



# MIDI Sequencing: Reason 4

Reason 4 is the ultimate in virtual studio simulation.<sup>7</sup>



## > Why Reason?

Reason 4 is a virtual 'rack' interface that can hold as many samplers, synths and drum grooves as your RAM can handle. This is then tied in to a virtual mixing desk that is linked to a MIDI arrange window with all the features of draw, copy, paste and quantise that you would expect from Logic or Cubase. The interface includes simple scrolling and a detachable MIDI window. As an addition, the included Factory and *Orchestral Sound Banks* provide real samples for you to trigger with a MIDI device or virtually in the arrange window. If you are after making a dance track, pop album or film score Reason 4 can do it – without recording any audio.

**Reason version 4 demo**

**Download Reason Demo (Mac OS, 156 MB)**  
The Reason demo has all the features of the full version but is save/export disabled. [Read more](#)

**Download Reason Demo (Windows, 141 MB)**

New to Reason? [Check out the introduction video](#) to help you get started.

**More Reason downloads**

**Reason updates**  
Free upgrades for owners of Reason.  
[Reason 4.0.1](#), or [older versions](#)

For documentation, add-on software and more reason downloads, [go here](#).

## > Setup

The demo for Reason 4 is easily accessible but you do need approximately 150MB of free space to install it, and Broadband to download it. Once it is installed save/export features are disabled.

Upon opening Reason for the first time you need to setup your audio/MIDI preferences – and if you have an external MIDI keyboard I recommend you use it!

On the right you can see a standard layout of Reason 4 in demo mode. A song has already been programmed in and each of the different effects, synthesizers or programmed loops have their 'playings' set in the MIDI arrange window at the bottom of the screen. Reason 4 now has the ability to detach this window and therefore have it floating on top for better access. The Mixer at the top controls the outputs and effects, while The Transport Bar is at the bottom of the screen for playback control.



<sup>7</sup> Demo Downloads Picture and Reason Logo: <http://www.propellerheads.se/>.

I was surprised at how quickly I got the program up and running. The sounds are definitely not standard computerized MIDI but very realistic due to the Soundbanks that accompany the program. In reading up on the developer *Propellerheads Software* I found the main aim for the creation of this unique program:

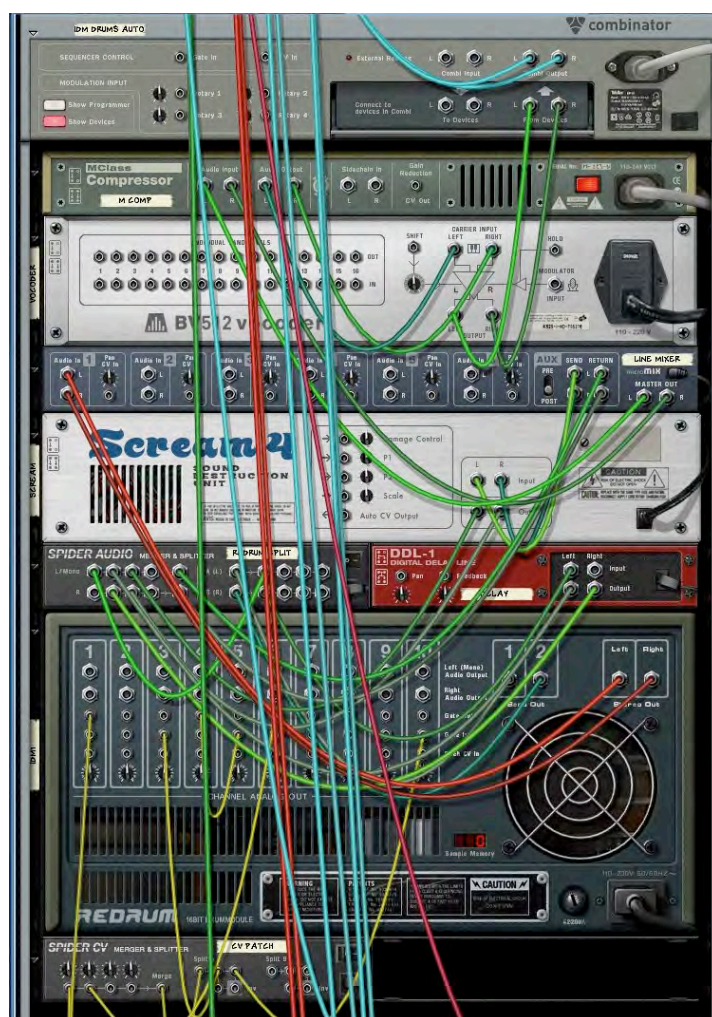
*“Having essentially started the business of software emulation of classic musical hardware, Propellerhead Software has worked very hard on delivering a comprehensive, self-contained virtual synthesizer and audio processing rack to rival expensive, heavy hardware equivalents.”*<sup>8</sup>

From my first impressions Reason 4 seems to be just that. However, I will mainly be focusing on the MIDI Sequencing side of Reason for this review.

