

PPTC Manual

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<http://pp-labs.net>



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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 – allowing enhancement of your personal workflow, unburdened from its underlying complexities.

PPTC captures your workflow – allowing 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 final mastering.

The Preset System

PPTC applies the concept of controlling a user defined set of parameters through a **Preset System**.

The word “preset” is usually associated with a setting of all parameters of a sound device. 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. Another name that is used for something very similar to a preset is the word “pattern”. It's used to refer to a timed sequence of events like a melody, in contrast to a “preset” which is more commonly used to refer to a set of i.e. synth parameters. A pattern can also be seen as a preset. Basically everything you do in music can be seen as creating a preset. Looking upon things like that, simplifying your creative process into presets allows you to advance your creativity – auditioning new instruments, samples, FX into a given workflow is now simple, while preserving the overall chain you've assembled.

The Preset System enables thinking and working in a controlled 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 the right settings for complex sets of parameters in the bigger context of the whole Live set.

PPTC comes with a number of devices, all following the Preset System. They share a consistent UI, showing 16 or 64 presets for the current song. Depending of the kind of the device, selecting a preset triggers different things, we nevertheless call it “preset” through this document. They can be operated by the mouse, but will unfold their full effect when used from a grid controller.

The next section describes the individual PPTC devices in detail. If you want to know how to setup PPTC to use the devices from a controller, go to the chapter [Working with Grid Controllers](#).

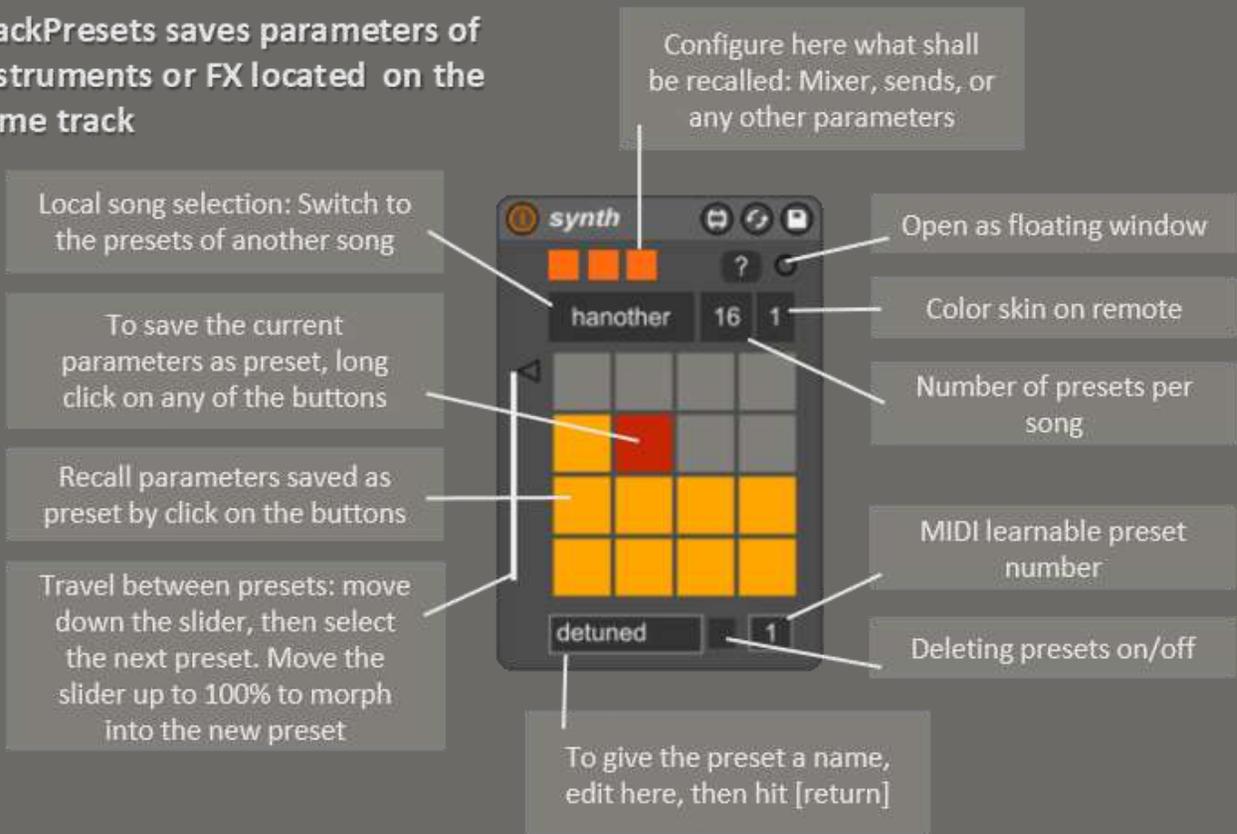
PPTC Devices

This section contains details about PPTC devices supporting the preset system. The devices all work standalone, as well as together with a remote grid controller.

