



# YOUR FIRST PARTY WITH SCRATCH LIVE

serato



SCRATCH LIVE

RANE

# PREPARATION

## Learning the ropes

When preparing for your first gig with Scratch Live, the time you spend before the gig is going to pay dividends on the night. This is especially true for those of you who have only just purchased Serato Scratch Live but are already gigging DJs with experience in clubs. You will need to be familiar with the differences of using Scratch Live and the creative opportunities that are available to maximize your first gigs potential!



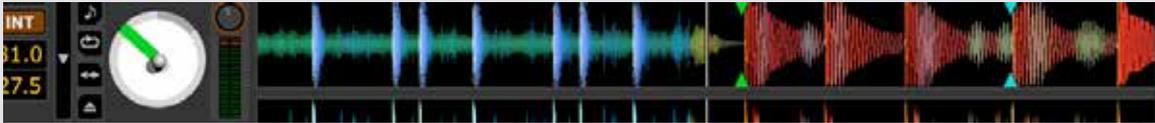
This guide assumes you have already read the manual and have a library of music in Scratch Live. If you haven't done this yet, please do so before you proceed.

A great way to get to know Scratch Live is via the tooltips; click the (?) next to the Scratch Live logo to enable tooltips then hover over parts of the interface with your mouse cursor to get info about them.

## The modes

Scratch Live uses 3 distinct modes for operation which are detailed in the manual. Most people start with Absolute mode since that is closest to “normal” vinyl. If you don't want any chance of skipping while you scratch, change into relative mode. If you need to play a track and aren't going to control it with a turntable, use internal mode.

## Cue points



Cue points are useful tools for helping you mix faster and more creatively. Go through your tracks and place markers at key points in the track: Where you usually cue from, mix into the next tune or scratch samples etc. If you DJ with doubles sometimes (same song on both decks) the markers can really add to your routines, and keep you oriented within the track. Setup screen

It can't be emphasized enough how important this screen is to the health of your Scratch Live. Learn it, re-read the manual section about it, and become comfortable with what it is used for. Once you're familiar with it, setting up Scratch Live should take about as long as swapping carts with the previous DJ (unless you have to swap in your Rane hardware).

### Some points to note are:

**USB audio buffer size** This is the key setting as far as performance is concerned; a smaller buffer size (slider to the left) results in tighter record control. Gradually lower the setting, while mixing (and/or scratching) until you get a "stuttery" display or you reach the lowest setting possible. This setting should be established well in advance of your gig, and if you don't feel confident that the setting is appropriate, then increase the buffer size one or two ms to be safe. **Auto fill overviews** If you're playing tracks which you've just added to your library, and don't have overviews built, this option will build them for you with "spare" cpu cycles. This will reduce the performance of Scratch Live if your CPU is already maxed.

## Plugins

This tab in the setup screen is where the DJ FX, SP-6 Sample player, SL3 Aux Deck, Serato Playlists, The Bridge and Serato Video plugins live. When you first open Scratch Live these plugins will be switched off (this is to help conserve CPU). If you are wanting to use any of these plugins you will have to turn them on here.

## Calibration

You must calibrate whenever you set up, and regularly with a permanent installation. The scope on your setup screen is an indispensable tool for checking your turntables and needles and to troubleshoot problems, check out the [Diagnosing the Scope Views](#) article for a selection of various scope signals and their likely causes. The threshold value is the level below which Scratch Live ignores the input, this is to prevent external noise being interpreted as part of the control signal.

## Building overviews

The overview of each track is stored within the file itself and provides an overall view of the track. If you've got one of those songs with 2 minutes of talking before the beat drops, look at the overview while you needle drop through. It's a good idea to analyze and build overviews for all your files before you play with them, it's one less thing for your computer to be doing while you're playing to an audience. Unplug your Rane hardware, click the analyze button, and Scratch Live will work through your library building all the overviews. For further information, please check out the [Preparing and Analyzing Your Files](#) article.

