column.

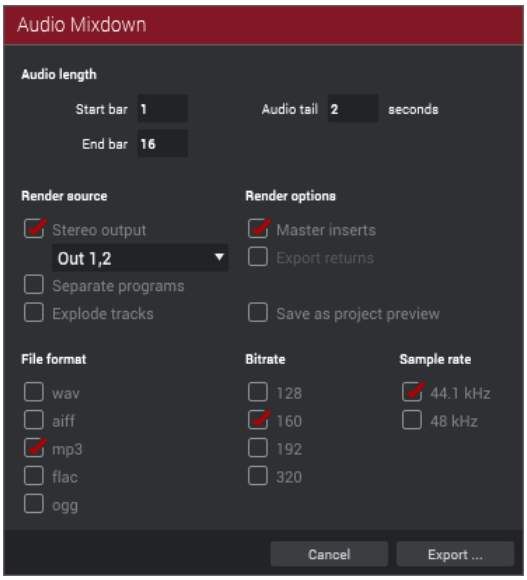
Important: Each sequence has its own tempo, while the project itself may use a different master tempo. The BPM value for each sequence may be different from the master tempo. As long as playback is set to follow the master tempo, each sequence's individual tempo will be ignored. By default, each project is set to use the sequence tempo. We recommend clicking the **Seq**/**Mst** button at the top of the window (so the button displays **Mst**) and entering a master tempo to ensure all sequences use the same tempo.

Once you are happy with your results, you can export the entire song to share with the world.

To export a song:

1. Click the **menu icon** (≡), and go to **File** > **Export** and click **As Audio Mixdown**.
2. In the **Audio Mixdown** screen that appears, do the following:
   - Make sure the **Start bar** field is set to **1**, and set the **End bar** field to the last bar of your song.
   - Click and drag the **Audio tail** field to set it to **2** seconds.
   - As you'll likely share the song online, click the **mp3** file format option under **File format**.
3. Click **Export** and choose where you want to save the song.

   To name the song, click the **File** field, type a name, and then click **Save** or press **Enter** to start exporting.



Next Steps

In addition to the modes and tools mentioned in this Quickstart Guide, MPC Beats software offers many other features for even more creative freedom. For example:

- Use the **Sampler** and **Looper** to record audio into your project.
- Use **Sample Edit Mode** to manipulate, chop and assign recorded samples in your project.
- Use the **Step Sequencer** to program complex patterns.
- Use the **Edit** menus to perform advanced editing functions on your sequences, tracks and programs.

For an in-depth look at all the features and functions of MPC Beats, open the MPC Software **User Guide** by clicking the **menu icon** (≡) in the software, selecting **Help** > **MPC Beats Help**, and then clicking **MPC Beats Software Manual**. The User Guide covers the full MPC software, so some features or functions mentioned may not be compatible with MPC Beats.

For additional support, visit **akaipro.com/support**.

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