trackPresets

The trackPresets device is made to optimize your workflow when creating or improvising sounds and effects. It lets you look upon any combination of instruments or effects in a track as one entity. It is able to reduce the whole lot of device parameters present in a track to one single preset, thus turning the sound of a track into an effectively performable parameter.

trackPresets saves parameters of instruments or FX located on the same track



If you write a preset, trackPresets saves the values of all MIDI mappable parameters on track or return track, on which it is located. If you select a preset by clicking on a button, trackPresets recalls the values of those parameters. Devices which were not available on the track during preset writing, remain unchanged.

Presets include parameters of instruments, audio effects and configured VST parameters. VST parameters have to be configured first.

trackPresets works likewise on a rack chain, i.e. it can control the parameters of all devices on that chain. The scope 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 both at once, check out the metaPresets device.

The slider on the left side of the trackPresets is for travelling smoothly from one preset to the next. That means, instead of recalling the parameters in an instant, you can control how much of the new preset you want. This is how it works: First move the slider down, then select the preset you want to morph into. Now move the slider slowly up again. You hear more and more of the new preset, until the slider is at the top. This ends the travel, the parameters values are to 100% the ones of the new preset.

Options

The trackPresets device can be configured by switching the three square buttons at the top. This controls what kind of parameter are recalled:

- 1) the device parameters
- 2) the amount of sends to the return tracks (if available)
- 3) mixer parameters: pan, mute, volume.

Workflow Tips

- Devices added to a track after saving a preset will not be affected by recalling. However, if you wish to add a new device to a preset – just recall the preset, and then overwrite it again. The parameters of the new device will be included.
- To copy presets from one Live set to another on, save the trackPresets by clicking on the  icon in the title bar. This creates an .adv files. In the second Live set, the devices names on track must be identical to the names in the original set. Drag the adv file on the track, and the presets are available.

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”. On recalling such a preset, playingClips stops all clips on other tracks, and triggers Ableton to launch the saved clip combination at the right point in time.

Save and recall clip combinations by the push of a button.

Save the playing clips combo with long press on any button

Play a combination of clips by clicking the buttons

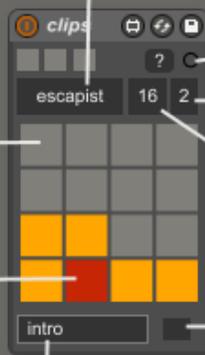
Local switch to presets of another song, so you can recall clip combinations used there

Open as floating window

Color skin on remote

Number of presets per song

Deleting presets on/off



To give the current clip combination a name, edit here, then hit [return]

If you want to exclude a track from being stopped by playingClips, give the track a name which starts with the characters *pptc*. This becomes necessary if you wish to have a track for recording.

Workflow Tips

- 16 clip combinations are easily reached. Change the number of presets to 64.
- If a set get 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

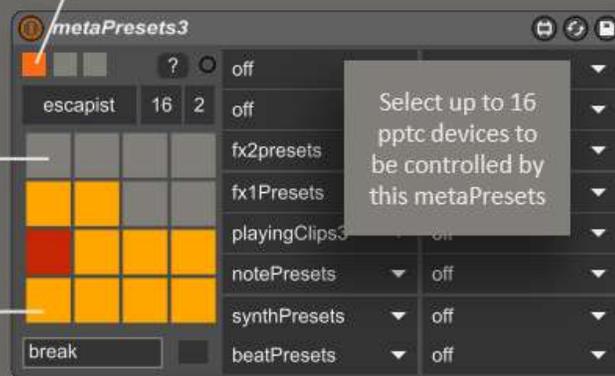
Use the metaPresets Device to combine and control the presets of other PPTC devices. It's one level up in abstraction, and therefore gives you unnumbered possibilities of what you can trigger with just a single button.

hide complex set structures with metaPresets

Long press on a button saves the currently active presets of the controlled devices as a new meta preset

Restore saved presets by pushing one of the buttons

If super write is switched on, writing a meta preset also generates a new preset for the controlled devices with the same number



What you can do with it:

- Change sounds and clips with single button
- Build your own drumkit-like instrument
- For designing sounds with many layers: recall presets of multiple layers in an instant
- Trigger pptc devices to reset all parameters to song defaults.

