

# PPTC Manual

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## Introduction

PPTC (Producing & Performance ToolChain) by pp-labs is designed to capture your creativity in Ableton Live and bring some of those funky moments of producing & performing music under effortless control. Like one of those moments when you run around in your studio and tweak a sound on some synth and suddenly everything feels in place or when you progress a melody part to another and you feel the song developing in the right way. PPTC lets you capture these moments for instant recall later, by turning your creativity into presets – enhancing your personal workflow, unburdened from its underlying complexities.

PPTC captures your workflow, this means it allows you to recall the moments you saved earlier, rather than trying to recreate them. The funky aspect here is by organizing creativity into presets – you don't lose creative possibilities but instead these are increased because you can combine, choose or judge on a much higher level than without the abstraction layer of a preset.

As the PPTC workflow is not bound to a particular instrument, effect or live session layout, it can be applied in every stage of production from sound design onto the final mastering.

## The creative power of the Preset Concept

The word “preset” is usually associated with a setting of all parameters of a sound device. We extend the meaning of the word “preset”, by calling a momentary snapshot of the sounds, clips, etc. “preset”, anything you wish to recall at a later point in time. What a preset does is simplifying a complex structure of settings into one simple value that can hold much more musical information or emotion than one of the parameters of a sound device alone.

The Preset Concept enables thinking and working in a controlled yet intuitive way on all levels of a Live set, from i.e. the detailed work on the layers of a bass sound to the progression of the arrangement, which can be combined and exchanged fluidly to simplify finding inspiring settings for complex sets of parameters in the bigger context of the whole Live set.

The Preset Concept streamlines producer workflows, so you don’t have to stop over and over each time you want to capture, recall, or change a sound. No need to assign titles, save locations – and then trying to remember the last parameter you were modulating – repeating this process every time you generate a good sound you’d like to keep. And even when you do save a typical preset, if you open it back up and change a single parameter – it has to be saved with a new name. It gets tedious and creativity suffers. PPTC is a simple solution to these fundamental workflow challenges – whilst concurrently opening up your creations to further modulation – a repository for your creativity.

PPTC comes with a number of devices, all following the Preset Concept. They share a consistent UI, showing 16 user-definable presets. Selecting a numbered button recalls a previously saved state of the Live set, called “preset” through this document. The devices can be operated by the mouse, but will unfold their full effect when used from a grid controller.



