Music Production Boot Camp

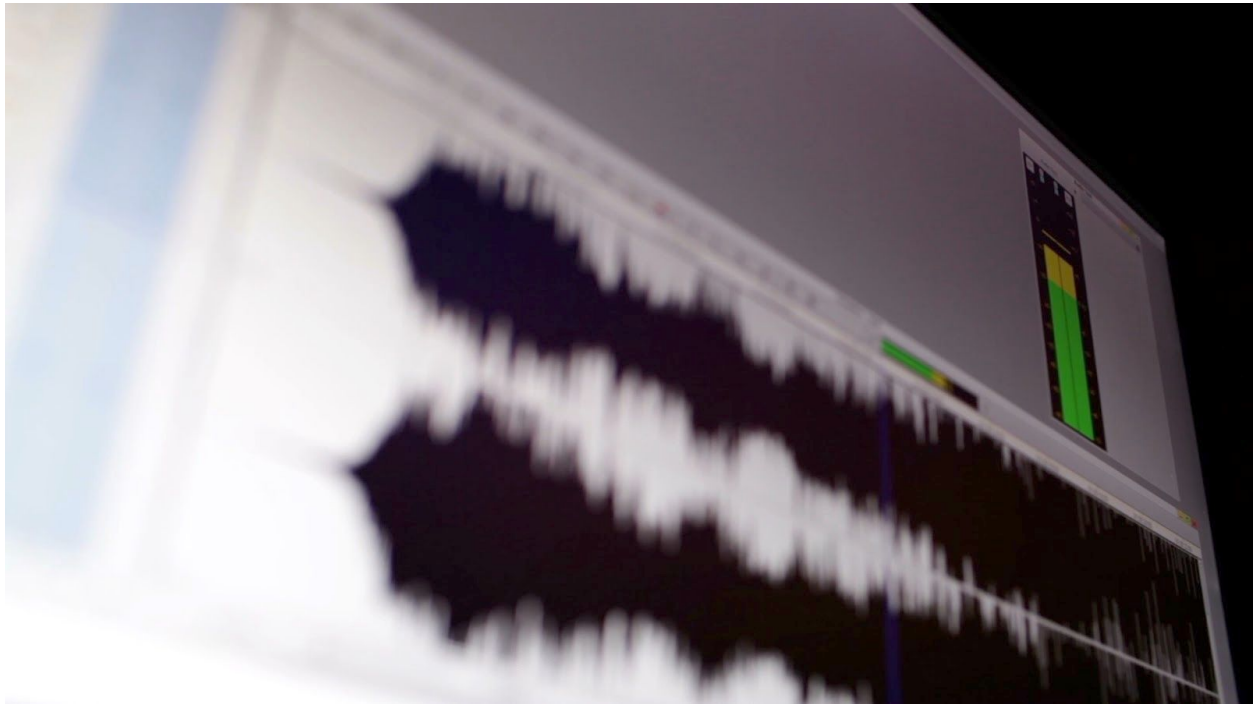
Exploring Sequencers

MIDI is the music communication protocol that allows synthesizers, drum machines, and computers to communicate on 16 independent channels. The acronym stands for Musical Instrument Digital Interface.

Sequencers have been around even longer and are the cornerstone of pretty much all modern music not played by a live band.

In this section of the course, we will look at various types of sequencers and you can get a feel for what type you like the most. It is the main work space where we can record and edit musical ideas.

<u>**Steps for starting a new idea in any DAW**</u>:

- Create a new song or find a blank sequence
- Set the tempo for the general speed you want. If the part is difficult to play, just slow down the tempo to record and bring it back when you play it back.
- Set the desired loop value. Usually this will be an even number like 2, 4, 8, 12, or 16 bars.
- Start with a sound that inspires creativity. This can be a basic piano or a drum kit.
- Record or 'click in' the notes in the sequencer on a track.
- Choose another instrument and input the notes and repeat until satisfied
- Be sure to save your work!

<u>**Definitions**</u>
Tempo - the speed of the music; the rate of its motion. It is measured in beats per minute (bpm)
Bars - ore one measure. A division of time based on the number of beats. Most radio music is in 4/4 or common time. That means 4 beats per bar.
Metronome - the tool that makes a steady pulse to define the tempo of the beat.
Piano roll - a way of visualizing music notes based on old player pianos (pic below). This is the most common screen among computer sequencers.

This is where we will spend a lot of our time when creating music. If you like to record the notes hands-on, you may want to get a <u>midi controller</u>.

I use the Akai MPK Mini throughout the course. It is inexpensive and pretty versatile! It may come with a free version of the Akai MPC Software so you can have a complete package relatively cheap.

If you are planning on using samples a lot and you like hardware sequencers, you may like the MPC series. The live is what I use in the course but there are many versions so look at them all to see the pros and cons.