PLUGIN SHOOTOUT

AUDIO

USER GUIDE

MAX FOR LIVE

BY CALUM VAUGHAN

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Plugin Shootout is a Max for Live workflow tool that helps you find the right plugin or preset for your session. Originally developed in collaboration with Jason Zdora to make A/B testing guitar amp simulations easier, it now works with any audio effect in Ableton Live.

Think of it as 'survival of the fittest' for your effects chain. Plugin Shootout activates your selection and deactivates the rest, saving you hundreds of clicks. Move your favourites to the front, delete the ones that don't fit, and repeat until you have a shortlist - or a winner.

Plugin Shootout also lets you compare effects processing the output of MIDI instruments and samplers. Use it to build creative modulation chains, make precise guitar tweaks, or explore any other effects-processing workflow.

SETUP

Place Plugin Shootout before the audio effects you want to compare. For simplicity, group the device and your comparison effects into the same chain of an Audio Effect Rack.

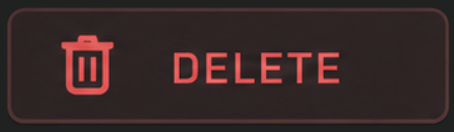




Now it's time to step through the candidates with the "Previous" and "Next" buttons. The selected effect will be enabled, with every other candidate being disabled. Feel free to keep your audio source playing while you compare.



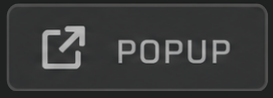
Move the selected effect to the front of the comparison order. Selection stays at its original position so you can carry on through the candidates.



Remove the selected effect from the chain. The replacement at that position becomes the next selection when one is available.



Open or close the selected plugin's editor. Auto-Reveal GUIs can do this as you switch.



Open the floating comparison controls to switch candidates without returning to the device.

PLUGIN SHOOTOUT

POPUP

FLOATING CONTROLS



Click POPUP to open a floating window with Previous, Next, Move to Front and Delete. Use it to compare candidates while working elsewhere in Live.

The labels show the current track, group, chain and selected effect.

Drag the hand to move the window. Click X to close it, or triple-click the drag handle.

POPUP / IN ABLETON LIVE

OPTIONS

OPTIONS

Plugin Shootout comes with several additional functions and appearance options. Click the Options button to see the full menu.

FUNCTIONS

Auto-Reveal GUIs
Show the selected plugin's editor when switching.

Open / Close All Windows
Open or close the plugin editors managed by this instance.

Turn Off Others
Disable the other comparison candidates.

Collapse Devices
Fold the controlled devices in Live's device view.

Mapping
Map MIDI controller or keys to device buttons.

APPEARANCE / HELP

Popup Size
Set the floating window to 100%, 150% or 200%.

Background & text colour
Set the interface colours with the two pickers.

Randomize BGs
Generate new background colours.

Help + Support
Open the built-in help.

Max Debug Window
Open the Max console to view diagnostic messages.

CONTROLLER MAPPING

Control Previous, Next, Move to Front and Delete with a MIDI controller or keyboard. Open Options > Mapping to reveal the dedicated mapping targets shown below.

Enter Live's MIDI Map or Key Map mode, select a target, then press the MIDI control or key you want to assign. Exit mapping mode to start using your assignments.

PREVIOUS	NEXT	MOVE TO FRONT	DELETE

Assignments stay active when the mapping panel is hidden. No enable switch is needed.

Undo/Redo: mapped actions do not support normal Undo/Redo, and some changes may still appear in Undo history. Use the ordinary mouse buttons when you need normal Undo/Redo.

Calum Vaughan calumvaughan05@gmail.com

USE CASES

Plugin Shootout has been designed to be highly flexible, facilitating a wide range of A/B testing workflows and combinations. Perhaps you just want to work with a simple group of effects, or maybe you're looking to optimise complex nests of effect groups. Regardless, Plugin Shootout should be able to handle it. Read on for examples of the different setups.

In the diagrams below, PS stands for Plugin Shootout. Each box labelled RACK contains a complete effects chain.

