Chord Pal by MGF Audio

Welcome to Chord Pal, a powerful yet intuitive device for "one-note chords", sequencing, and more.

Chord Pal is a Max For Live MIDI Effect that receives and outputs MIDI.

Installation

Chord Pal works in Ableton Live 12 and above on Windows and Mac. Place it in your Ableton User Library under Presets/MIDI Effects/Max MIDI Effect.

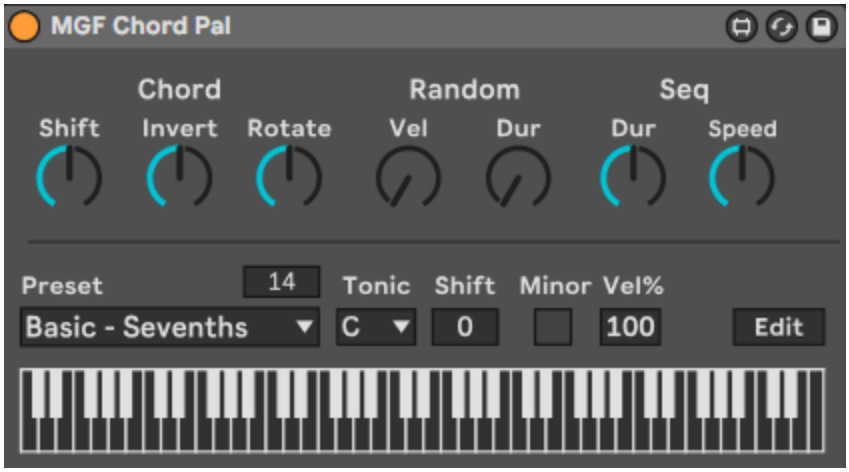
To find the path, go to User Library in Live's browser, right click an item, and select "show in Explorer/Finder".

Paste the whole Chord Pal folder here, **don't separate the AMXD device from the other files** as it will be expecting them to be in the same folder.

What is Chord Pal?

Chord Pal is a Max For Live effect that makes playing chords as easy as holding down a single key.

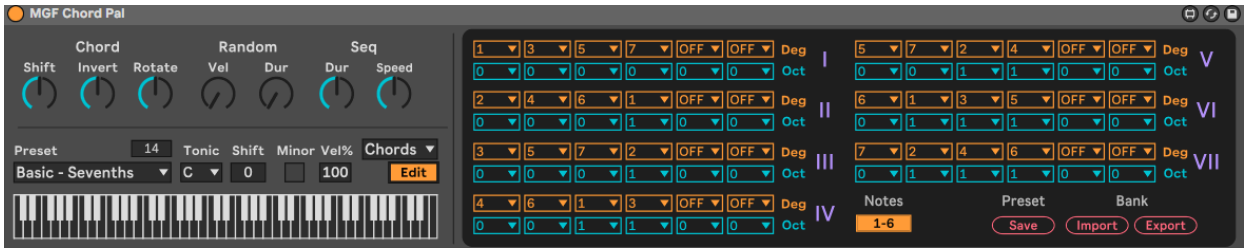
It is a "scale aware" device that divides each octave on the keyboard into 7 separate chords. In a standard configuration, you can think of simple triads ascending upwards, but Chord Pal allows for much more extensive chord sets.



Drag or load Chord Pal onto a MIDI track in Live and you'll be greeted with the default view that shows the macro controls, preset browser, and controls for changing the scale and velocity.

By default, Chord Pal starts in its "unexpanded" state. This allows for simple use without sacrificing screen space. Simply select a preset and play some keys. You'll hear that pressing a single key plays an entire chord, and you can move the macro knobs in the top row to change the chords on the fly.

If you want more control over the chords, or you want to use the sequencer and other functions, press the Edit button to expand Chord Pal.



Chords

At the heart of Chord Pal are 7 chord "channels". Each channel can have up to 12 notes, and each note is defined by scale degree (Deg) and an offset of the input note's octave (Oct).

The chord numbers (roman numerals) are typically designated for each step of the scale in ascending order. If the scale is set to C Major, playing a C into Chord Pal will result in chord I being triggered, D will trigger II, E triggers III, etc. Using the preset “Basic - Triads” would give you CMaj, Dmin, and Emin respectively.

The scale is set automatically by Live (see Live’s new Scale Aware features in Live 12). But you can override it by changing the root note (Tonic) and the 7 intervals that define the scale in the “More” section.

