How To Use An iPad For Live Music

by Mark Cole

One of the biggest changes that I've made onstage is using my iPad for carrying and reading all my charts. I love that it holds hundreds of songs, has great lighting for the stage, is small and portable, has a great built-in metronome, has a smaller footprint onstage, and that I can use a hands-free foot-switch to turn my pages. Here is how to make it work for you:

1. Buy an iPad

There are numerous tablets on the market but the iPad is still #1. And because of its market dominance it gets the best support for products and apps.

If a new one is out of your price range… pick up a used one on Kijiji.

2. Convert all your documents (music, notes, etc.) into .pdf documents

This is quite simple: When you're printing your documents from your Apple computer, simply choose the PDF option in the lower right corner of your print page.

For multiple options on the platform you're using, check out this WikiHow article: 5 Ways To Create PDF Documents

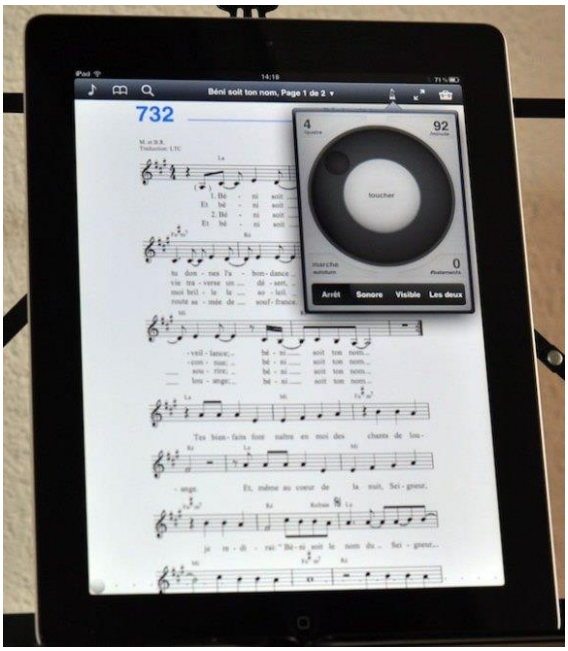
3. Get a free Dropbox account and load all your .pdf documents into it

Dropbox is free and is becoming one of the best ways to store your documents in the 'Cloud'. Check out this article: How To Start Using Dropbox

4. Download a great music reading app

My favorite music reading app is 'forScore'. Here is a link to an article of the top music reader apps. The reason I prefer forScore over other apps (and I've tried numerous other ones) is:

- It links easily with Dropbox
- It has great user-friendly features
- It has a versatile metronome built-in
- The metronome instantly changes when the next song comes up
- I can write notes on my iPad music



I also want to give honorable mention to the OnSong app. It has a solid metronome, great editing and transposing features, the ability to sync tracks and also download charts from Dropbox and convert files from CCLI's Songselect.



5. Buy a stand for your iPad

My recommendation is the GigEasy stand. It is good looking and very easy to use. (Although, you can just put your iPad on a music stand if needed.)

6. Buy a Bluetooth Foot-switch for your iPad

Airturn has made a great 2 pedal Bluetooth foot-switch. (BT-105) Now you don't have you use your hands to turn pages. It uses one pedal for turning the page forward and the other pedal for turning backwards. The foot-switch recharges easily, links up easily with your tablet and is durable and easy to use.



7. Practice and use the iPad for live music ~ here's how:

- I make all my music into .pdf's and then I download all of them onto my Dropbox account.
- I put them into a set list.
- I set-up the metronome settings for each song.
- I link my Airturn Bluetooth foot-switch to my iPad and practice using it to turn the pages backwards and forwards.
- If needed, I send the metronome click to the band for their in-ear monitors.
- I practice using this set-up so that it works seamlessly in live performances.
- I memorize my music and only use the iPad for a back-up.

Question: What are you using on stage for your music? What app are you currently using? Do you memorize your music?

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The article above and many additional insights may be found on Mark's blog at http://markcole.ca/

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