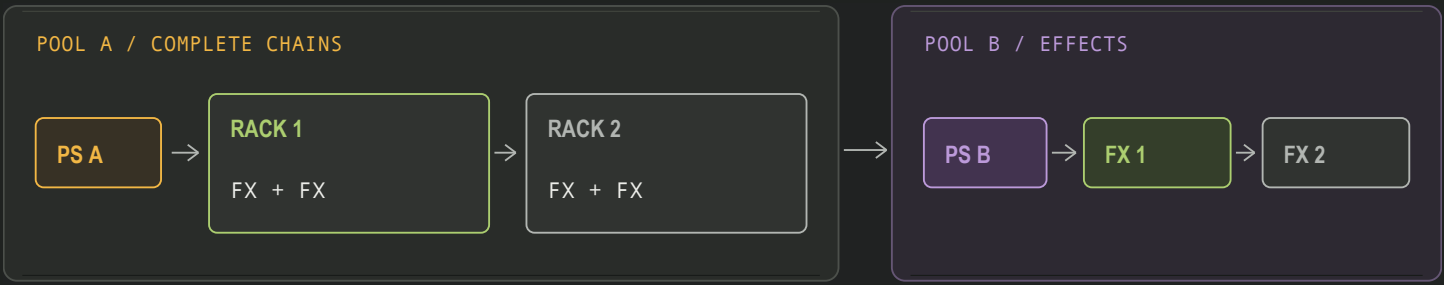
1 SIMPLE / ONE POOL OF EFFECTS

Place one Plugin Shootout before a group of effects to compare amp simulations, EQs, compressors or different presets. Only the selected candidate is enabled at any time.



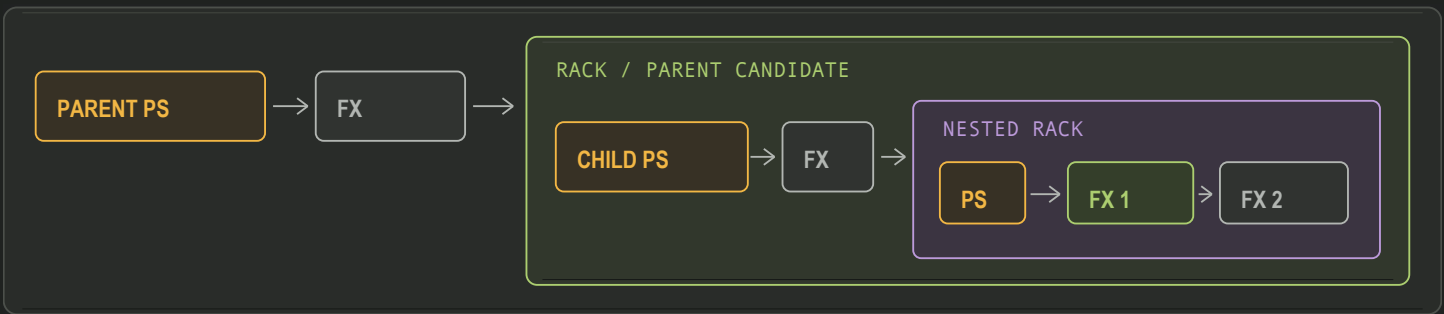
2 MULTIPLE / BUILD A COMPLETE SOUND

Place several Plugin Shootout instances on the same track, each before its own group of candidates. Make an independent selection in each group to build your sound. To compare several effects as a single candidate, place them together inside an Audio Effect Rack.



3 NESTING / A SHOOTOUT INSIDE A SHOOTOUT

A parent Plugin Shootout can compare individual effects and racks that contain their own child instances. The parent selects the outer candidate, while each child controls the effects inside its own rack. You can repeat this arrangement to create deeper comparisons.



Each instance controls the devices to its right at the same level, until the next Plugin Shootout or the end of the track or rack chain. A rack counts as one candidate for its parent, so Move to Front and Delete act on the whole rack. Use the child instance to compare the effects inside it.