If we continue to use the scale of C Major as an example, a Deg value of 1 will play a C, 2 would be D, 3 would be E, etc. The Deg values are independent of the chord channel number, which means that a Deg of 1 would be C on any chord channel.

Chord Pal is optimised for heptatonic scales, but you can achieve more complex harmonies by using the # and *b* versions of scale degrees. This simply offsets that note by a semitone (+1 for sharp, -1 for flat).

The Oct control shifts that note in the chord up or down octaves, relative to the input note’s octave. So if you play a C3 and trigger a simple 1,3,5 chord with an Oct value of 0 for each note, you’d hear a chord with C3, E3, and G3.

Inversions can be easily achieved by changing the Oct control on the notes you want to invert, or using the Invert macro control, which inverts all output on the fly without changing the note settings.

Single presets can be saved (Save) and are automatically added to the bank. Entire banks can be imported and exported.

Sequencer

Chord Pal has two modes - whole chord mode and sequencer/arp mode. To use the sequencer, click the dropdown menu above the Edit button and select Seq, then select the **On toggle**.

The sequencer allows you to create patterns based on the notes inside the currently playing chord. Unlike the Deg control with chords, the **Notes dropdown** selects note positions inside the chord channel. So a value of 1 will play the first note in the chord, following the left-to-right order of notes, which may not necessarily be the lowest note in the chord in terms of pitch.

However, **Pitch+** shifts steps up or down by scale degrees, **not** note positions inside the chord. Velocity% changes the velocity of that step relative to the velocity of the input note, and Dur is note length in 16ths.

The sequencer contains up to 16 steps, but patterns can be up to many bars in length depending on the **Wait** values of each step (which delay the onset of the step in 1/16ths). Use a Wait time of 0 to play steps simultaneously (to create harmonies and chords).

The steps are output sequentially from top to bottom, but you can change the order by clicking on the circular button for that channel, and gesturing either up or down with the mouse.

Playing whole chords with the Sequencer

You can also trigger one of the 7 chords from a single sequencer step by selecting one of the “C” options. C is a shortcut to a particular chord, and different values will trigger different chords depending on the associated symbols. Using a value of C1 will trigger the first chord when that step is reached. C2 for chord II, C3 for chord III, etc.

CC stands for “current chord” (i.e. trigger the chord that corresponds to the input note). From here, the + and - values act as offsets from the current chord. So CC+1 plays one chord above the current chord, CC+2 plays two chords above the current chord, etc. As you might expect, CC-1 plays the chord below the current chord, CC-2 plays two chords below the current chord, etc.

Once again using a C Major scale as an example, playing a G would trigger chord V if the step is set to CC. CC+1 would trigger chord VI, CC+2 would trigger chord VII, CC+3 would trigger chord 1 but an octave higher, etc.

Polyphonic Sequences

Multiple input notes can be held down for even more complex sequences. For this purpose, the **Delay control** exists to offset any extra notes forward or backwards in order.

So if two notes are held with the sequencer on, and Delay is set to 1, the sequence for the second note will start on the final step of the sequence, so that it is always one step behind the first sequence. You can also use negative Delay values to push the second sequence ahead of the first. If three notes are held, the sequence for the third note will start on the second last step (i.e. one step behind the second note).

Other Sequencer controls

You can use the **Hold** button to continue the sequence indefinitely, even after releasing any held notes. So not only will the current sequences be held, but you can add more sequences on top simply by tapping another key.

The **Length control** cannot be changed directly but is rather an indicator of how long the sequence goes for based on the Wait times.

Sequencer presets can be saved to banks and banks are imported/exported in a similar manner to chord presets.