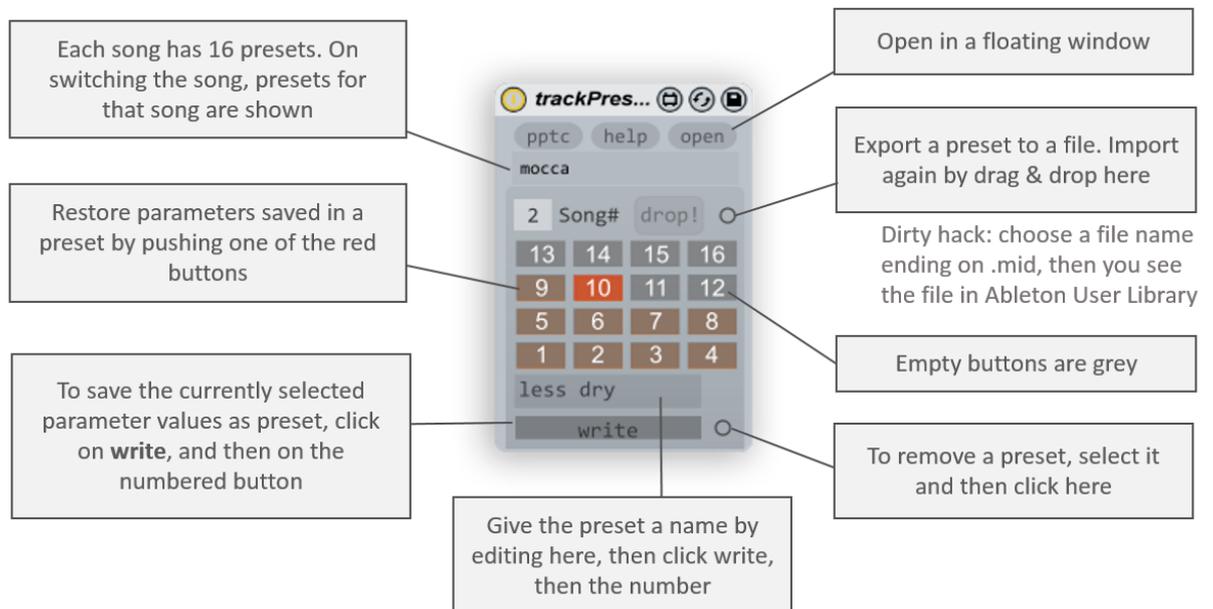
## PPTC Devices

This section contains details about PPTC devices supporting the preset concept. The devices can all be used on their own, together with a grid controller or in combination. All devices can be used in context with the help of the [songSwitch](#) device - the concept of “songs” is explained in the [songSwitch](#) section.

### trackPresets

trackPresets saves all MIDI mappable parameters of the devices on the track where it is located. trackPresets works on MIDI and AUDIO tracks.

Parameters of instruments, audio effects and configured VST parameters are included. VST parameters have to be configured first. You can have multiple instances of trackPresets in the live set, for instance one on each track.



trackPresets works likewise on a rack chain, i.e. it can control the parameters of all devices on that chain. The coverage of a trackPresets device ends with the track or chain, it will not “see” devices located on a sub chain. If you wish to control multiple tracks or chains at once, check out the [metaPresets](#) device.

The presets are automatically saved together with the Live set. Additionally, it is possible to export them to a file, in order to import the presets to a different Live set. To do so, both Live sets need to have the same devices on track, and the names of the devices need to be identical. To import into the second Live set, drag the file e.g. from Explorer, on the *drop!* button of the trackPresets device.

### Workflow Tips

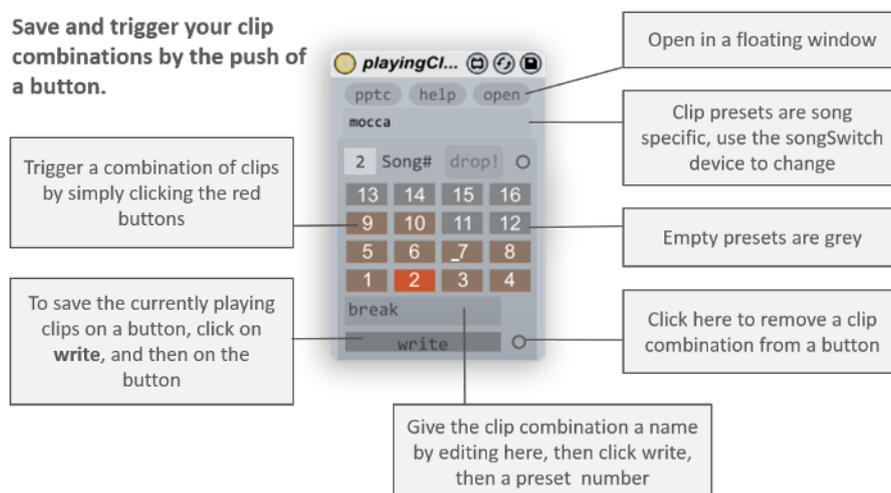
- If you wish to add a new device to a preset - recall the preset, and then overwrite it again. The parameters of the new device will be included.

- If you need more than 16 presets - think about structuring your Live set into songs. trackPresets supports 16 presets per song, and up to 98 songs are possible. See [songSwitch](#).

