

🔪 Red Pen for Ableton Live

User manual - review notes on clips, tracks, scenes, and arrangement positions, inside Live.

Version 0.9.5 · August 2026 · by Lincoln Tracy · redpen.tools

What Red Pen does

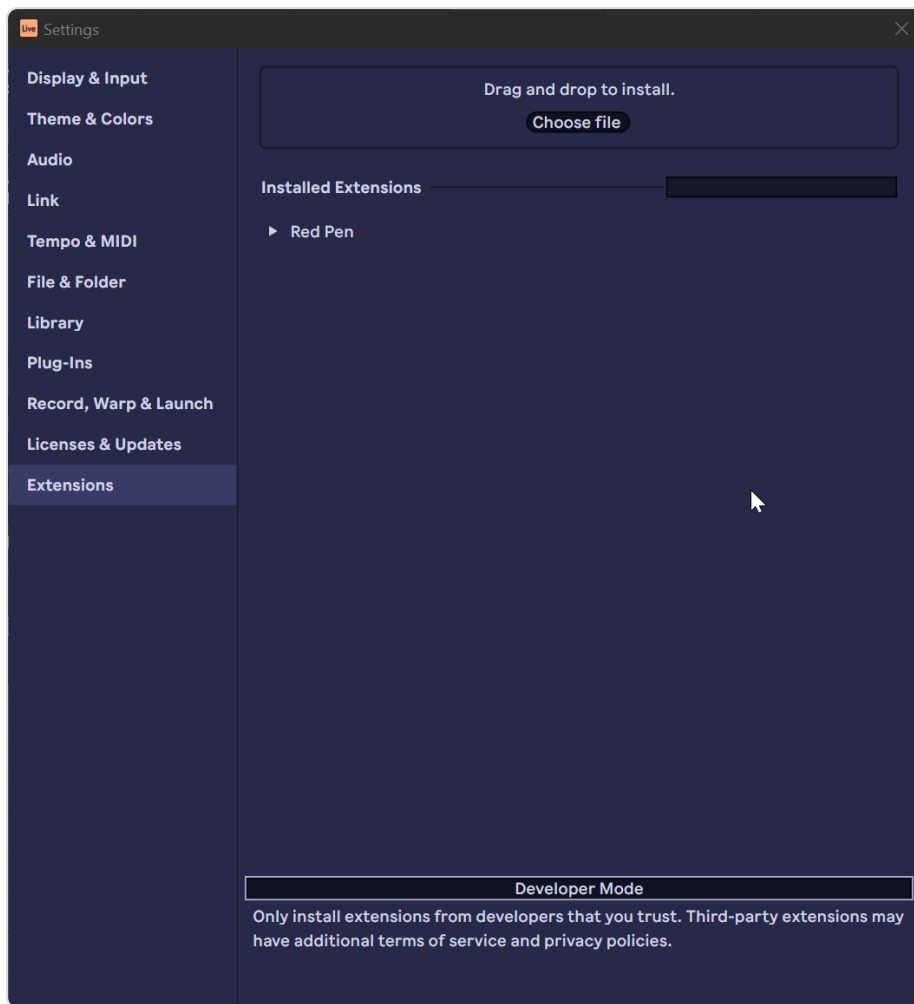
While you work on a track, you attach typed notes to the things they're about: "kick clashes with the bass through the drop" pinned to the kick clip, "does the bridge need its own scene?" pinned to the scene. Notes appear on a board inside Live, as locators in your arrangement, and as red-tinted clips in session view. Fix the thing, resolve the note, and the marks disappear.

Your notes are saved to a local file on your computer. They are never written into your `.als` project file, and nothing leaves your machine.

Requirements and install

- An Ableton Live 12 license.
- The **Live 12.4 Beta** from Ableton's beta program (ableton.com/beta). Extensions are a beta feature; stable Live cannot load them yet.

Install: open Preferences in the Live Beta, go to the **Extensions** page, and drag `Red-Pen-0.9.5.ab1x` onto it.



Live's Extensions page after installing.

