

## LIGHT RIDER

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**MSRP: £299 (LR512 - APP IS FREE)**

[WWW.LIGHTRIDERAPP.COM](http://WWW.LIGHTRIDERAPP.COM)

There's no doubt about it, today's mobile DJs have access to incredible lighting technology. The fixtures currently available, even the most affordable, offer a huge amount of creative potential through their various effects and features. However, to make the most of them, some form of DMX control is required. This is a hurdle at which many mobile DJs fall. Setting up and programming an effective DMX-controlled lightshow can be a time-consuming and complicated undertaking. This is due in no small part to the lack of a control system on the market specifically targeted at DJs with simplicity of use at its core. That is – potentially – until now.

When the new Light Rider app first began to be advertised here in Pro Mobile towards the end of last year, I was instantly curious as it is billed as 'The Pro DJ Lighting App'. It appeared that this could be the lighting control system many DJs have been looking for, one specifically designed for DJ use with a simple interface but powerful features. However, initially, only the app itself was released, which meant that it had to be used in conjunction with hardware from other manufacturers. Therefore we decided to hold off a full review until the dedicated Light Rider WiFi/DMX interface, the LR512, was ready.

The first, pre-release, shipment of LR512s arrived in late March (they are due to be available publicly in June), which gave me plenty of time to try out Light Rider before putting this review together. But before I get into my experiences of using the system, let's first look at where the app has come from. Although Light Rider is new brand, it has been created by a company with a wealth of experience in DMX control software, the Nicolaudie Group. Nicolaudie's existing brands include Daslight, Sunlite and DmxSoft, and its products are used to control DMX lighting systems of all sizes in a wide variety of settings worldwide, from theatres to nightclubs, retail stores to cruise ships. So if anyone can pull off an easy-to-use, but powerful, DJ-focussed DMX control solution, Nicolaudie is well positioned to do it.

The story behind how Light Rider came about is recounted in the software's manual through an introduction by Nicolaudie's Product Manager, Simon Bennett. He explains that at BPM back in 2015 he spoke with many DJs and found out that although they owned the latest lighting fixtures, most just relied on the in-built 'standalone' programmes. They wanted to create a great looking lightshow but simply didn't have the time to program the effects, or learn how to use the software tools on offer. Together with his colleague (Product Designer, Fred Revellat), Simon soon realised that to solve this problem they had to move away from the 'scenes and steps' approach used by conventional DMX controllers and software applications and create a system that generated as much automatically as possible. Taking inspiration from games controllers, DJ music software and synthesiser keyboards, they came up with a completely new approach to lighting control specifically developed for DJs who 'don't do DMX'!

The resulting Light Rider app is completely different to any other lighting control system I have ever seen. It's main interface is a collection of buttons,

which are labelled with imaginative icons and arranged into two main areas: one that deals with movements (for moving heads / scanners) and one that is concerned with colours.

The app itself is available for both iPad and Android tablets and is available as a free download from the Appstore. However, obviously, to connect the app to your DMX-compatible lighting fixtures a piece of hardware is required. While a number of other third party devices can be used, the new dedicated LR512 is specifically designed to work with Light Rider straight out of the box.

Setting up really is a very straightforward process. You simply plug in the LR512 to the mains and hook up your lights to the XLR output socket. When it receives power, the LR512's LEDs will start blinking and a wireless network is created. All you then have to do is connect your tablet to the network and select the LR512 within the app. It's that simple! A blue LED on the interface lights up when a tablet is connected and starts to flash when a control signal is being sent by the app, which gives visual reassurance everything is working as it should. There is no need for an internet connection or a separate wireless router (as is the case with other solutions such as the Visual Productions Cuety), the LR512 and a tablet are all you need to control your lightshow.

The next step is to setup your fixtures, which again is an incredibly straightforward process. You simply select a manufacturer from a list, choose a specific model, decide on a channel mode and press the 'Add A Fixture' button (repeatedly if you have more than

one of the same type of unit). The software then tells you what address to set on the fixture (including a DIP Switch diagram for if you have older fixtures that use those for addressing). You then simply repeat the process until all of your lights have been setup. You can then choose to rename each fixture, to label them with something meaningful to your setup (for example 'Moving Head Left' or 'Plinth Uplight Right').

