

USING THE DECKS: BASICS

“As a DJ, I’m always counting in the back of my head.”

—Armin van Buuren

SUBCHAPTERS

- Armin's On-Stage Setup
- Organize Your “Record Box”
- Use Hot Cues to Edit on the Fly
- Make It About the Music

CHAPTER REVIEW

Armin recommends that all aspiring DJs learn their equipment inside and out—if you don’t own the right gear, go rent what you need for a month and practice. You should be competent with all the different musical functionalities of your gear and comfortable enough to troubleshoot any technical problems that you might encounter during a performance.

Armin’s typical DJ setup includes four Pioneer CDJ-2000 players and an XONE DB4 mixer. Why four CDJs? It’s simple: Computers (and most technology) can break. Having more than two players available when performing live means you can play through most unexpected technical issues. Armin likes the XONE DB4 mixer because of its sound and, most importantly, the capability it provides to apply different effects—especially reverb—per individual channel (rather than just the master channel). This opens creative possibilities that help him smooth his mixes and add dramatic effects to his sets.

Armin’s tracks are organized in advance by key and BPM so that he can easily mix tracks together. He thinks simple, seamless transitions are key to keeping your audience in a state of trance. The audience is there to hear the tracks you’re playing, not the fancy tricks you can do with the decks. Armin uses preprogrammed hot cues—which let him jump to preassigned points in the track at the push of a button—to edit tracks on the fly. Using these cues, Armin can let a song go long if the audience likes it, or jump toward the end if it doesn’t rock the crowd.

LEARN MORE

- Research the equipment Armin uses in this chapter, such as the [CDJ-2000](#) or the [XONE DB4](#). Rent this equipment or similar models to practice your DJ set at home. Practice until you’re completely comfortable and feel like you could stay cool in an on-stage technical disaster.