Capturing a note

Right-click a clip, track, scene, or device and open the **Extensions** submenu. Three Red Pen entries appear:

- **Red Pen: Open board** - the notes board, already pointed at what you clicked.
- **Red Pen: Quick note** - a small box for one thought. Type, press Enter, back to work.
- **Red Pen: Resolve notes** - closes the open notes on the thing you clicked, without opening the board.



The right-click entries on a clip.

Type tokens

Leading characters set the note's type and priority as you type, in the quick note and the board's add box alike:

You type	You get
! the kick is late	a Problem
? does this need a riser	a Question
* double the pad here	an Idea
!! clipping on the master	high priority (combines: !! ! = high-priority Problem)

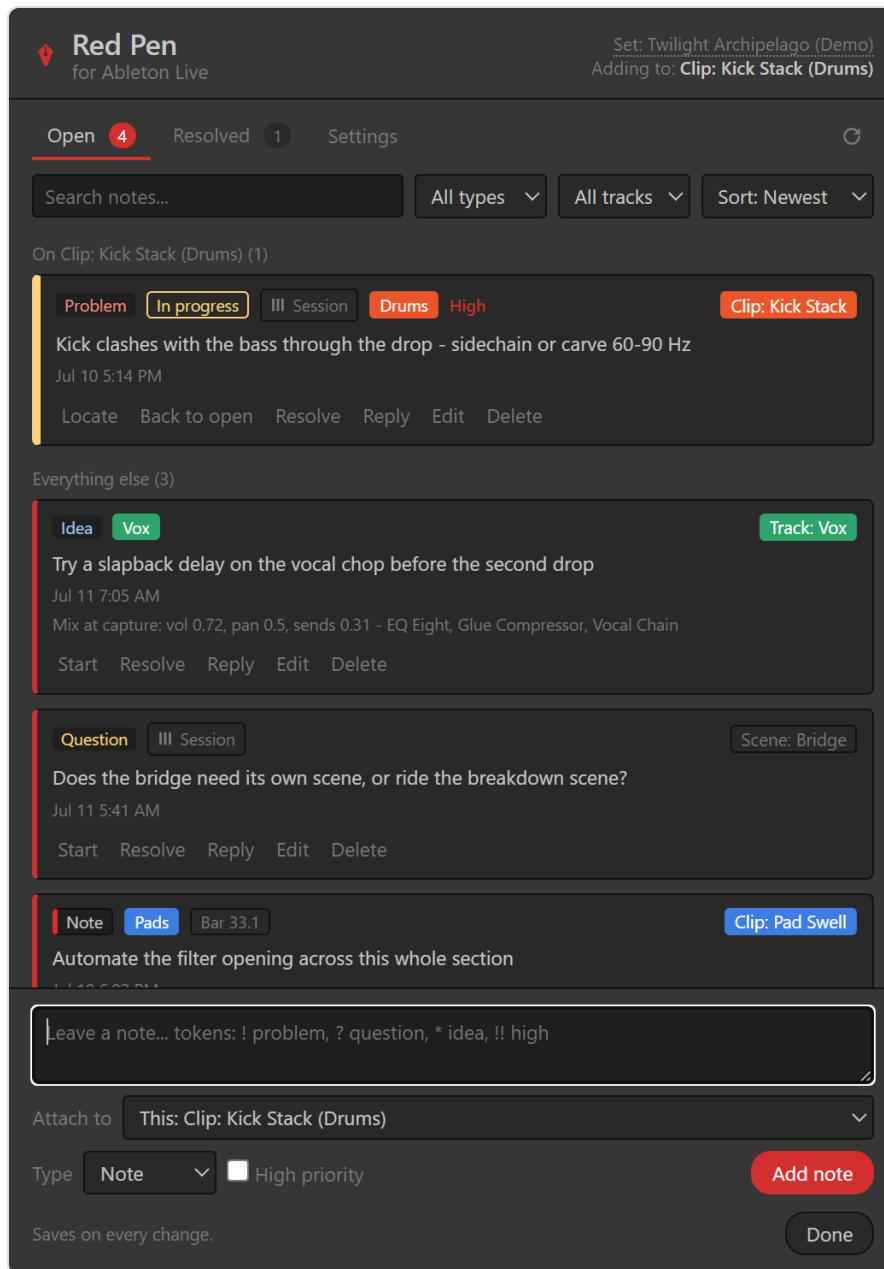
Red Pen quick note on **Clip: Kick Stack (Drums)**

! kick is late against the bass

Enter saves - Shift+Enter for a new line - Esc cancels - tokens: ! problem, ? question, * idea, !! high

The quick note dialog. Enter saves, Esc cancels, Shift+Enter makes a new line.