## playingClips

The playingClips device lets you save and recall multiple clips in your Live set at any moment in time. To simplify things, we will call a saved clip combination also “preset”. If you write a preset, playingClips remembers the combination of currently playing clips on all tracks. If Live’s transport is not running, it takes all clips where the clip launch button is highlighted in green.

On recalling such a preset, playingClips triggers Ableton Live to launch the saved clip combination, and additionally stops all clips on other tracks. The timing of stopping resp. starting the clips is controlled by Live’s clip trigger quantization setting.



Recalling a playingClips preset is quite similar to Ableton Live launching of a scene. However, it doesn’t require you to organize the clips in the same row of the session view. Moreover, you can move around the clips to different places in the session view, playingClips will still find them if they are part of a preset.

playingClips can be dropped on any MIDI track of the Live set. It deals always with all tracks of the set, and therefore it doesn’t matter where it is located.

## Workflow Tips

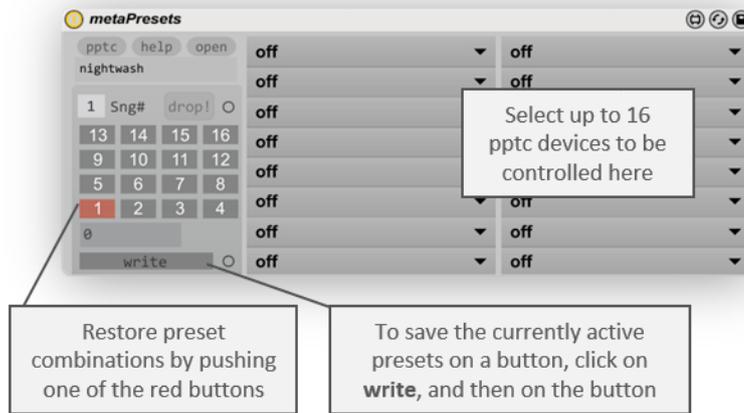
- If you need more than 16 playingClips presets – you can add a second device to the set.
- If your set is complex, it is good practice to avoid duplicating clips. playingClips allows you to re-use clips, independent on the scene where they are located on. This helps to slim down large sets, and, it allows you to make changes to a clip, without the need to search for the duplicates in need to keep them identical.

## metaPresets

Use the metaPresets Device to combine and control the presets of other PPTC devices. It's one level up in abstraction, and therefore gives you innumerable possibilities of what you can trigger with just a single button.

### metaPresets is a remote control of pptc devices

to use metaPresets, IpRemote needs to be in the same set



The metaPresets device can be placed on any track in the Live set. PPTC package includes variants for MIDI and audio tracks. On writing a preset, the metaPresets device remembers which presets of the managed PPTC devices are currently active. On recalling, metaPresets activates those preset combination again.

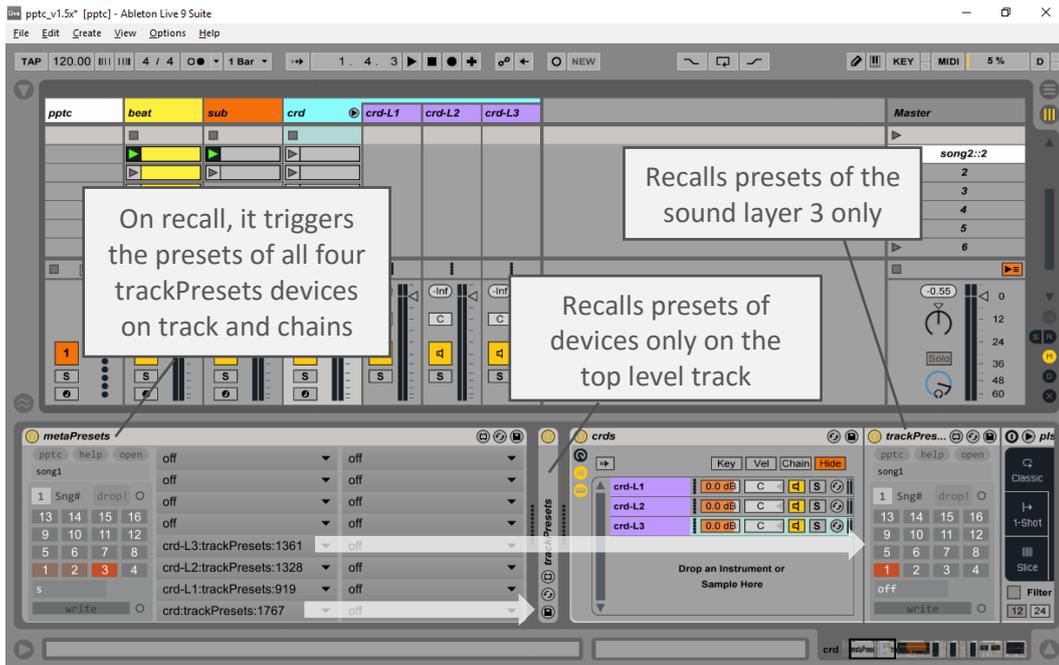
As the metaPresets device is able to control other metaPresets, nesting is possible, which means you can let a metaPresets device control other metaPresets, and so on.

