
makebeats101
HOW TO BUILD A PROFESSIONAL BEATMAKING STUDIO IN YOUR BEDROOM WITH MINIMAL EQUIPMENT

In this short report, I want to reframe your mindset that **you DON'T need to spend your life savings on software and equipment to pursue your dreams of making music.**

It doesn't have to cost you a mint to make your own music and compose your own beats. And thanks to technological advances in the past decade, it actually doesn't!

Musicians left and right are banging out dope beats from the comfort of their bedroom using nothing but a laptop and a bit of creativity.

The best part of it? You don't need to get them all at once to start composing beats (we'll talk more about this later).

This report is for you whether you're an aspiring producer looking to sell your beats, or if you're a rapper looking to make your own beats that you can record your own rhymes with (like I am).

So let's get on with it and build you a studio, shall we?

Nobody says you can't have your own beatmaking studio at the corner of your bedroom.

Computer *ESSENTIAL*

First and foremost, your computer is the heart of your music production studio. These days, computers are so powerful that you don't really need anything else to create music with -- everything happens inside the box.

Chances are, the computer you're using now is good enough to make beats with. I would recommend a system that has at least a dual-core processor with at least 1 gHz of processing power. You'll also want at least 4 GB of RAM, but if you have a choice, 8 GB or more is preferred.

You'll also want sufficient hard drive space -- I wouldn't go for anything less than 500 GB, personally -- however this isn't as important because you USB drives are pretty cheap these days. Just make sure you have enough USB ports on your computer, or alternately, you can buy a powered USB hub.

Aside from those must-haves, I don't really lean towards any particular direction as to what type of computer you should use.

Desktop or laptop, Windows or Mac... It's all pretty much the same, it's just a matter of what you're more comfortable using.

Personally? I use a Surface Pro 3 because that's what I have and that's what's comfortable for me. Your choice may vary.

Today's laptops are powerful enough to run an entire music rig.

DAW *ESSENTIAL*

Your digital audio workstation, or DAW for short, is the main program that you're going to be using to make beats.

This will be your platform for composing, recording and mixing your songs.

Every DAW allows you to load up instruments, record MIDI notes, adjust the song tempo, add effects to your sounds, mix your different instruments together, etc.

Each piece of software does things a little differently from each other, but at the end of the day they all allow you to do one thing: make music.

Your computer of choice determines what software you'll be using, as some programs only run on specific platforms.

Each one has specific advantages and disadvantages over the other and their own workflows -- it just depends on exactly what you're looking for and what you get used to. Take some time to download demos for each program, play around and see what you like.

NOTE: FL Studio is the program of choice for most hip-hop producers right now.

If you are willing to spend a little bit more money for a full setup now, you can't go wrong with either the full version of Reason ($299 on Amazon which is $200 less than retail) or Logic Pro X ($199 on Apple's App Store, Mac only).

Once you choose a program, don't look back -- learn it as well as you can. Resist the temptation to switch to another software just because their marketing convinced you that you'll make better music with it than the program that you're using.

I've played around with most of the programs, and trust me**: they're all going to be able to do the same thing -- the only difference is how you do it.**

What you'll want to do is to get to know your program so well that you're in music creation mode the moment you fire it up.

Your software should be an extension of your hand, and you shouldn't be searching for menu windows wondering how to do something.

There's a huge list of DAWs you can use, all of them claiming to be the best software for your music creation needs, but don't believe the hype. **Making good music isn't in the program that you use, but rather, the producer using it.**

FL Studio comes with a lifetime of free updates, so you only have to buy it once as opposed to other programs. There's different versions available, but for our purposes you'll want to go for the Producer Version which costs $199.

Sound libraries *ESSENTIAL*

So once you have your DAW to sequence with, you're going to need the actual sounds to sequence. Most beats are made with instrument samples or synthesized sounds.

By samples, I don't mean the traditional definition of sampling from vinyl records ala DJ Premiere or other sample-based producers -- I'm talking about single-shot recordings of certain instruments across different musical notes.

Some DAWs, such as Reason and Logic, come with a great instrument library. If you choose to go with one of those two programs, there won't be any need to invest in sound libraries for a while.

But if you want to expand past your DAW's factory sound bank, your best bet would be to buy an external plugin instrument such as IK Multimedia's Sampletank 3 or Native Instrument's Komplete 11.

Although external plugins can get pricey, the quality speaks for itself. You can get "creative" with how you get these programs though *wink wink*

Oh yeah, you'll also need drum kits. You can buy these everywhere for pretty cheap (http://hiphopdrumsamples.com/ offers great kits from big producers such as Hi-Tek, !llmind and Ski Beatz) but again, Reason already has an extensive amount of drums you can use without having to buy anything extra.

Logic Pro X will blow you away with its built-in sound library.

Need more sounds for your DAW? Logic and FL Studio will let you use Sampletank 3, a 32 GB sound library for $299.

MIDI keyboard

These keyboards don't make any sounds by themselves -- however, by plugging it in your computer it allows you to play instruments in your DAW.

I wouldn't say that having a MIDI keyboard is absolutely required, but it will help you so much with music composition that I would highly recommend that you get one for yourself.

Nektar's Impact LX49 – the most feature rich MIDI keyboard for just $159.

Yes, you'll still be able to program your melodies using your computer keyboard or click them in using your mouse... But not only is it tedious, but it's also quite limiting.

Most DAWs allow you to use your computer keyboard as a MIDI keyboard replacement of sorts.