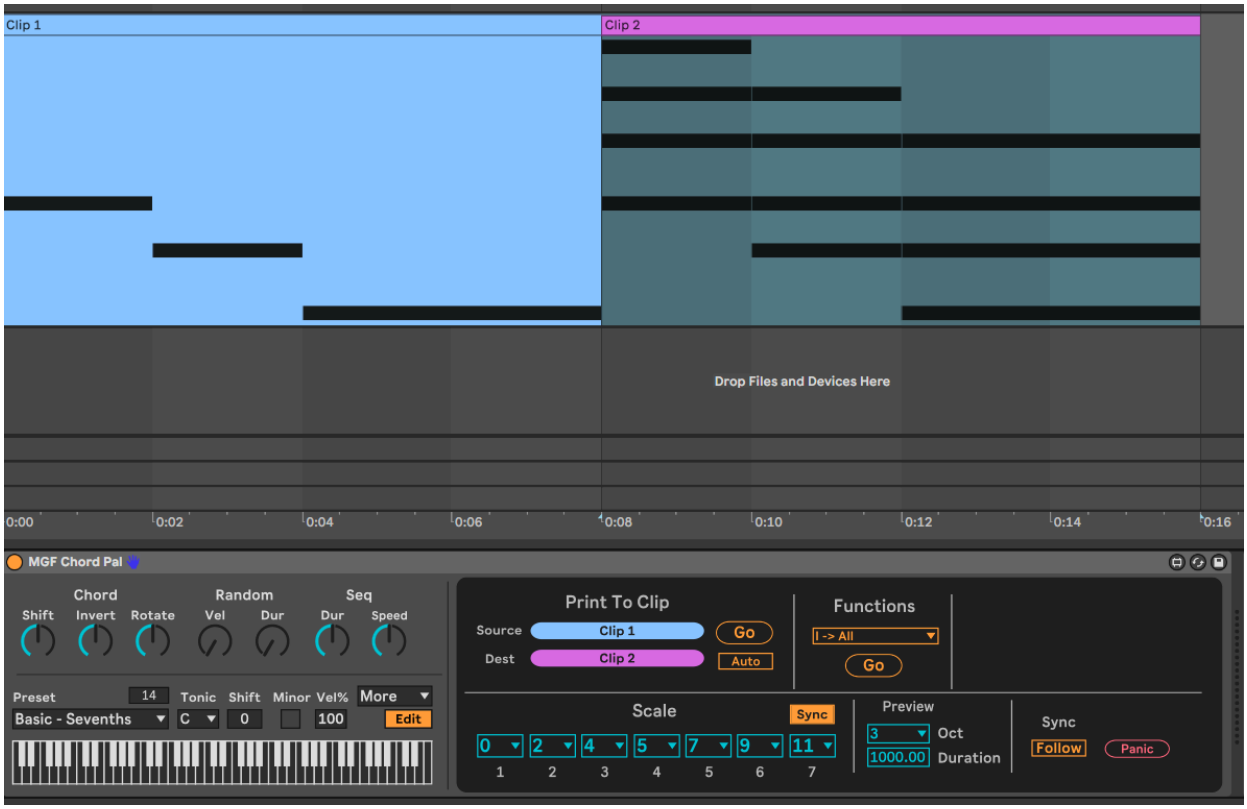
There are also controls to randomise the sequence (**Rand**) and the wait times (**Rhythm**). To help you easily double or halve the speed of the sequence, there are **x2** and **/2** buttons that affect the Wait times of all channels.

More

If you select “More” from the Edit menu, you’ll see a few options and extra features.

Print To Clip

With this feature, you can apply the current chord or sequencer settings to a MIDI clip in Live. You need to set a source and destination clip by clicking a clip, then clicking either Source or Dest to set it. **The source clip contains the input MIDI for Chord Pal and the destination clip will contain the output chords or sequence when you press Go.**



There is also an “Auto” mode that will automatically update the Dest clip when the Source - or any other Chord Pal settings - are changed.

Scale

You can change the seven scale steps to suit a variety of custom scales. By default, they will be synced to the current scale that is set in Live. You can override this by turning off the Sync button.

Functions

This menu contains a variety of functions and macros to create and modify chord sets, as well as copy presets from one bank to another. There are currently four functions:

- **I -> All**: This copies the pattern of the first chord channel to all other channels, increasing the Deg according to the channel. This means you can define a chord shape on channel I and map it to all other channels to get seven different chords based on the same shape.

- **Extend chords:** Adds thirds to the top of each chord, based on the last note in the chord.
- **Extend oct:** Extends each chord by adding octaves of the original notes.
- **Copy from Preset:** You can borrow a chord from one preset and replace a chord in your current set. When you select this option, an extra set of menus appears asking you for the preset and chord # to copy from, and the subsequent destination for this chord in your current set.

Preview

When you click on the roman numerals for each channel, you can quickly preview the chord .The length of the preview chord is set with Duration, and Oct will change the octave of any previewed chords.

Sync

This allows multiple instances of Chord Pal to share the same chord bank. By default, the first instance of Chord Pal is a “leader”, sending its chord information to other instances. On subsequent instances, you can enable the Follow button to receive this information from the leader Chord Pal.

(Not to be confused with the Sync button inside the Scale section)

Panic

If for any reason you are getting stuck notes or other weirdness, hit this button to clear all notes.