### Workflow Tips

- For designing sounds with multiple layers – use metaPresets to recall track presets of multiple sound layers at the same time. You can arrange the song, and the underlying layers remain configurable. See the [Example](#) below.
- If you get carried away during performance by changing sound parameters, you can revert all sounds to a defined state with a single button – use metaPresets to trigger a preset on multiple PPTC devices at the same time.

### Example Sound Layers

The demo set in the PPTC package comes with an example where metaPreset is used to control sound layers. Check out the chord track (crd), it has a rack with three chains or layers, called crd-L1 and so on. There is a [trackPresets](#) device on each layer, controlling the sounds of the layer only.



## songSwitch

As a Live set grows larger and gets more and more clips, it is quite naturally to structure it in Lives session view. There will a number of scenes for chorus, verse, break, etc. Those adjacent scenes in the session view which musically belong together, this is what we call a “song”. Moreover, a “song” can have its own set of sounds, instruments, layers and so on. If a song gets activated with PPTC, the sound presets, and clip combinations for this song are loaded, and ready for use.

PPTC identifies a song by the scene names on the master track. If the name ends with :: and a number, the scene marks a new song. Here, song number 2 is called *mocca*. The song section in the session view ends where the next song starts.



The demo set included in the PPTC package comes with two songs. To get a feeling how it works, try switching between them and check out how the presets change.

If you switch a song with PPTC, Lives session view jumps to the right section where the clips are located. More importantly, it switches all PPTC devices to load the presets for that song, i.e., you get the 16 presets belonging to that song ready for use. A song switch will not trigger any presets, so it is up to you to make the transition into the new song.

You can think of a song switch being equivalent to switching to another “combi” on a classic workstation.

**Switches between songs, and activates saved track and clip presets.**

The screenshot shows the songSwitch interface with the following callout boxes:

- Open in a floating window**: Points to the top right corner of the device.
- To save a song on a button, first select it here ...**: Points to the dropdown menu showing "mocca 2".
- ... then click on **write**, and finally on the button with the number**: Points to the "write" button and the number "2" on the keypad.
- Switch to a saved song by pushing the red button. The presets can be used as a playlist.**: Points to the red button "1" on the keypad.
- No song is saved here, yet**: Points to the "write" button.
- Gather all songs from the set. A song is simply a number of scenes. To mark the begin of a song, change the name of the master track scene. E.g. if you want the song **moCCA** as second, the master track name must be **moCCA::2****: Points to the "get songs" button.

songSwitch can be dropped on any MIDI track of the Live set, it doesn't matter where it is located.