# ORGANIZING YOUR LIBRARY

## Entering ID3 tags



HAVING "SET AUTO BPM" SELECTED WILL WRITE BPM INFORMATION TO TRACKS WHEN ANALYZING FILES

Having correct information for all your tracks will mean you can find any song when you need it. There are numerous third-party applications which you can use to enter information into the tracks, or if you are ripping your tracks yourself from CD, you may be able to use the CDDB to retrieve the track names from the internet. The BPM tag can be useful for finding tracks to mix, analyzing your tracks in the offline player should write this as long as you have the "Set Auto BPM" option selected.

## Browse and search

Browse view can be used to find a track very quickly if the tags are correct. For a set which you haven't completely planned out, the browse view can be used to search out tracks which fit into your set. For instant access to a specific song, press command + f (ctrl + f on PC) and type keywords into the search area. As you type, the songs visible in your library will be narrowed down accordingly.

## Making crates

A screenshot of the Serato Scratch Live library view. The interface shows a sidebar on the left with a folder tree including 'All Audio...', 'All Videos...', 'Library', 'A List', 'Electronic', 'Drum and Bass', 'Dub', 'House', 'Favourites', 'Crews', 'Personal', 'International', 'LOCAL', 'MUSIC', 'Party Tunes', and 'Radio Shows'. The main area displays a list of tracks with columns for 'song', 'artist', 'album', 'bpm', 'bitrate', and 'length'. The tracks listed include 'LiveFeed - Rane SL 1 Mic In', 'Valley Of The lights', 'May we be Open and Lost', 'Nymphs', 'Restless Address', 'from there to here and back again or not', 'Not Heaps', 'Pussycat', 'Fingerpops', 'Evening Dark', 'Bring me Back', '500 Degrees', 'Filthy Joe', 'Loosey Lucy', 'The Day The Great War Came', 'Dark Of The Light', 'Redeemer', 'Lights Out', 'Dignity', 'Batman you're Flying', 'You are a star', 'God Of The Sky', and 'Wet Plastic'.

song	artist	album	bpm	bitrate	length
LiveFeed - Rane SL 1 Mic In					
Valley Of The lights	Comball	Comball	66	192.0kbps	07:05.7
May we be Open and Lost	Flying Blue	We Have Responsibilities	68	192.0kbps	09:05.2
Nymphs	The BB	Get Dancing	68	192.0kbps	05:03.4
Restless Address	Massiveism	Inside A Noisy Brain	69	192.0kbps	05:28.3
from there to here and back again or not	Suddenly Loose	Northern Lights	69	192.0kbps	05:40.7
Not Heaps	Calligraphy	The Hurricane	70	192.0kbps	03:43.3
Pussycat	Four Lane Highway	The Mechanical Man	73	212.7kbps	03:59.2
Fingerpops	Garageband	Pop	75	197.2kbps	02:50.3
Evening Dark	Bobabacker	Downsetting	87	192.0kbps	06:42.7
Bring me Back	Bobabacker	Everything Else Known to man	87	1411.2kbps	08:56.8
500 Degrees	Grenadesafe	Tip The Roof	87	272.8kbps	07:04.8
Filthy Joe	Grenadesafe	Tip The Roof	87	266.1kbps	06:00.7
Loosey Lucy	Brain over a hill	hug It Or kiss It?	89	192.0kbps	04:13.3
The Day The Great War Came	Atomic Load	Million	90	192.0kbps	04:19.7
Dark Of The Light	Comball	Comball	94	192.0kbps	04:53.8
Redeemer	Solar Flower	Moves On	95	200.7kbps	04:44.8
Lights Out	Solar Flower	Moves On	97	204.6kbps	04:42.7
Dignity	Trade Slater	My Only Salvation	97	192.0kbps	02:59.3
Batman you're Flying	Suddenly Loose	Northern Lights	103	192.0kbps	04:18.7
You are a star	Flying Blue	We Have Responsibilities	104	192.0kbps	05:24.8
God Of The Sky	CyberSkin		110	1411.2kbps	05:03.3
Wet Plastic	Brain over a hill	hug It Or kiss It?	111	192.0kbps	04:03.3

If you're used to ordering your record crates according to your set, then the crates in Scratch Live will be handy. Make new crates by clicking the (+) button under the crate list and drag songs from your library into them. Once the songs are in there, click on the crate and order them how you like. One song can be in any number of crates.

You can also set up smart crates which contain tracks dependent on certain rules such as "added before 24/5/10". The blue crate (+) next to the regular crate button will add one of these.