But the disadvantage is you usually only have 1 to 1.5 octaves of notes to work with, which made it hard to figure out chords that sound nice and play well with each other.

I highly suggest that you make room in your budget for a MIDI keyboard controller that has at least 49 keys.

If you need to make a choice between a smaller keyboard with extra bells and whistles (such as knobs, faders, pads, etc.), or a bigger keyboard with no extras, I personally would go for the latter. More often than not, you'll use the extra keys more than the knobs and pads.

Now, a lot of people ask me whether they need to get a MIDI keyboard especially since they don't know how to play the piano.

Arguably you don't really NEED one. **However, having one will make it much, much easier to play melodies, which will only help you make better beats.**

And as you progress and get better, you'll pick up some keyboarding skills along the way. There's nothing quite like playing out melodies with your hands. The feels, man, the feels!

As for my recommendation, **there's no better keyboard than the Nektar Impact LX49 for those on a budget** (\$159 on Amazon). You get 48 keys that feels incredibly like a real piano, PLUS the faders and knobs as well as pads for programming drum sounds.

The Impact LX49 also integrates seamlessly with a wide range of DAWs so you can control your software without needing to reach for your mouse.

I like it so much that I'm not even going to bother recommending any other piece of equipment – you won't find anything else that gives you more for your buck.

Nektar is a small company, so it's not as popular as other brands of MIDI controllers such as M-Audio, but trust me, you really can't go wrong with this keyboard.

I don't know how to play the keys either, but I consider my MIDI keyboard to be an ESSENTIAL tool when I'm producing beats, so get one as soon as you can afford one.

Studio Monitors

It's incredibly difficult to make a beat that sounds great when you're using laptop speakers.

You won't be able to hear the full spectrum of the sounds you're using because bass is virtually non-existent on tiny speakers, and all you'll be able to hear are the mids and highs.

You'll need a pair of studio monitors so you can hear the instruments in your beats and how they sound with each other.

They're also designed to give you a flat and clear representation of your music, so your mixes will translate well to other speakers.

It doesn't matter so much what monitors you use as long as you're using some kind of speaker system to compose and mix your beats with.

For the budget conscious, there's nothing wrong with using a pair of hi-def home speakers and a pair of headphones.

My headphone recommendations would either be the KRK KNS 8400 ($99 on Amazon) or the Audio Technica ATH-M50S ($113 on Amazon). You can compose your beats using your home speakers (there's nothing quite like feeling that thump in front of your face!) and mix using either one of these headphones.

Audio Technica ATH-M50 headphones.

KRK KNS 8400 headphones.

Just be sure to make it a habit to listen to your mixes through other speakers (car stereo, headphones, iPhone, home theatre, etc.) if you do decide to go this route to make sure they translate well in other systems.

Do keep in mind that you WILL have to upgrade your equipment later on as you get more serious about music production!

But when you're just starting out without a lot of cash to spend, this is a low-budget option that's perfectly suitable.

If you do have room in your budget for studio monitors now though, I would highly recommend the Presonus Eris E5 for your first pair.

It's available for $260 a pair on Amazon and are probably the flattest pair of studio monitors you'll find in this price range.

Some people also prefer the KRK Rokit 5s (which you can get for $299 online) for a completely different sound for a similar price range.

It's difficult to make recommendations about studio monitors because the listening and mixing experience is so subjective.

What I would do in this position would be to head to the nearest music store in your city, bring a playlist of your favorite music and plug them in as many monitors as you can, and make a decision from there.

Presonus Eris E5s at work.

KRK Rokit 5 studio monitors.

Conclusion

We've come to the conclusion of this short report.

At this point, there's really nothing left to hold you back – you have all the information you need to start building your own bedroom studio using your computer today.

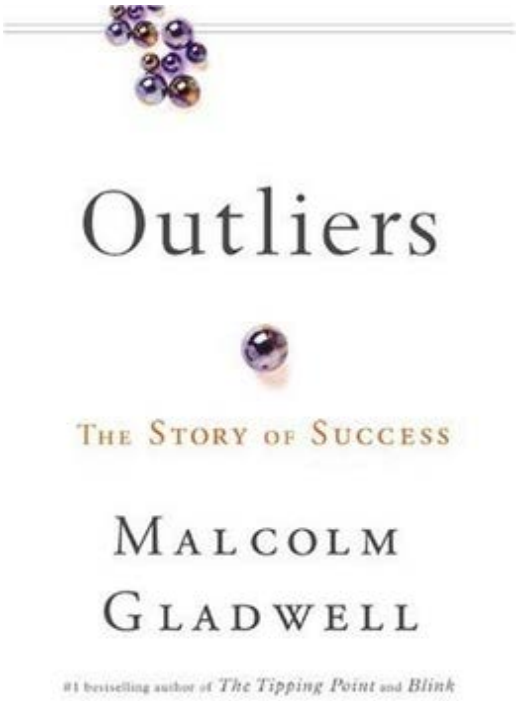
The only thing left for you to do is to download the software of your choice and start making music.

If your first beat doesn't sound too hot, don't worry – nobody gets it right on the first try.

Malcolm Gladwell wrote a book called "Outliers" that basically concluded that people who are great at their craft spent at least 10,000 hours practicing what they now do best.

Just keep practicing your craft and put in your "10,000 hours" and you'll get there – trust me.

I hope this report has been helpful to you in your journey to make your own music and produce your own beats!



Malcolm Gladwell hypothesizes that the key to success is practicing a specific task for at least 10,000 hours.