The PPTC devices [trackPresets](#), playingClips, and metaPresets come with a handy concept that simplifies copying presets between two different songs. If you change the local song number, PPTC loads the 16 presets defined for that song, just for this device. That way you can quickly recall the presets, switch back to the globally selected song, and save the preset there.

The screenshot shows the songSwitch interface with the following callout boxes:

- Local song number**: Points to the "1" button on the keypad.
- Globally selected song**: Points to the "song1" label at the top of the device.

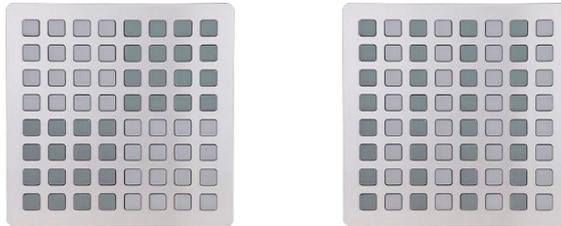
### Workflow Tips

- Make yourself a playlist, by putting the preset numbers of the songSwitch device into the right order, guiding you on stage to know what comes next.
- With the help of songSwitch, you can put a whole album into one Live set. This allows you to re-use your typical sound elements for all songs of that album, without duplicating them. And it often generates inspiring results if you combine, say, the clips of one song with the track presets of another one of your songs.

## Working with Grid Controllers

While producing and performing, grid controllers like Launchpad or Push are a logical control surface to further enhance your workflow.

PPTC adds custom modes for supported control surfaces. Custom modes layout device presets in either a 4x4, or a columnar layout.



Device layout in 4x4 quadrants, vs. columns

With the *IpRemote* device coming with PPTC, you choose where the devices shall be located on your controller, and how many presets of the device are shown, either 8 or 16. Our intention is, that you take the grid, and create your own customized instrument.

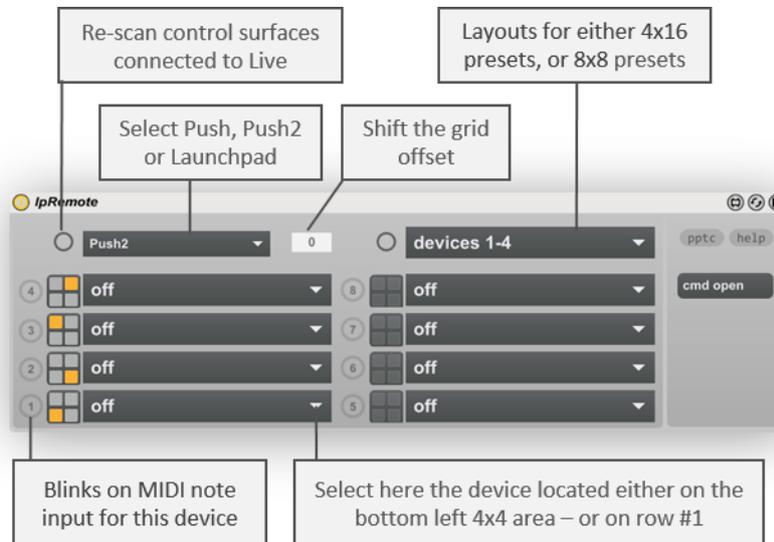
PPTC v1.5 supports the following control surfaces:

- Ableton Push, and Push 2
- Novation Launchpad, Mini, and S

Within limitations, generic MIDI controllers are also supported, see section *Generic MIDI Controllers*.

## IpRemote

To access the PPTC devices from a supported control surface (or from a generic MIDI controller) you need to add the IpRemote device to the Live set. It's best to put it on a separate MIDI track like shown in the demo set.



## Button Assignments

How to interact with each of the supported control surfaces

	Launchpad	Push and Push 2
Enter PPTC mode	User 2 Button	Press Session button while in session mode
Leave PPTC mode	By entering Session, User 1 or Mixer mode	Session button
Save preset	Long press on button	Long press on pad
Delete preset	Hold the Arm button, then press the on the lit button	Hold the Delete button, then press the on the lit pad

Push2 is a bit slow on initialization. Please wait a few seconds before entering PPTC mode.