The board



The board, opened from a right-click on the Kick Stack clip. Notes on the clicked thing group at the top.

Each card shows the note's type, its status, the track it belongs to (in the track's own color), where it lives (Session bars icon, Arrangement lines icon, or a Bar number), and the clip or scene it's pinned to. Track notes also record the mixer at capture time - the "Mix at capture" line - so a mix note keeps its evidence even after the mix moves on.

- **Search and filters** narrow by text or track, and the type pills toggle independently - so you can show Notes and Ideas while hiding Problems and Questions in one click. **Sort: Timeline** orders notes by bar position so a mix pass follows the song. Your sort choice sticks.
- **Start** marks a note in progress; **Resolve** closes it (with a 4-second Undo in the footer); **Reply** threads a follow-up; **Delete** asks twice.
- **Flash** blinks the note's clip in Live for about a second so your eye finds it - white if the clip is currently tinted red. It does not scroll the view or select anything: Live's extension API has no way to move the view, select a clip, or

move the playhead, so a colour blink is the whole trick. Notes anchored to an arrangement range have no clip to blink, so their button is greyed out and points you at the RP: locator instead.

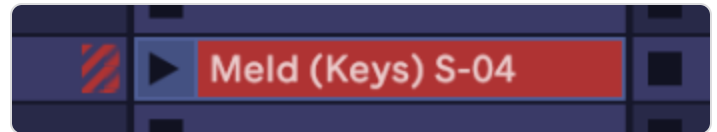
- The board saves on every change. Closing warns you if typing would be lost.

Keyboard: `Ctrl+Enter` adds the note in the draft box (`Ctrl+Shift+Enter` adds and closes), `Ctrl+Enter` saves an edit, `Esc` steps back out of fields and asks before closing over unsaved typing.

Notes show up inside Live



Open notes with a timeline position become "RP:" locators.



Session clips with open notes tint Red Pen red.

What Red Pen writes into your Set. Three things, all ordinary Live objects you can see and undo: a locator at bar 1 named `RP#...` (always - it is how notes stay attached to this Set), `RP:` locators for notes with a timeline position (Settings, on by default), and session clip colors (Settings, off by default). Your note text is never written into the `.als`. Both locator kinds and the tint have switches on the Settings tab, and the same list is printed there.

Locators are real Live locators: they save into the `.als` and travel with the Set. Resolving a note removes its locator and restores the clip's color. If you recolor a channel mid-review, the tint follows your new color. Rename a track or clip, or move a clip, and Red Pen re-finds the note's target the next time the board opens; a target that no longer exists gets a "Missing" chip on its card.

Arrangement notes follow the timeline. Insert eight bars of intro and Live moves its locators with everything else - including the RP: ones. Next time the board opens, notes anchored to an arrangement range read their locator back and move with it, so bar 52 still means bar 52. Drag an RP: locator yourself and its note follows that too. Two things to know: a note only follows while it still has a locator (so this stops working if you turn RP: locators off), and if two notes start with the same 40 characters Red Pen cannot tell their locators apart and leaves both alone rather than guess.

Each Set keeps its own notes

Opening the board in a Set creates a locator named `RP#...` at beat 0. That locator is the Set's identity: the board only ever shows the open Set's notes, so you can't resolve the wrong project's note. Leave the marker alone.

The marker lives in the `.als`, which means it only becomes permanent once you **save the Set**. Creating it marks the Set as changed, so Live will offer to save on close - take that offer. Close without saving and the marker goes with it, leaving any notes you wrote unattached to that Set. The board says so plainly the first time, on the open that created the marker.

