

APPENDIX 3

AKAI APC: Ableton Performance Controller

The Ableton Performance Controller APC40 and APC20 is a hardware controller directly and fully dedicated to real-time tactile control over Live's Session View, and it comes with its own custom edition of Live called "Ableton Live Akai Professional APC Edition".

First of all, understand that the APC is in many ways a gigantic mouse. The mission was to design a hardware device that allows you to launch clips and to navigate the Session View while providing an intuitive way to indicate the status and actions that are taking place in the Session View at all times. Once you've got your head wrapped around that, then we can proceed.

The APC is made up of a unique "Clip Matrix" consisting of multi-color backlit buttons representing Live's Session View. These buttons are referred to as the *Clip Launch/Session Overview* on the APC interface, which provides user control over an 8 × 5 (eight tracks/five Scenes) grid matrix that mirrors Live's Session View, clips, and Scenes. The idea is simple: *press* a Clip Launch button in the matrix and its associated clip will be triggered in the software. In return, the buttons will light up signifying the clip's status (playing or recording). Also note that an amber light indicates when a clip is present in a Clip Slot. Hundreds of LEDs are integrated on the surface interface of the APC, which light up one of three colors: amber, green, and red. These indicate the status of a Live Clip that is associated with that matrix button—a fantastic element that simulates the software!

As far as software integration is concerned, there is a red colored 8X5 visible border that outlines the clips/tracks in the Session View once you have the APC connected to Live. It functions as an important visual container or viewfinder for displaying in the software the current status of the APC hardware. Notice in our example the red border surrounding the currently selected 8 × 5 group of clips/tracks on the hardware device, which appears in focus in Live's Session View. This is crucial in keeping track of clips, Scenes, and other tasks!

Figure A3.1
APC40.

Heavy Guitar	Bass Guitar-EIC	Session Dr	Analog-Lead	5 Pad-Aquar	Solo Guitar-	Pad-A Snow	8 Synth-Poly	9 Audio	10 Auc	Master
▶ Heavy Guitar	▶ P-BASS EIC-1	▶ Kit-BrightRc	▶ Lead-10 Sav	▶ Pad-Aquar	▶ Solo Guitar	▶ A Snow Pad			▶ 06 0	▶
▶ Heavy Guitar	▶ P-BASS EIC-1	▶ Kit-BrightRc	▶ Lead-10 Sav	▶ Pad-Aquar		▶ A Snow Pad		▶ Beat 040	▶ 06 b	▶ Pr
▶ Heavy Guitar	▶ P-BASS EIC-1	▶ Kit-BrightRc	▶ Lead-10 Sav	▶ Pad-Aquar	▶ Solo Guitar	▶ A Snow Pad	▶ Synth-Polyr	▶ Beat 041	▶ 06 d	▶ Bre
▶ Heavy Guitar	▶ P-BASS EIC-1	▶ Kit-BrightRc	▶ Lead-10 Sav	▶ Pad-Aquar		▶ A Snow Pad		▶ Beat 042	▶ 06 s	▶ 7 ba
▶ Heavy Guitar	▶ P-BASS EIC-1	▶ Kit-BrightRc	▶ Lead-10 Sav		▶ Solo Guitar	▶ A Snow Pad	▶ Synth-Polyr	▶ Beat 043	▶ 06 s	▶ Gro
	▶ P-BASS EIC-1	▶ Kit-BrightRc	▶ Lead-10 Sav	▶ 1 7-PPad-Ac	▶ Solo Guitar	▶ A Snow Pad	▶ Synth-Polyr	▶ Beat 044		▶ O
	▶ P-BASS EIC-1	▶ Kit-BrightRc		▶ 1 7-PPad-Ac		▶ A Snow Pad		▶ Beat 045	▶ 06 s	
	▶ P-BASS EIC-1	▶ Kit-BrightRc				▶ A Snow Pad				
	▶ P-BASS EIC-1	▶ Kit-BrightRc				▶ Synth-Polyr				

Figure A3.2

The red 8 × 5 border outlines clips slots and tracks in the Session View that are being controlled by the APC40.

Since the APC's Clip Launch matrix is set to an 8 × 5 grid, it's necessary to be able to expand its scope and clip/track accessibility, especially when your Set has more than eight active clips or five Scenes. To do this you can navigate the viewable red border with the APC's up/down, left/right *Bank Select* arrow buttons, which move the red box up, down, left, and right by tracks and Scenes in Live. This also includes a Shift button, located to the left of the *Bank Selector* that increases the incremental options for navigation, allowing you to navigate across by multiple Scenes or tracks at once, as opposed to one at a time when Shift is not pressed.



Figure A3.3

Use the APC40 Bank Select buttons to navigate the 8X5 grid within Live.



Figure A3.4

Device Control section with Rotary Encoders.

Below the Clip Launch View you'll find a replica of Live's Session View Mixer section, including its track buttons and faders—a full eight-channel fader set, master fader plus mute, select, solo, and record. On the right-hand side of the hardware interface are *Rotary Encoders* for direct control over track functionality, Live's devices, and effect Sends. These Encoders are laid out as a bank of eight LED knobs. The Track Control section hosts encoders for pan and/or sends, and the Device Control section below that is for controlling your Live devices on each track. Use the Shift button to access extra controller features, such as another bank available in the Device Control section. This also allows you to accommodate complex devices that have more than eight control parameters. The left and right buttons are used to toggle through each individual device in the Device View.

At the bottom of this section is Live's *Crossfader*, which you DJs know all about. Since the APC's features are mirrored in Live's software, the Crossfader is automatically set to control Live's Crossfader on the Master track. This way you can have that tactile "DJ Crossfader" for fading multiple tracks.

The APC is more than just a tactile device for launching your clips, Scenes, and moving Faders and parameters. It also doubles as a fully customizable surface controller for remote controlling Live. From Live's MIDI preferences you can set up the APC so that it will instantly act as your main controller. For more on Control Surface setup, MIDI Mapping, and Remote Control, launch to [► Scene17](#).

You can redirect any button, knob, or slider to virtually any function within Live's Session View by employing the MIDI Mapping feature at any time. For example, you could choose the last knob in the Track Control section and MIDI Map it to control the Quantize Menu. This would allow faster triggering and launching of clips and Scenes. Don't forget that APC40 also has all of the necessary buttons to

control Live's global functions. You can open and close views and activate the essential features for recording your Session clips and other ideas into the Arrangement View.

Hot Tip

Take advantage of all those Clip Launch buttons in the APC40's Clip Launch View by changing each clip's actual launch value to a tighter quantization value independent of each other. Since multiple Launch buttons can be addressed individually with several fingers at once, as opposed to clicking one at a time with a mouse, you can create some very interesting musical events. The great thing is that once you have an idea of what you want, you can engage record just by selecting the APC's one touch Record button in the Transport Section.

The APC40 also comes with two footswitch (pedal) inputs on the back of the unit for controlling Live and its assorted devices on stage and in the studio. To utilize the footswitch, you could MIDI Map it to launch Scenes or activate the Multi-Purpose Transport button in Looper when overdubbing your guitar or vocal parts. At the same time, try mapping a group of Follow Action clips and use the secondary footswitch to start and stop them.



Figure A3.5
APC40 rear panel.