## Generic MIDI Controllers (MIDI Keyboards)

To use PPTC with a MIDI keyboard, or another generic MIDI controller, you first need to go to Ableton Lives preferences and set the MIDI input for this controller to "Track".



Next, place IpRemote on a MIDI track, select the controller in the “MIDI From” menu and set monitoring to “IN”.



IpRemote maps the lowest eight octaves of MIDI notes to the devices selected in IpRemote, therefore you can trigger the first 12 presets of the devices by using that method.

As soon as MIDI notes arrive at IpRemotes input, you see yellow lights indicating which device you are triggering.

## Workflow Tips & Ideas how to get the most (fun & productivity) out of the PPTC devices

### Arranging clips into a song

A preset of a playingClips is like a scene on steroids. Clips can reside anywhere in the live set and be moved to another Clipslot and the preset will still work. Great for distilling parts of a track from a not-yet-organized pile of clips.

### Arranging clips, without ever touching the mouse or looking at your screen

When you have two grid controllers, use one of them in standard session mode to display the clips in your set. Use the second controller in PPTC mode with playingClips. Now start/stop the clips on the controller in standard mode. Save playingClips presets through a longpress on the 2<sup>nd</sup> controller. Lets you build a song with you eyes closed.

### Creating & playing new musical variations

trackPresets is a natural partner to Ableton Live's MIDI FX. Once you have some basic clips playing, set up a MIDI effect rack with trackPresets and the arpeggiator, velocity & scale FX. Playing around with these three should quickly give interesting results. When you have saved some variations with the help of trackPresets, you can "perform your settings". And while doing that maybe record the result to a new MIDI track.

### Control which devices get included in a preset

You can control which effects on a track or chain get included in a preset by putting them in an effect rack, together with the trackPresets device (see the image in section [Example Sound Layers](#)).

Putting effects in a rack isolates them from a trackPresets device existing outside the rack, only the racks' macros will be included in the Preset.

### Laying out your dream sampler structure

(Aka building a performable beatmachine, create complex layered sounds, mimic a big organ, chop up & get creative with any sample, etc.)

The main idea is to use simpler or sampler as what would have been called "a voice" in a hardware sampler or sound module and control that voice with trackPresets. Then use metaPresets to control the settings of the different voices you set up. This often has been called "Multi" or "Combination" or "Program" on samplers, workstations and sound modules.

If you want to go for an eight voice sampler (aka a drum machine) create an instrument/drum rack with eight chains, each containing a simpler/sampler and

whatever FX you want to use, maybe an EQ and a Compressor are a good start. Put a trackPresets device into every chain, so you can have i.e. different kick drums in the same chain by using trackPresets to save different settings of the devices in this chain. Mind you with sampler you can also have the sample selector included in the preset, so you if you load up sampler with all your kick drums and make use of the sample selector setting, it may well have been the last time you need to load a kick drum sample into Ableton Live.

When layering a bass sound you can use an instrument rack with maybe two chains/ trackPresets, a sampler with a sine in the 1st chain and something less subby in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chain. When you get the layers right, you can add a metaPresets device outside the instrument rack, so you can change/recall the whole bass sound with one button.

When sample mangling or chopping up beats in your customized and playable sampler structure, this workflow will easily yield results that would have been impossible to imagine beforehand and yet can be controlled and performed in a musical way.

### Recalling all presets at once

Setting up a metaPresets device and selecting all the different preset devices in your set (that may include other metaPresets devices) and mapping that to your controller, you can recall the settings for all your devices at once. Handy in combination with the songSwitch. Check the metaPresets device on the “pptc” track in the demoeset.

### trackPresets and controllers with parameter feedback

when you have parameters of devices presetted with trackPresets mapped to another midi controller with parameter feedback (endless controllers, that have a value display) - like the Behringer BCR2000 - via the standard Live midi mapping function, you should see the parameters update on your controller as you change presets. Think of it like presets for your control surface. Lets you “play” your controller in new and powerful ways.