**NOTE** Smart crates will not save to an external drive if you are DJ'ing on a different computer than your own.

## iTunes

If you're already organizing your songs with iTunes, selecting the "read iTunes library" option in setup screen will show your iTunes library and playlists in Scratch Live.

## External drives

With most people using Scratch Live on laptops, external drives are the most popular way to add storage and performance for reasonable cost.

If you build a library including songs on an external drive, you will be able to plug your drive into another Scratch Live DJ's setup and have your songs available on the fly. External drives also help system performance since the heads on the internal drive are free to fetch information for the system, while the song data can be read whenever it is needed.

One point to remember is that if your external drive is USB2, you may have a shortage of USB bandwidth if you run it on the same hub as your Rane hardware, keyboard, mouse, Bluetooth dongle etc. So test it out! If you have problems or drop outs make sure you have done all the things suggested here:

[Troubleshooting USB dropouts on Windows](#)

[Troubleshooting USB dropouts on Mac](#)

## Stress-testing your setup

It's worth putting your Scratch Live in the worst-case scenario so you know how far you can push it on the night. If you're not going to be using your own computer at the gig, it is important to gain access to it so you can be confident that everything is in order. Some things to try (all while two songs are playing): - Rapidly scrolling through your library - Copying songs from a CD-R of tracks onto your hard drive - Backspinning through one track as fast as you can - Playing songs from an audio CD in the CD-ROM drive If you get drop-outs, try adjusting your USB buffer size, disabling extra processes like WiFi, power management, Bluetooth, Antivirus etc. If you're still getting dropouts, before you rush out buying new gear, come onto [Serato.com](#) and let us and other users know what's going on. It's a great resource and the people there really know what they're talking about. Chances are someone else has already gone through what you are.

## Disk system

Play two wave files and needle drop through them, see how it performs. Wave files are large and therefore read from the disk a lot. They also sound great and are (slightly) easier on the CPU than compressed files.

## CPU

Needle dropping through compressed songs like MP3s and backspinning rapidly can test how your CPU performs under load. Remember to disable useless background processes like your anti-virus and power management systems which will slow down your CPU on purpose.

## Needles/vinyl

DJ for a couple of hours. Now check your setup screen, are those scopes still nice and clean? Do you need to brush your needles and records? Unlike with normal vinyl, you won't get the usual cues something is going awry; e.g., if your tracks are getting summed to mono by a faulty tonearm connection, with normal vinyl at least the music won't stop, with Scratch Live that would mean having to switch to internal mode as you won't be able to track the record correctly any longer.

## Temperature

After the DJing session above, feel how hot your computer is, especially underneath. If it's hot, you should consider getting some extra cooling. A desk fan pointed at the laptop can be all you need, there are also 3rd-Party coolers which will do a great job of keeping your laptop cool. Remember, it can often get hot at venues and micro-electronics such as that in your laptop can malfunction.

# SETTING UP AT THE VENUE

## Installation

Scratch Live needs some installation to be integrated into a DJ setup. If the venue doesn't already have a Rane hardware wired into their setup, work out how much setting up you will need to do, and how much of it can be done before the night begins.

## Leads/plugs

Make sure the turntables are correctly grounded to the mixer and that they are plugged into the correct inputs of the Rane hardware. For most Rane Hardware (SL 2, SL 3, SL 4, and TTM57 SL, Sixty-One, Sixty-Two and Sixty-Eight Mixers) make sure that the dip switches are set to the correct level for each input (phono for turntables, line for CDJ's). Bring up Scratch Live on your computer and make sure that tracks play forwards with the record movement, sometimes poorly serviced turntables have their RCAs swapped and this will result in the tracks playing in reverse.

Connect the line outs from the SL 1 to the line ins on your mixer and the THRU outputs to the phono ins. If you have an SL 2, SL 3 or SL 4 simply connect the outputs to the line level inputs on your mixer. The THRU function for playing regular vinyl is in the software next to the ABS, REL and INT mode buttons. If you're playing with other regular DJs, you may need a power adapter for your Rane hardware.



## Situation of gear

Make sure your laptop doesn't get in the way of the mixer, and that the position of your Rane hardware isn't placing any stress on leads. Ensure that with lighting system on you can see your screen clearly and reach the controls quickly.

