FUNDAMENTALS GUIDE

Welcome to deadmau5's Electronic Music Production MasterClass. Before you start, we want to cover a few basics. This is a technical class. You'll spend most of your time alongside deadmau5 in his home studio learning the professional techniques he uses himself. To get the most out of these lessons, you should be familiar with the basics of recording and processing audio on your computer. If you already have those skills and can produce tracks of your own, you should be ready to go. If you feel like you need to get up to speed or brush up on some core concepts, this instructional tutorial will get you started.

LISTEN TO THE MUSIC

In the class, deadmau5 will be using his own tracks as examples and teaching tools. Get to know his sound and think about how his tracks are constructed. You can find some of the songs he'll focus on in your class here:

‣ *Snowcone*

‣ *Imaginary Friends*

‣ *My Pet Coelacanth*

‣ *Phantoms Can't Hang*

‣ You can also check out some of the other electronic artists Joel discusses:

  • Nine Inch Nails

  • Kraftwerk

  • Skrillex

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LEARN THE BASIC TERMS

The world of music production speaks its own special, technical language. Most of the terms you'll need to know will be covered in your workbook. If you're ever confused, ask your fellow classmates. They'll be a great resource throughout the class. There's also information online, like this glossary. In the meantime, here are some basics to get started:

‣ *DAW* (Digital Audio Workstation): This is the software you use to record and manipulate audio on your computer. For this class, Joel will be using Ableton Live. Cubase, Logic and GarageBand are other examples of DAWs.

‣ *MIDI* (Musical Instrument Digital Interface): This is the language that computers use to talk to electronic instruments and vice versa. Joel uses MIDI to send data from his DAW to tell his outboard synthesizers what notes to play.

‣ *Synthesizer.* Any instrument that makes sound electronically is a synthesizer, from your little sister's toy Casio to a wall-sized Moog Modular system full of knobs and patch cables.

‣ *VST* (Virtual Studio Technology): Also called "plug-ins," these are pieces of software that integrate with your DAW and either create sounds (VST instruments) or process sounds (VST effects). You can think of them as virtual equivalents of the keyboards, FX pedals and rack units in a recording studio.

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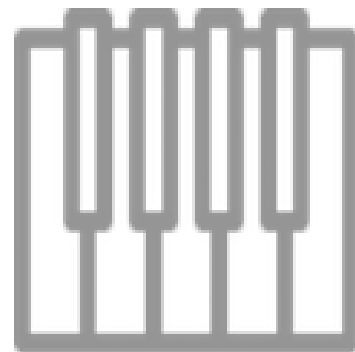
GET THE EQUIPMENT

To start putting deadmau5's lessons to work and producing your own tracks, you'll need some equipment of your own. The good news is, everything Joel's teaching can be done on a home computer, and all the necessary software is available for download in free trial versions. No matter what DAW you use, there's plenty of first-time-user tutorials available online, search YouTube and find one that works you.

▸ We'd recommend downloading the demo version of the DAW Joel uses in the class, *Ableton Live,* here, and working your way through their tutorial videos, here.

▸ You can also familiarize yourself with deadmau5's favorite VST synth, *Serum.* It's available for free trial here, and you can watch their tutorial videos here.

▸ For those of you who want to build out your home studio with more recording equipment -- whether it's an audio interface, monitor speakers or synths -- you might want to wait for the class to start. Joel has good advice for you about what you need and where to find it.

MASTER THE BASICS

Once you're feeling pretty comfortable in the world of digital audio, here's an exercise you can try to make sure you're ready for the class:

▸ Start a new project in your DAW and set your track's tempo to 130 BPM, a good tempo for EDM.

▸ Bring in an audio sample of a kick drum and set up a one measure loop, with the kick drum playing on every quarter note.

▸ Set up a VST synth you like, and put a melody over your kick drum pulse, either by playing in MIDI notes or drawing them in the piano roll.

▸ Adjust the levels of your two tracks, so you can hear both the kick drum and the melody line clearly.

▸ Add an effect to one of your tracks, like a reverb on the kick drum, and adjust the effect until you like the way it sounds.

▸ Add processing to your track's master channel. Try adding a limiter and adjusting its parameters to see what kinds of effects it can have on the overall sound.

▸ Now name your track, save it, and export it as an audio file.

If this all seems easy, we think you'll get the most out of deadmau5's MasterClass. If any of it's still confusing, don't worry. Try watching the tutorial videos again, or bringing your questions and concerns to your fellow classmates.