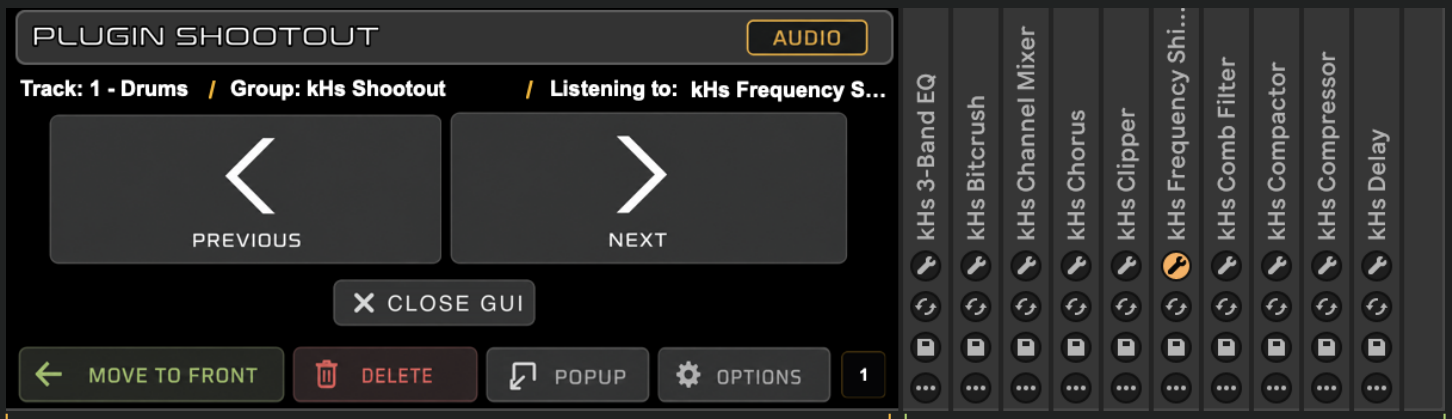
GO DEEPER

Nest racks to compare complete chains, explore variations within them and refine individual effects. This lets you keep alternatives organised and narrow down each choice without rebuilding your setup.

THE SETUPS IN ABLETON LIVE

The download includes three example racks and an example Live Set demonstrating simple comparisons, independent groups and nested racks. These examples require Live 12.4.6 or later; this requirement applies to the examples, not the standalone device. The screenshots below illustrate the three setups.

1 SIMPLE / ONE PS, ONE POOL



PLUGIN SHOOTOUT COMPARISON EFFECTS

One Plugin Shootout controls the effects to its right. Each folded device is a separate candidate, so you can compare different plugins or several instances of the same effect.

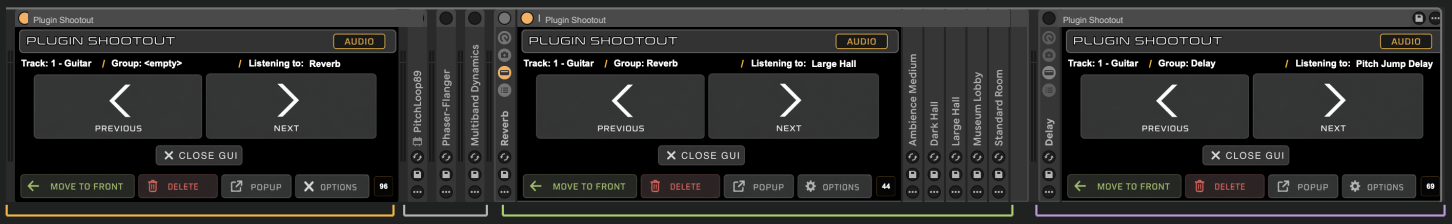
2 MULTIPLE / INDEPENDENT GROUPS



GROUP A / PS + CANDIDATES GROUP B / PS + CANDIDATES

Each rack contains its own Plugin Shootout and group of candidates. Both racks sit on the same track, and each selection remains independent. Combine the two selections to build a complete effects chain.

3 NESTING / PARENT + CHILD CONTROLLERS



PARENT PS FX RACK A / CHILD PS RACK B / CHILD PS

PARENT CANDIDATES: INDIVIDUAL EFFECTS + WHOLE RACKS

Each child Plugin Shootout controls the candidates inside its own rack.