### > GUI & Fundamental features

The interface for Reason 4 is nothing short of amazing. Every component is linked *virtually* by cables, just like a real studio. Press ‘tab’ and the entire program turns around to show you its spaghetti linking all the ins and outs to other components. You can click and drag them anywhere you want. The cables even sway and fans are whirring!<sup>9</sup>

When you create a ‘new’ file up pops a mixer with connections ready to go. You then click on ‘create’ and add something like a ‘Redrum’ unit to program in some loops. What is very cool is that the cables are instantly ‘connected’ and as soon as the loop starts you hear everything through the above mixer. The ‘Redrum’ unit is also labelled and given its own track in the MIDI Arrange window below. Everything is setup automatically and with such ease. The only time things can go wrong is when you add a unit above a previous one and you are momentarily confused as the tracks are rearranged to reflect this new order.



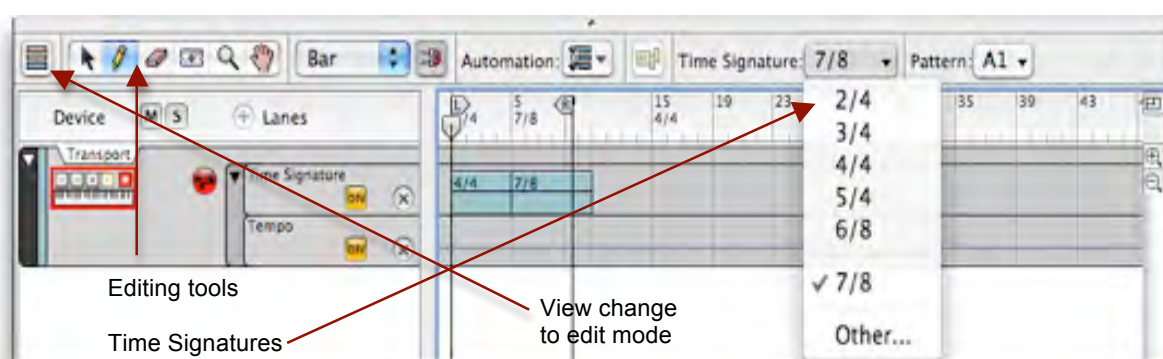
The entire program makes you feel as if anything is possible – that any button can be pressed, cable moved or sequence programmed just by a click of the mouse. This is a real testament to the minds behind its creation.

<sup>8</sup> D Biedny, *Propellerhead Reason 4*, viewed 29 March 2009, <[http://www.maclife.com/article/propellerhead\\_reason\\_4](http://www.maclife.com/article/propellerhead_reason_4)>.

<sup>9</sup> Back of Reason Wires Picture: <[http://www.vaevictus.net/reason/rack\\_back.jpg](http://www.vaevictus.net/reason/rack_back.jpg)>.

## > Getting your hands dirty

The Reason 4 website claims that the integrated sequencer is “...dedicated to turning your ideas into great music... [that it] is swifter, stronger and more intuitive than ever.”<sup>10</sup> To say it is intuitive is laying it on a bit thick. There are a few tricky steps before you to get to the sequencer itself. But the process is very simple once you have tinkered with it. What is fantastic, is that any unit/device you add to the virtual rack gets its own track automatically in the sequencer with “...separate lanes for note, performance and automation data.”<sup>11</sup> You have tools for drawing, cutting, pasting and looping, in what I call the blocks format (arrange mode), or the side keyboard view (edit mode). This is basic MIDI events creation. You can draw in events and they ‘snap’ into time thanks to automatic quantizing (Reason 4 also has the ability to now change time signatures).



Anything entered into the sequencer arrange window can be “opened, sliced or moved.” Each event tells the unit/device of that track to trigger its programmed sound to the length/timing of the drawn-in event. Creating a MIDI controller of sorts within a virtual studio.

Another useful addition to the sequencer is the *Tool Window* that contains all of the MIDI data for “...those detailed editing functions you use all the time; quantize, transpose, note velocity, note length and legato.”<sup>12</sup>



Just as you would expect to see in Logic or Cubase, Reason also has *matrix edit* capabilities for pitch and velocity. Above is the edit window in which events are shown next to a corresponding pitch (C3, D3, E3), just like a MIDI sequencer. For a more detailed and *interactive* look at the Reason Sequencer visit the [Sequencer Information Page](#) by *Propellerheads*. This link also has access to the other units in Reason 4.