Options

metaPresets has one option: Superwrite. If you switch it on, writing a meta preset automatically writes a preset at the same number at each of the contained device. If there is eventually a preset on that number already saved, it gets overwritten.

Workflow Tips

- For designing sounds with many layers – use metaPresets to recall track presets of multiple layers in an instant. You can arrange the song, and the underlying layers remain configurable.
- If you like to be 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 the PPTC devices to reset all parameters to song defaults.

- If creation of meta presets gets too complex, because of losing overview of the presets of the dependent devices, switch on Superwrite. It quickly lets you forget the underlying track presets. Don't worry about the amount of (potentially identical) presets you generate this way, PPTC is designed to be used like that.
- As the metaPresets device is able to control other metaPresets, nesting them is possible.

songSwitch

This device helps you to organize a large Ableton Live set. Primary, a *song* is a section of adjacent scenes in the Live set. Beyond that, a song comes with its own collection of presets. Or, to say it the other way round: each PPTC device has its own set of presets per song.

If you select a preset button on the songSwitch device, PPTC globally switches the presets on all devices, i.e., it displays the presets which you saved for that song. However, it will not trigger any presets, so it is up to you to make the transition into the new song. If a MIDI controller is managed by the *pptcRemote* device, PPTC will also position the session ring to the scenes of that song. The moment you save a songSwitch preset, PPTC stores the currently selected song, groove amount and the tempo for later recall.

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

Switches between songs, and activates track and clip presets for that song

List of song names. To save a song on a button, first select it here ...

... then long press on any of the buttons

Switch to a saved song by pushing the button. These presets are like a playlist for your set

Get song names which are available in the Live set. A song is simply a number of scenes. To mark the begin of a song, change the name of the master track scene to `song::name`.



Open as floating window

Color skin on remote

Number of presets

Deleting presets on/off

PPTC detects the scene where a new song starts by the name of the master track scene. If the name starts with `song::` and some text, the scene marks a new song. Here, song is called *hanalog*.



Options

The songSwitch device comes with two options, they allow you to suppress recalling of Tempo (bpm), and / or Groove amount.

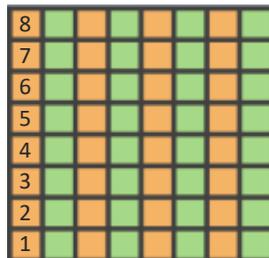
Workflow Tips

- Intro, outro or break might be good candidates to be organized as “song”.
- Make yourself a playlist, by putting the preset numbers of the songSwitch device into the right order, helping you on stage to know what comes next.
- Copy a preset from one song to another: use the local song menu to get the presets of that other song. Select the preset to recall it. Then again use the local song menu to change to the target song, and save the preset there.

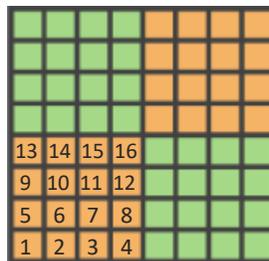
Working with Grid Controllers

While producing and performing, the grid controller is just the right means to interact with the music. It does not interrupt the focus on listening and allows to concentrate on the musical things happening without sacrificing concentration for visual perception.

PPTC adds a new mode to the Grid Controller. In this mode, buttons of the Grid Controller trigger presets. You can configure how you would like to layout the presets on the grid. The PPTC devices are the building blocks, a device takes either a column, a quadrant, the left half, or the entire button matrix of the controller.



In columns layout, the individual presets count from bottom to top.



With layouts in quadrants, presets count starts from bottom left. 16 presets per device are accessible.

It is up to you to define where the device shall be located, the color skin of the device, and how many presets of the device are shown. Our intention is, that you take the grid, and create your own customized instrument, a virtual groove box for your needs.

PPTC v3 supports the following control surfaces:

- Ableton Push 1 and Push 2
- Novation Launchpad, Mini, and S, Launchpad MK2 and Launchpad Pro
- Akai APC Mini
- Generic MIDI controller, like MIDI keyboards. See section [Generic MIDI controller](#).