## Swapping out

Playing with other DJs usually means mixing into the last track they play, if you're unable to install your Rane hardware beforehand, practice swapping the leads while one deck is still playing, dropping a tune in Scratch Live and then connecting the other leads. This can be fiddly, so bring a flashlight, and make sure you know which plugs are which so you can do it before the music dies!

## Calibration/sound check

It's important to check your setup beforehand so you know what to expect when you start DJing. All calibration should be done at the volume you will be performing at, with all potential sources of interference, especially lighting, on.

## Scopes

Install your headshells and play the control vinyl from the start, check the scopes, are the circles clean? Make sure the turntables's are correctly grounded to the mixer and that the Rane hardware is set to the correct level, are the turntables line-level? If so make sure in the setup screen that Scratch Live knows. Tweak the P/A and L/R knobs to get the innermost circles as round as possible.

## Threshold

Stop the records, play a track in internal mode, and click estimate with the needle on the record. Check the tracking percentage, is it hovering around 100%? If not, why not? Are there speckles in the scopes? This can mean noise and interference being picked up, if the tracking is bad try moving lights, moving power leads and turning off un-used equipment.

## Sound check

Run through some of your set with someone listening, are any of your tracks so compressed that they sound bad? Mark them in Scratch Live so you don't play those ones. Make sure you don't get drop outs and that the level from Scratch Live is loud while not clipping the mixer.

Check what the gain settings on the mixer should be, remember: those other DJs might not know what they're doing!

## Interference

Remember to keep your cell phone away from your DJing equipment, and find out who to talk to if you get interference during the gig.

## Other DJs

If you're playing with other DJs find out whether any of them use Scratch Live, maybe you can share your Rane hardware and save some setup time. Find out who is before you. If you need it, request they play a longer track to finish up so you can swap in your gear.

Show them Scratch Live, tell them how great it is, and where you bought it from :)

## Promoter/owner

He's the guy you will be talking to about getting paid at the end of the night. Make sure he's around to see how good you are!

## Sound tech

There shouldn't be any difference sound wise, but if the venue has a sound tech, let him know what you're using as a courtesy. Find out if there is any spare equipment (turntables, mixers, headshells etc) and where it's kept. If some of the club's gear fails you'll know what to ask for.

## Facilities

Find out where you can keep your gear before and after the show, where the closest bathrooms are and how hard it is to get to them with a crowd. Parking, if any, and where is safe to park is also good to know.

# The Gig

Put in your headshells, and go through the calibration sequence again. Check your levels and make the crowd go wild etc.

Clean your needles and control vinyl during the course of the night.

Keep an eye on the tracking indicator. Make sure everyone who's interested knows where they can buy Scratch Live.

It's a good idea if you can to record your set and listen back to it afterwards to see what went right, what went wrong and how it all sounded. This can be done easily with most Rane hardware by simply connecting either the aux or record out from the mixer to the aux input on the Rane hardware. With this you can record directly into Scratch Live. With an SL 1 you will need another soundcard and a 3rd party recording program. There is a [Recording your set](#) article which explains recording further.

# Potential Problems

It's unlikely that you will run into problems, but if something strange happens, you should know a few basics to figure out what's wrong.

First things to check are:

- The tracking indicator
- Dust on the needles
- Temperature
- The scopes in the setup screen
- Is your control vinyl is clean
- Other applications, tasks open

If you see the USB light coming on and sound glitches, the first thing to try is to switch to the setup screen and raise the USB buffer. If it's maxed out and you still get dropouts, make sure your cooling is working, your other programs aren't running and the tracks you're playing aren't corrupt somehow.

It might be a good idea to throw on some backup audio and restart your computer.

Quickly play backup audio and restart your computer. Make sure you don't play that file again until you've verified what the problem is.

If your computer crashes that iPod might come in real handy. Don't be scared, almost all of our users have never had a crash in a live situation, but try and remember the track you were playing, and come onto [Serato.com](#) and tell us about it, so we can make sure it never happens again.

If it turns out your problem was caused by a particular file, we need to know about it, so please retain the bad file and send it to us at some point (make a topic on the forum and we'll let you know how).