LIL CHORD STABBER

BY LESSONS IN LIVE · USER MANUAL

One finger. One chord. Pick a chord type and every key plays it on its own root, like a sampled chord: A with **m9** plays A minor 9, D plays D minor 9. A warm synth, a step sequencer where every lane has its own length, a three-head tape echo and a lush reverb turn one finger into dub techno, deep house, minimal and underground techno.



INSTALLING

- **Mac** (Apple Silicon and Intel, macOS 11 or later): quit Ableton Live (or Logic, and any other music software), unzip the download, open `LilChordStabber-1.0.2-Installer.pkg` and follow the steps. It installs the VST3 into /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3 and the Audio Unit (for Logic Pro and GarageBand) into /Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components; if you only use Live you can untick the Audio Unit under Customize. The stand-alone app (play it with a MIDI keyboard without a DAW) is optional, also under Customize.
- **Windows** (64-bit): quit Live, unzip the download and run `LilChordStabber-1.0.2-Windows-Installer.exe`. It installs the VST3 into C:\Program Files\Common Files\VST3 and, if you like, the stand-alone app. Windows may ask whether to run an app from an unknown publisher: choose More info › Run anyway.
- **In Live**, open Settings › Plug-Ins, make sure **Use VST3 Plug-In System Folders** is on and click **Rescan**. Lil Chord Stabber appears under Plug-Ins › Lessons in Live Instruments. If Live lists it twice (the VST3 and the Audio Unit), use the VST3: your sets then also open on Windows.
- **In Logic Pro**, make a Software Instrument track, click the Instrument slot and choose AU Instruments › Lessons in Live Instruments › Lil Chord Stabber. If it isn't there, open Logic Pro › Settings › Plug-in Manager, select Lil Chord Stabber and click **Reset & Rescan Selection**.
- **In GarageBand**, make a Software Instrument track, press B for Smart Controls, click the Inspector button (i), click the instrument slot under Plug-ins and choose AU Instruments › Lessons in Live Instruments › Lil Chord Stabber. If Audio Units aren't listed, turn on **Enable Audio Units** in GarageBand › Settings › Audio/MIDI and restart GarageBand.

QUICK START (ABLETON LIVE)

1. Drop **Lil Chord Stabber** (Plug-Ins › Lessons in Live Instruments) on a MIDI track. It starts on **Golden Ripple**, a dub techno stab with its sequence.
2. Hold a key: the sequencer plays the chord on that key. Play another key and the whole pattern moves there.
3. Pick another chord under **CHORD**, another preset with ‹ › or **BROWSE**, or press **GENERATE** for a new sequence.

Turn **SEQ ON** off to play the chords yourself, one per key.

CHORD

- **The chord**: 42 types in six families, each with its own colour: **MINOR** (m7, m9, m11, m13, m6, m6/9, half-diminished …), **MAJOR** (maj7, maj9, 6/9, add9 …), **DOM** (7, 9, 13, 7#9, 7b9), **SUS** (sus2, sus4, 7sus4, 9sus4, 6sus4), **DUB** (the open dub techno and Detroit shapes: dub m7, dub m9, deep m9, quartal, stacked fifths …) and **COLOUR** (dim, dim7, aug, maj7#5, aug6). Every key plays the chord you picked on its own root.
- **VOICING**: NATURAL (as a keyboard player lays it out), CLOSE (everything inside one octave), DROP 2 (the second note from the top an octave down: wide and warm), OPEN (every other note up an octave: airy) and WIDE (the root an octave under the rest).
- **INV** turns the chord over (the lowest note goes up an octave per step), **OCT** moves it by octaves.
- **LOW ROOT** adds a bass note: **-1 OCT** is the root right under the chord, **-2 OCT** an octave lower (never under C0). The keyboard in PLAY shows it.

- **STRUM** rolls the chord from the lowest note up (0–120 ms); **HUMAN** makes every note a little different in time, velocity and tuning.
- **PLAY**: **POLY** lets chords overlap, **MONO** plays one chord at a time, **LEGATO** slides from chord to chord without starting the notes again (set the speed with **GLIDE**).

PLAY

The chord you hear right now, its notes, and a keyboard you can click to play it. **GLIDE** slides from chord to chord; **VEL** sets how much your velocity changes loudness and brightness.