PPTC can control multiple controller in parallel, only limited by the number of control surfaces Ableton Live is able to connect to.

Button Assignments

How to interact with each of the supported control surfaces

	Launchpad Mini, S, MK2	Launchpad Pro	Push, Push 2	Akai APC Mini
Enter PPTC mode	User 2 button	User button	Session button while in session mode	Shift + soft key 7
Leave PPTC mode	Session, User 1 or Mixer button	Session, Note or Device button	Session button	Shift and soft key 7
Write preset	Long press on button	Long press on button	Long press on pad	Long press on button
Delete preset	Hold the Arm button, then press the on the lit button	Hold the Delete button, then press on the lit button	Hold the Delete button, then press on the preset pad	A three button combo: Hold Shift + soft key 6 and press the preset button
Preset traveling (aka morphing)	-	-	Use the touch strip (see below)	-
Show device and preset name	-	-	Hold the Shift button, then press on the preset pad	-



Akai APC Mini

See the table above for the button assignments of APC Mini. The soft keys refer to the two unlabeled buttons on the right. Press them together with the shift button (bottom right button, on top of the main volume slider).

Ableton Push

See the table above for the button assignments. Notice that Push 2 is a bit slow on powering up. Please wait a few seconds before entering PPTC mode.

With Ableton Push 1 and 2, you can control preset traveling of *trackPresets* by means of the touch strip. This is how it works:

1. Put a finger on the touch strip, and hold it. The position on the touch strip gives the amount how much of the new preset you will hear.
2. With the other hand, select the preset to morph into.
3. Move the finger on the touch strip up to get more of the new preset, or down, to get more of the previous one.
4. Release the finger to end morphing. If you finish morphing in some mixture of old and new preset parameters, the pad remains blue.



pptcRemote

For each controller you wish to use in PPTC mode, you have to add a pptcRemote device to the set. Multiple pptcRemote device can be located on the same MIDI track. To setup which PPTC device is located where on the control surface, you need to configure the devices, by selecting them from the drop down menus.

Configure your grid controller with pptcRemote

Re-scan control surfaces connected to Live

Horiz. or vertical offset of the session ring

Select control surface

See midi help

Select layout of the devices

get 1:Launchpad_Pro 1 8 devices ?

0

playingClips3 songSwitch3

notePresets metaPresets3

synthPresets fx2presets

beatPresets fx1Presets

Configure here the device 1. If you chose the 8 devices layout, the presets of device 1 are mapped to the left row of the grid

Options

pptcRemote comes with two options. The first one enables *MIDI input from track*, necessary for working with a *Generic MIDI controller*, see the next chapter.

The second option is *MIDI feedback to track*. See chapter *Recording PPTC Sessions*.

Generic MIDI controller

To use PPTC with a MIDI keyboard, or a MIDI controller, you need to set the MIDI input of the track to ON. Next, place pptcRemote on a MIDI track, and select the controller in the *MIDI From* menu.

	MIDI Ports	Track	Sync	Fernst.
▷ Input:	RayDAT Midi Port 1	Aus	Aus	Aus
▷ Input:	RayDAT Midi Port 2	An	Aus	Aus



Next, activate the MIDI input option of the pptcRemote device. This is the orange square in the screenshot below. Once the option is selected, pptcRemote interprets incoming MIDI notes as preset numbers. Each octave is mapped to a PPTC device, therefore you can trigger up to 12 presets of up to 8 devices.

On the left side of the pptcRemote device, you see the presets available for the 12 notes of each device, and which one is selected, so you can see that the setup works correctly.

Control pptc devices with MIDI

Slider for preset traveling

Show device. Device 1 is mapped on octave C1, device 2 on C2, etc.

Activates listening to MIDI on track

Activates MIDI output on track. Allows recording presets into a MIDI clip, for feedback

remote1

device 7

get 0:Launchpad_MK2 1 8 devices ?

0

playingClips3 songSwitch3

presets3

beatPresets fx1Presets

The presets shown in this grid can be triggered by incoming MIDI notes, starting with C on bottom left

Recording PPTC Sessions

It is possible to record a PPTC Session. More precise, it is possible to save the preset numbers of devices controlled by a single `pptcRemote` in form of a MIDI clip. This allows to replay the session, which is a great basis for an arrangement. As the recording is on PPTC level, it is still possible to manipulate the underlying presets. For instance you can change the sound parameters or clips, while hearing the recording. As long as the preset numbers stay the same, the recorded session can still be replayed, with tuned sound parameters.