### Transforming presets into automation data from your grid controller

When you enable automation recording for all tracks and record your performance into Ableton Live’s arrangement view, every parameter that gets changed through trackPresets will be recorded as automation. Editing the recorded automation on the transitions between the presets can make for some nice buildups.

### Streamline your work with Live

As PPTC enables you to utilize the same set of instruments and effects in a track for totally different sounds, you can build your own personal workstation or groovebox.

When you have a track finished, add the songSwitch device and make some new scenes below those already existing. Define the songs by naming scenes (see

[songSwitch](#)) and then 'reuse' the existing tracks / instruments / FX by selecting the new song you created in song switch and then varying the settings and creating new presets 'belonging' to the new song.

You will be quick in advancing the new track as you already know the Live set. At some point it may be interesting to change to the sounds of the older song with the push of two buttons: 1<sup>st</sup> select another song, then choose a preset. It comes in handy if you have the songSwitch presets mapped to a remote.

Over time you may condense the basics of what you do until you get a real good set of tracks / instruments / FX / songs that are instantly performable from your grid controller, all in one Live set. Think of it as your personal Production & Performance Instrument.

### Effectively tune and improve your mixes

Set up your mixing effects (opposed to the creative effects) in a separate effects rack on your tracks. A mixing effect I would consider effects that don't do anything too musical. A short reverb ambience I would consider a mixing effect. A large washy reverb maybe is a musical effect in a breakdown. Anyway. Mix your song using the mixing effects, save a preset and give it a name so you can remember where this mix came from, i.e. 'studio-PA'. Now put on your headphones, and check the mix. Adjust whatever the headphone mix requires. Now put the headphones aside, you can compare the 'headphone' mix to the 'studio-PA' mix on the studio PA by changing the presets you stored into trackPresets. Using this technique to go back and forth between different monitoring situations and not changing but saving and comparing the things required for the different systems and environments will, with some experience, result in much better mixes. Its kind of frightening how different things can turn out when you mix on a PA or in your car. The working with presets will let you find the best settings on all systems much faster. To take things a little further, this concepts can also help a lot in designing critical sounds like a subbass, that 'works' everywhere.

### Mastering Management

You can set up your mastering chain with maybe an EQ, compressor and limiter. Then add a trackPresets device to save the settings of these devices. Now you can use the presets to try different settings for the same song or use the presets to completely change the settings of the whole chain for another song, when i.e. mastering a whole album.

## Installation

PPTC requires Ableton Live Suite 9 or Live 9 Standard + Max for Live 7. It is tested on MS Windows 8/10 and OSX 10.10. References:

- <https://www.ableton.com>
- <https://cycling74.com/downloads>
- <https://support.apple.com/kb/DL1572> (Mac only, java required by MAX7)

Release notes are included in the package.

If your PPTC package comes in zip format, extract the zip and copy the whole 'pptc' folder to your Live User Library folder:

- on Microsoft Windows usually in  
C:\Users\YOURUSERNAME\Documents\Ableton\User Library
- on MAC OSX usually in MACHD/users/yourusername/music/ableton/user library

If it comes in .alp format, double-click on the alp package file, and follow the instructions.

Send support requests to the Contact page at <http://isotonikstudios.com>. You also will find info for recovering a lost download there.

We post latest news and issues here: <http://pp-labs.net/wp/notes>.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use PPTC with Launchpad Pro?

No, not with PPTC v1.5. Starting with v2beta Launchpad Pro is supported.

Can I use my midi-keyboard with PPTC?

Yes, see section [Generic MIDI Controller](#).

Is trackPresets able to recall samples?

Depends on the instrument under control. With Ableton Lives sampler you can of course load samples and then change the sample selector parameter, which gets stored in trackPresets.