SOUND

- **SOURCE**: **ANALOG** (two saws, COLOR turns them square), **PULSE** (pulse width moving per voice), **ORGAN** (drawbars, with a click), **KEYS** (an electric piano that barks when you hit it), **GLASS** (bell-like FM) and **VOX** (saws through vowel formants). The line under it says what COLOR does for that source.
- **COLOR**, **DETUNE** (a second, detuned copy, spread by WIDTH), **NOISE**, **DRIFT** (every note wanders a little in pitch and brightness, like an old synth), **WIDTH** (stereo).
- **DRIVE** (warm saturation), **CHORUS** (I, II or I+II, the classic two-mode chorus), **PUMP** (a sidechain feel on the beat, at the **PUMP RATE**) and **VOLUME**.

SEQUENCER

Turn **SEQ ON** and hold a key: the sequencer plays the chord on that root. Every step has its own:

Lane	What it does
STEPS	does the step play
LENGTH	a short stab (0.25 step) up to a long chord (16 steps)
NOTE	moves the root: +5, -2 … a chord progression
VELOCITY	louder and brighter
CUTOFF	opens or closes the filter for that step
DELAY	how much of the TAPE ECHO this step gets: 100 % = the ECHO knob, 200 % = a dub throw, 0 = dry
REVERB	the same for SPACE
CHANCE	how likely the step plays

- **Polymeters**: every lane has its own length (the number left of it: drag it, scroll it or click it). A 16-step rhythm with a 7-step note lane and a 5-step cutoff lane keeps changing for minutes, and lands the same way every time Live plays the song.
- **RATE** (1/32 to 1 bar), **SWING**, and **RUN**: **KEYS** (plays while you hold a key), **LATCH** (keeps playing after you let go; the next key moves it), **TRANSPORT** (plays when Live plays; **ROOT** sets the chord when no key is held, a key moves it).

- **GENERATE** writes a whole new pattern in a style it picks itself (dub techno, deep house, minimal, techno, long chords or Chicago) and sets its rate. The dice on a lane give that lane new values, **DICE ALL** every lane, **POLY LENGTHS** gives every lane a new length, **DOUBLE** makes the loop twice as long with its steps repeated (it sounds the same until you change the second half), **CLEAR** empties it.
- Editing: click or drag to paint, drag LENGTH and NOTE up and down, right-click or double-click a step to reset it.

TONE

- **FILTER**: LP 24, LP 12, BAND or HIGH, through a **CHARACTER**: **CLEAN**, **LADDER** (round and fat), **ACID** (squelchy) or **VINTAGE** (an old saturating filter).
- **FAT** drives every note on its own into the filter and adds weight underneath, so the chord gets thicker but stays clean.
- **CUTOFF**, **RESO**, **ENV** (how far the filter opens on every chord, also negative), **SNAP** (how fast it closes again), **MOVE** (a slow filter sweep on the song's grid, at its **RATE**: 8 bars down to 1/16) and the amp envelope **ATTACK**, **DECAY**, **SUSTAIN**, **RELEASE**.

DUB STATION

- **TAPE ECHO**: one tape with three playback heads. **ECHO** is the send, **TIME** (1/16 to 1/2, dotted and triplet), **HEADS** (which heads play: 1, 2, 3 or a mix), **FEEDBACK** (past 100 % it runs away into dub feedback, kept in check by the tape), **TONE**, **WOW** (the tape's wobble), **WIDTH**, and **> SPACE** (how much of the echoes goes into the reverb). Changing TIME bends the pitch like a real tape machine.
- **SPACE**: the reverb. **SPACE** is the send, **MODE**: **PLATE**, **HALL**, **CLOUD**, **BLOOM** (it swells), **SHIMMER** (an octave up, rising) and **ABYSS** (endless). **DECAY**, **SIZE**, **PRE** (pre-delay), **TONE**, **MOD**.
- **VINTAGE** makes SPACE sound like an early digital reverb: **SUBTLE**, **OLD** or **EXTREME** (less bandwidth, a lower sample rate, fewer bits, more wobble).

MIDI OUT: PLAY YOUR OWN SYNTHS

Lil Chord Stabber also sends what it plays as MIDI, on channel 1. That's every chord note, with the VOICING, INV, OCT, LOW ROOT, STRUM and HUMAN, from your keys and from the sequencer (LENGTH, VELOCITY, CHANCE, SWING, the polymeters). So any synth can play the same stabs. The mod wheel and pitch bend go along.