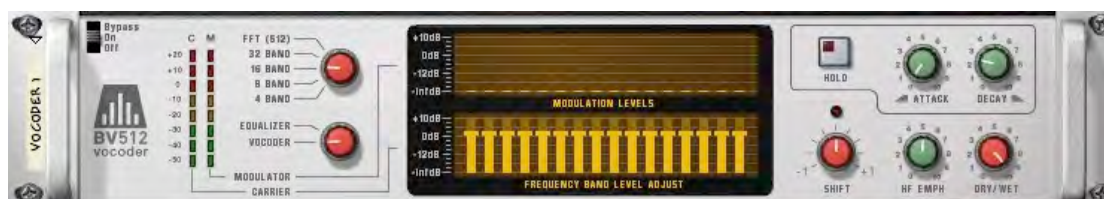
<sup>10</sup> Propellerheads Products Information, viewed 29 March 2009, <[http://www.propellerheads.se/products/reason/index.cfm?article=devices\\_sequencer&fuseaction=get\\_article](http://www.propellerheads.se/products/reason/index.cfm?article=devices_sequencer&fuseaction=get_article)>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

### > Will it work in the classroom?

I envision real possibilities for all of the components to instruct in various aspects of music. Whether up the front of the classroom or with each student on their own machine, Reason 4 will intuitively instruct on subtractive/additive synthesis, wave formation and acoustics, musical textures and the workings of various audio rack systems (virtually, of course). I had even set up a lesson where I used the 'Vocoder' unit in Reason 4 to simulate the *Doctor Who* style sounds of the *Daleks* in our Film Music studies.



*Propellerheads Software* have also produced a unit entitled Teaching Music With Reason<sup>13</sup> that is now available for free (link available at end of review). Its lessons comprehensively address the main elements of music and allow for a lot of interaction with the software. In some cases, this is better than the manual!

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### > Does anyone ever read the manual?

Troubleshooting and support are readily available. Reason has reached an almost frenetic fan base that churn out refills (different soundbanks) and songs constantly. There are numerous tutorials on YouTube as well as many professionally developed videos from Reason4Tutorials or Lynda's Tutorials. The *Propellerheads* support page is likewise excellent, but you need to sign up to access it.

### > What else compares?

FL Studio seems to be a big competitor to Reason 4. Touting that "...you will be creating wav, mp3 or midi songs or loops only minutes after launching it."<sup>14</sup> It doesn't seem to have the amount of MIDI control that Reason does or the same stable *Rewire* ability, yet it does support AU and VST plug-ins. Something Reason still lacks.

<sup>13</sup> Concept and written material by Stephanie Sobey-Jones

<sup>14</sup> FL Studio Overview, viewed 29 March 2009, <<http://flstudio.image-line.com/documents/what.html>>.

## > Final Thoughts

Reason is a unique package. Inside the virtual studio there are numerous methods of sound production: synthesis, sampling or MIDI sequencing. You can use your mouse and keyboard, or an external MIDI controller for triggering the inserted rack devices/units. Everything is wired together into a slick, realistically sounding package. I highly recommend Reason for educative sessions and the supportive documents are an added bonus.

Reason does lack some features such as AU or VST support, better MIDI sequencing such as scoring, but that is not its purpose. It allows you to create music in a 'hands on' fashion while giving you the chance to experiment with sound. For its price, professional quality and customizable setup, Reason 4 shows you something new every time you use it.

## > Reason Resources

- <http://free-loops.com/download-reason-4-free.php>
- <http://www.kreativsounds.com/propellerhead-reason-4/>
- <http://www.reasonstation.net/>
- <http://www.reasonfreaks.com/>

**Developer:** <http://www.propellerheads.se/>

**Price:** \$710 AUD

**How to Buy:** <https://www.propellerheads.se/shop/>

**Get the demo here:** <http://www.propellerheads.se/download/>

**Computer requirements:**

PC with XP, SP2 or Vista, 1GB, 2GB free hard disk space, DVD Drive, 1024x768 screen resolution, 16-bit windows compatible audio card and a MIDI keyboard/interface.

Mac OSX 10.4 or later, 1GHz Intel recommended with 1GB RAM, 2GB free hard disk space, DVD Drive, 1024x768 screen resolution and a MIDI keyboard/interface.

**Do you need to be a trained musician to operate this?** Not necessarily, but you can accomplish much more with a trained ear and harmony skills.

**Educational Value?** Exceptional. And it's fun. Check out the free booklet *Teaching Music With Reason* available at:

[http://www.propellerheads.se/download/index.cfm?fuseaction=get\\_article&articl](http://www.propellerheads.se/download/index.cfm?fuseaction=get_article&articl)

## Overall Rating of 5 out of 5 Mice