Save As and Save a Copy duplicate the marker. Live copies every locator, the `RP#` one included, so without help the new Set claims the same identity as the original and both show the same notes.

If you run the Red Pen Hub, the board notices and asks. The Hub can read Live's window title - the extension cannot, since Live's API exposes no file name, path or save event - so when the file name and the Set's Red Pen name disagree, a bar appears at the top of the board with three answers:

- **New version** - this file gets its own identity, your open notes come with it, and the resolved ones stay with the file they were closed in.
- **Same Set** - one identity, one set of notes; the Set adopts the new name.
- **Not now** - nothing changes, and it stops asking for that name.

It never decides for you. The detection is a guess, and only you know whether "final_v7" is a new version or a rename. Without the Hub there is nothing to detect it with: delete the `RP#` locator in the new Set and reopen the board to mint a fresh identity by hand.

The Set's name shows at the top of the board. Click it to name or rename; if you run the Red Pen Hub, the name is picked up automatically from Live's window title.

Settings

Red Pen
for Ableton Live

Set: Twilight Archipelago (Demo)
Adding to: **Clip: Kick Stack (Drums)**

Open 4 Resolved 1 **Settings**

CAPTURE

☒ **Auto-name unnamed clips on capture**
When you Red Pen a clip that has no name, the clip gets named "<track> <bar>" (arrangement) or "<track> S<scene>" (session). Named clips keep notes identifiable and make their anchors survive a Set cleanup.

IN LIVE

☒ **Tint session clips that have open notes**
Session view has no locators, so clips with open notes are tinted Red Pen red instead. The original color is restored when the note is resolved or deleted (or this setting is turned off).

☒ **Remove locator when a note is resolved**
Resolving a note deletes its RP: locator from the arrangement. Turn off to keep resolved markers on the timeline.

☒ **Remove locator when its clip is deleted**
If the clip a note is anchored to no longer exists, the note's locator is released (the note itself is kept). Checked on every save or board open - Live gives extensions no live change events.

RED PEN HUB

☐ **Push notes to Red Pen Hub** ([Learn More](#))
Mirrors this store to your local Hub (one project per Set) at board open and after every save. Statuses changed on the Hub board flow back here. Get the URL and token from the Hub's connect info.

Hub URL

Hub token Test

Saves on every change. Done

The Settings tab. Hub fields stay greyed out until you turn the push on.

- **Time signature** - under Timeline. Live's extension API does not expose a Set's time signature, so Red Pen cannot read it: tell it once and every bar number it shows matches Live's ruler. Left alone it assumes 4/4, which is why bar numbers were wrong outside 4/4 before you set it. Bar numbers on notes you already have refresh the next time the board opens.
- **Auto-name unnamed clips** - a captured clip with no name gets one ("Drums 33.1" in arrangement, "Drums S-05" in session), which keeps its note findable after a cleanup.
- **Tint session clips** - the red session tint, on or off. Turning it off restores every clip's color.
- **Create locators for timed notes** - on by default. Turn it off if you use locators for your own purposes and don't want RP: markers in your timeline; existing ones are cleared. The **RP#** identity marker is separate and stays either way, because scoping depends on it.
- **Locator removal** - whether resolving a note, or deleting its clip, removes the RP: locator.

- **Your name** - under Collaboration. Set it once and every note and reply you write is signed with it, so a shared Set shows who said what. It applies to all Sets, not just the open one. Leave it blank for no byline.
- **Push notes to Red Pen Hub** - optional, off by default. See below.
- **Backup and portability** - show the notes file in your file browser, export every note for this Set to JSON and CSV, or import notes from a `red-pen-import.json` placed in the notes folder. Import only adds notes it hasn't seen, so it's safe to run twice.

The Red Pen Hub (optional)

The Hub is a separate free tool that collects notes from several projects - music and web work alike - onto one board in your browser. If you don't run it, ignore this section; nothing in the extension needs it.

With the push turned on, each Set appears as its own project on the Hub board, and resolving a note on either side updates the other. The Hub is free and connects as many projects as you like.

 **Red Pen Hub**
combined project board

15
OPEN

0
IN PROGRESS

125
RESOLVED

140
ALL

11
PROJECTS

11
SOURCES

Refresh

Export MD

Export CSV

Search notes...