To record a session in MIDI, enable the option *MIDI feedback to track* of the `pptcRemote` device. Create a new MIDI track and select MIDI input of that track to receive notes from the `pptcRemote` track. Rename the track, it should start with the characters `pptc`. This prevents `playingClips` to stop the MIDI clip into which you let Ableton record the session.

To replay the session, just change roles of the track input/outputs. The recorded MIDI track becomes the input of the `pptcRemote` track.

PPTC General Workflow Tips

Arranging Clips into a Song

A preset of a playingClips device is like a scene on steroids. Clips can reside anywhere in the Live set and be moved to another clip slot 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 a layout giving playingClips 32 or 64 preset buttons. Now start/stop the clips on the controller in session mode. Save playingClips presets by long pushing a pad on the 2nd Controller until it flashes. It's so simple, that if you rest your hands on the controllers, it even works when you close your eyes.

Creating & playing new musical variations

trackPresets becomes a weapon when used in conjunction with Ableton's MIDI Effects. Once you have some basic clips playing, set up a MIDI Effect Rack with trackPresets and for instance the Arpeggiator, Velocity and Scale Effects. 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 what gets 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.

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

Laying out your dream sampler structure

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

The main idea is to use sampler or sampler as what would have been called "a voice" in a usual sampler or sound module and preset 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 8 voice sampler (aka a drum machine) create an instrument/drum rack with 8 chains, each containing a sampler/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.

When layering a bass sound you can use an instrument rack with maybe 2 chains/ trackPresets. Maybe a sampler with a sine in the 1st chain and something less subby in the 2nd 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, 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.

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 i.e. Behringer BCR2000) via the standard Live MIDI mapping function, you should see the parameters update on your controller as you change presets.

Transforming presets into automation data from your grid controller

when you enable automation recording for all tracks and record your performance into Lives 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 lets you use the same set of instruments and effects in a track for different sounds, you can build your own personal workstation or groove box.

When you have a track finished, add the songSwitch device and make some new scenes below the ones 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 2 buttons: 1st 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.

Effective 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 stuff that doesn't do anything too musical. A short 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 putting the headphones aside, you can compare the 'headphone' mix to the 'studio-pa' mix on the studio PA by changing the presets. Using this technique to go back and forth between different monitoring situations and not changing but saving the things required for this systems will, with some experience, result in much better mixes. It's 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 sub bass, that 'works' everywhere.

Mastering Management

You can set up your mastering chain with maybe an EQ, Comp & Limiter. Then add a trackPresets device. 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>

Release notes are included in the package.

To install, double-click on the alp package, and follow the instructions.

Send support requests to <http://isotonikstudios.com/support/contact>.

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

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use my 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.

Which kind of parameters are saved by trackPresets?

Presets include parameters of instruments, audio effects and configured VST parameters. VST parameters have to be configured first. Optional, trackPresets saves also Mixer Parameter (sends, pan, volume ...)

I used Hot-Swap presets, and trackPresets doesn't working anymore?!

Hot-Swap presets is the Ableton Live method to exchange parameter values of a device, where you select an adv file. trackPresets uses the device name to identify the devices on which parameters are to be saved resp. recalled. This method allows to delete a device and restore it again, and no presets get lost. If you Hot-Swap the presets, the device name gets the same name as the adv file, and for trackPresets this is technically a new device. Simply change the name back to what it was before Hot-Swap, and trackPresets should again work as expected.

Can I use PPTC with Native Instruments Maschine JAMs?

No, native support of the JAM is not yet in PPTC v3.0. You still can use it as [Generic MIDI controller](#).

With pptcRemote on my track, why do the notes of the MIDI clips don't come through anymore?

pptrRemote can be placed on any MIDI track of the Live set, so just put it on a track where you don't have any instruments. If you send MIDI notes to pptrRemote, it interprets them as preset numbers, see section [Recording PPTC Sessions](#). If you put pptrRemote on the first track in the set, you might want to shift the controller grid by one, so that in Session mode of the controller you don't waste a column for pptrRemote. See section [pptrRemote](#), offset of the session ring.