Obviously, this system relies on your fixtures being in Light Rider's database. But, as there are



over 15,000 in there, that really shouldn't be a problem. Scrolling through the manufacturers and products included, I saw all of the names I was familiar with and many that I wasn't!

Having used a wide variety of DMX software and hardware solutions over the years, I can honestly say that this is the easiest one I've ever setup. What's more, this is as complicated as the Light Rider app gets. Once you've setup your fixtures, controlling them really is nothing short of child's play!

If you have moving heads, selecting one of the seven movement effects will instantly

send their beams sweeping and soaring around the room. You can then easily customise the effect by altering attributes such as size, speed and fan. The interface is incredibly intuitive and easy to use, so much so that my six year old was even able to have a go!

The same applies for colour effects. There are seven types to choose from, which can then be customised by selecting up to six colours. These selected colours will then flash, chase or fade across all of your fixtures creating fantastic effects that would be complicated and time-consuming to create using traditional hardware or software control solutions.

Both types of effect can be independently set to either run a specific speed, a speed linked to the BPM of the music (entered via tapping in the beat) or a speed detected by the tablet's internal microphone. GOBO, Zoom, Iris and Prism all have dedicated controls, so those features can also be easily integrated if your fixtures have them. There is a dedicated Dimmer fader too, as well as a Strobe button with a corresponding speed control.

Once you have created a 'look' that you like – by combining movement and colour effects with the other attribute options – you can then save it to one of 50 pre-set slots and give it a custom name. These 50 pre-sets are arranged over five pages of ten buttons and are located across the bottom of the main interface.

In addition, the app features five 'Flash FX' that each have their own dedicated button. These are: Smoke (triggers a DMX-compatible



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fog machine), Blackout (instantly kills all your lights), WOW! (creates a build-up of strobing effects synchronised with the BPM), Blinder (directs all lights forward and switches them to white) and Freeze (pauses the current movement / colour effect).

It is also possible to create, save and load 'Projects' which include both fixture setup and pre-set information. This means that if you have different rigs, which use different combinations of fixtures, you could easily setup and save a separate 'Project' for each of them so that the pre-sets are designed around the fixtures that you are using for a particular event.

Another useful feature is the ability to set 'Pan/Tilt' limitations for individual fixtures, or groups of fixtures. This means, that wherever your lights are located (all at the front, or around the room etc.) and however they are rigged (on plinths, or hanging from a goalpost etc.) you can ensure that movements and effects are centred on the dancefloor.

Light Rider is designed to do all the heavy lifting for you, but through the 'Fixtures' screen it is possible to see the individual channel values for a specific fixture and even override them should you wish. This is useful for trouble shooting (to check exactly what information is being transmitted) as well as for setting up a static 'warmer' look at the beginning of a gig.

While the software is incredibly intuitive, and I was very quickly able to get to grips with it just by playing with it. When I got around to looking at the manual I found it to be useful, highlighting some features that I may have otherwise missed. I know it goes against the nature of many of us, but I really

would suggest giving it a read if you decide to invest in the LR512. It is written very clearly, in plain English, and will help you to get the most from the system.

I must admit, when I first heard about Light Rider, I was a little sceptical. I thought that a DMX control system that works with all manufacturer's products and allows for creative lightshows to be created without complicated programming simply wouldn't be possible. However, I must now hold my hands up and admit that I was wrong. A great deal of thought has clearly gone into the development of this system and the result is a lighting control tool that is both very powerful and incredibly easy to use.

If you'd like to take control of your lightshow and make use of its full potential, especially if you own moving heads, I'd really recommend seriously considering Light Rider. I'm confident that even complete DMX novices will find it

easy to get to grips with and it's unique workflow really is incredibly well suited to DJs. Setup is easy, creating effects is simple, storing presets is straightforward and running a show during a gig (using presets and Flash FX) can easily be done alongside a DJ's main job of playing the right music to fill the dancefloor.

In creating Light Rider, the Nicolaudie team set themselves the challenge of re-inventing DMX control software in a way that will open it up to all mobile DJs, regardless of their level of technical expertise. Having spent some time trying out the system, I think I can confidently say that they have not only achieved their goal but surpassed it. Not only is this a system that anyone should be able to quickly learn to use, it is so powerful and intuitive that I can imagine many DJs who already use more complicated control systems choosing to switch over to Light Rider!