All projects

All surfaces

All types

All priorities

Saved views...

Save view

PROJECT	SURFACE	TYPE	PRIORITY	STATUS	NOTE	LOCATION	CREATED	RESOLVED
Tracy Digital Media	wordpress	suggestion	high	open	'End of ____ projects' should have no hover state → Spooqs	open ["sel":div:nth-of-type(3) > ...	2026-07-07 11:55	Start Resolve
Tracy Digital Media	wordpress	suggestion	high	open	'The Process' needs to be filled out with real info on all development clients → Spooqs	open ["sel":div:nth-of-type(3) > ...	2026-07-07 11:53	Start Resolve
Tracy Digital Media	wordpress	suggestion	high	open	Transcript Grabber, smooth moves, media mage, log lens, and discord archiver should have an in development badge. Lets shelf field forge for now. → Spooqs	open ["sel":section:nth-of-type(5...]	2026-07-07 11:28	Start Resolve
Tracy Digital Media	wordpress	suggestion	high	open	in development badge should be a little smaller and a little higher up. When a card is in hover state the badge overlaps the title text slightly → Spooqs	open ["sel":section:nth-of-type(4...]	2026-07-07 11:27	Start Resolve
Tracy Digital Media	wordpress	suggestion	high	open	Reconsidering monthly charge for business model.	open ["sel":section:nth-of-type(4...]	2026-07-07 11:26	Start Resolve

The Hub board aggregating notes from several projects, Ableton Sets included.

Where your notes live

All notes sit in one local JSON file, written atomically with an automatic backup of the previous version. Installed normally, the extension uses the storage folder Live assigns it; in developer setups it uses `~/red-pen-ableton/notes.json`. Either way: plain JSON you can read, copy, or back up. Your `.als` holds only the RP: locators and the RP# marker - ordinary Live locators, nothing else.

Notes do not live in your Project folder, and Collect All and Save will not gather them. That command collects the media a Set references, and nothing in the `.als` points at your notes. Live's extension API also gives no way to write into a

Project folder, or even to ask where it is, so this is a platform limit rather than a choice - it may loosen as the Extensions SDK leaves beta.

To move notes with a Set, use **Export notes** before you zip or send it, and **Import notes** on the other side. Export writes `red-pen-notes.json` and `red-pen-notes.csv` into the notes folder and opens it for you, so you can drop the JSON in beside your project. The CSV is for reading in a spreadsheet; the JSON is the one that imports back.

If something breaks

Symptom	Likely cause and fix
No Red Pen entries in the right-click menu	You're on stable Live. Extensions need the Live 12.4 Beta; check the extension shows on Preferences > Extensions.
Board opens empty in a Set that has notes	The RP# marker at beat 0 was deleted, so the Set isn't recognized. Undo the deletion, or re-add notes; unlinked notes show an Adopt button to reattach them.
"Hub not synced" in the board footer	The Hub isn't running or the token is wrong. Notes are safe locally either way. Settings has a Test button.
Two Sets show each other's notes	One was made with Save As, which copied the RP# marker, so both claim the same identity. Delete the RP# locator in the newer Set and reopen the board to give it its own.
A note's card says "Missing"	The clip or track it pointed at is gone. The note and its text are intact; delete it or leave it as a record.
Bar numbers don't match Live's ruler	Your Set is not in 4/4 and Red Pen has not been told. Set the time signature under Settings > Timeline; the labels recompute the next time the board opens.

The rest of the family

Red Pen also runs on WordPress, Express apps, static sites and Blender, with the Red Pen Hub collecting them onto one board. Each surface is its own port of one shared model - and this one is bounded by what Live's Extensions SDK exposes - so they do not all have the same features. The **Surface matrix** at `docs.redpen.tools/matrix.html` is the per-feature answer for which surface has what today.

Red Pen for Ableton Live 0.9.5 - built by Lincoln Tracy. Part of the Red Pen family: WordPress, Express, static sites, Blender, Ableton Live, and the Red Pen Hub. `redpen.tools`