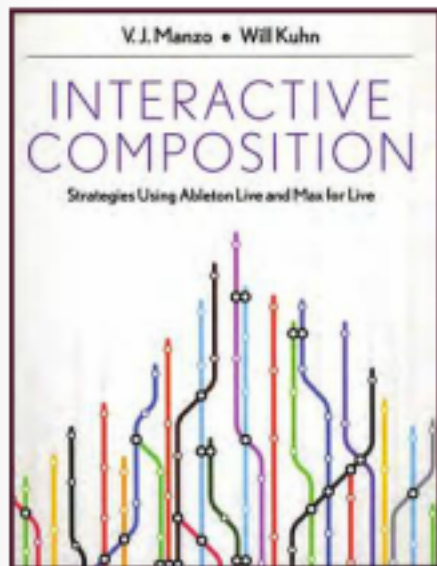




## INTERACTIVE COMPOSITION A BOOK REVIEW

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**I**nteractive Composition, by V.J. Manzo and Will Kuhn, is a complete how-to guide for creating technology-based music in a variety of popular styles. It contains clear, concise instructions, and examples for new users with little or no computer programming experience. This treasure-trove of lessons on creating synthesized music including hip-hop, rock, pop, and dubstep can be applied to other software platforms as well. A remarkable history of synthesizers and notable artists is sprinkled through the text.

Before providing more detail about *Interactive Composition*, here's a short primer on *Ableton Live* and *Max for Live*:

*Live* is a computer software program that has two modes: a traditional Arrangement View that is much like other Digital

Audio Workstation recording and composing programs (DAW's), and a non-traditional Session View which is like an improvisation and performance sketchpad. *Live*'s Session View is widely used in live performance by DJ's and in EDM (electronic dance music).

*Max for Live* is an embedded computer-programming tool that uses the visual programming language Max MSP. *Max for Live* enables the user greater flexibility to customize instruments, effects, and tools.

*Interactive Composition* is a complete guidebook for using *Live* and *Max* to create new music. This is a welcome and necessary addition to the music technology library. Expert guides and educators such as Manzo and Kuhn are needed to help teachers and students step up from *GarageBand*, *Mixcraft*, *FL Studio*, and other DAW's. Early chapters walk the reader step-by-step through *Live*'s Arrangement View and Session View. For users who are familiar with another DAW like *GarageBand*, early chapters provide valuable scaffolding. Clear written instructions, screen clips, and a companion website with sample and tutorial files complete the support for new users.

As the text progresses, the authors provide a clear, concise, non-technical chapter on programming with *Max*. They directly address the issue of, "Why would I want to start programming?" *Max* provides composers and performers an easy and logical way to create new effects and instruments. Instructions and visuals guide the reader through steps for pro-

gramming, with no prior computer programming experience necessary.

The bulk of *Interactive Composition* contains complete instructions for creating music in classic electronic styles: how to compose ambient music using synthesis techniques like Brian Eno's; creating effects like Trent Reznor of *Nine Inch Nails*; and step-by-step instructions for classic Dubstep wobbles. Each chapter is devoted to a specific style with its own unique effects. Detailed instructions walk the reader through creating and customizing each effect. The files from the companion website provide clear working examples, enabling the reader to move forward with original projects.

Is *Interactive Composition* for everyone? If you teach music creation with technology, it is a must-have. No music tech lab should be without it, even if the content is beyond the scope of your curriculum. Every teacher has advanced students who are eager to explore and experiment. The beauty of *Interactive Composition*'s clean writing style, detailed instructions, ample visuals, and companion website make it an ideal resource for lesson planning or for advanced students' independent study.