In Live:

1. Put your synth on its own MIDI track.
2. On that track, set **MIDI From** to the Lil Chord Stabber track, and pick **Lil Chord Stabber** in the chooser under it.
3. Set **Monitor** to **In**.

- To hear only your synth, pull the Lil Chord Stabber track's volume all the way down. The MIDI keeps going.
- The CUTOFF, DELAY and REVERB lanes, MOVE and the effects are Lil Chord Stabber's own sound, so they don't go out.
- Logic Pro and GarageBand don't take MIDI from an instrument, so there MIDI OUT stays unused.

PRESETS

- 122 factory presets in six categories: Dub Techno, Deep House, Minimal, Techno, Long Chords and Chicago. Each brings its own sequence.
- ‹ › steps through them, **BROWSE** opens the browser (categories, search, favourites), the **star** makes the preset a favourite. A `*` after the preset's name means you changed the sound.
- **SAVE** stores your own preset with its sequence. Your presets live in `~/Library/Lessons In Live/Lil Chord Stabber/Presets` on a Mac and in `%APPDATA%\Lessons In Live\Lil Chord Stabber\Presets` on Windows (the gear menu › Open your presets folder).

GOOD TO KNOW

- **Colour**: the gear menu › Colour gives the unit another finish: GRAPHITE (the default), MIDNIGHT, PETROL, DUB GREEN, OLIVE, GOLD, COPPER, OXBLOOD, ROSE, PURPLE or STEEL. The chord and lane colours stay the same on every finish. Every Lil Chord Stabber window remembers it.
- **The value displays** (RATE, MOVE RATE, PUMP RATE, ECHO TIME, HEADS, MODE, INV, OCT, SWING, ROOT): click the arrows to step (as fast as you like), click the middle of a list for every value at once, or drag up and down or scroll. Option-click (Alt-click on Windows) goes back to the default.
- Drag the bottom-right corner to resize the window, or pick a size in the gear menu › Window size.
- The **mod wheel** opens the filter, **pitch bend** bends the chord, the **sustain pedal** holds it.
- Live records every knob as automation; the sequencer follows Live's song position, so a pattern always plays the same at the same bar.

TRIAL AND SERIAL

Lil Chord Stabber starts as a free **30-day trial** with everything working; the **TRIAL** button at the top, next to SAVE, shows how many days are left. After the trial it keeps working in demo mode (the button says **DEMO**), with about two seconds of silence every minute (MIDI OUT too); your sets always load and play.

To keep it, buy a serial on lessonsinlive.com, click the **TRIAL** button (or the gear menu, top right › Enter serial number) and paste it in. Activating needs an internet connection once; after that it works offline. **One serial works on two computers**, Mac and Windows; on a Mac the VST3, the Audio Unit and the stand-alone app share it. To move it to another computer, choose the gear menu › Deactivate this computer first.

UPDATES

When a newer version of Lil Chord Stabber is out, a bar at the top says so, with DOWNLOAD (the installer for your computer), LATER and SKIP (that version). Updates are free: install the new version over the old one; your serial stays activated, your presets stay, and your sets sound the same. Lil Chord Stabber asks lessonsinlive.com at most once a day, only while its window is open, and sends nothing about you. The gear menu › Check for updates now asks right away; Check for updates automatically turns the daily check off or on.

IF LIVE WON'T START ON WINDOWS

If Live suddenly won't open, or says **libusb-1.0.dll was not found**, Microsoft Defender has most likely taken that file out of Live's Program folder. libusb-1.0.dll belongs to Ableton Live (Live uses it for USB controllers such as Push), and Defender sometimes mistakes it for a threat; Lil Chord Stabber only installs its own files. To get Live back:

1. Open **Windows Security › Virus & threat protection › Protection history** and click the entry for libusb-1.0.dll.
2. If it says Quarantined, choose **Actions › Restore**. If it says Removed, choose **Allow** and reinstall Live from your Ableton account (your sets, Packs and User Library stay where they are).
3. Start Live again.

Don't download libusb-1.0.dll from a "DLL download" website: the file from Live's own installer is the right one.