

UPFRONT



FOUR TET LIVE 101

A shoeless Kieran Hebden explains his concert setup.

PHOTO ANTHONY BLASKO

AFTER FIELDING PARTICIPANTS' RECURRING questions about playing for an audience, Academy Studio mentor Kieran Hebden (aka Four Tet) decided to give an impromptu demo of his live setup in the Academy lecture hall on Tuesday. Hebden sat barefoot on the floor with his gear in front of him while participants gathered around.

In his ideal live environment, the computer shouldn't block the crowd's view of the artist. "It creates a boundary between you and

the audience," Hebden says. "If I get to a club and I don't like the way the DJ area is situated, just let me set up in the middle of the crowd. It's guaranteed to save the show. Everybody's happy and can be where they want to be."

Hebden's entire live rig can fit into his carry-on luggage when he travels, and this bare-bones aesthetic extends to his software too. He claims he's never used an Apple computer; "Hardly ever touched one," he says. He does use Ableton Live software, however. "I don't

know much about Ableton at all, with all its endless functions. I want the music to be ideas-driven rather than equipment-driven." Hebden doesn't tour with a sound engineer, and runs everything through a DJ mixer. ("The kind that every club in the world has," he says, "so I know it will be the same every time.") Separating the channels through a mixer makes a big difference, saving him from dead silence in the event that something crashes.

It also allows him to tweak the sounds to the atmosphere of the room. Hebden knows which tracks will work together in terms of key and tempo, and puts those next to each other. "I have to plan something slow at first so it can build up to my most banging song. You look at your tracks and figure out what the best options are. I want to have loud moments and I want to have quiet moments."

Academy participant Harald Björk, who has played festivals on the same bill as Four Tet, thinks this is a sound piece of advice. "I did it accidentally at my gig [Monday] night at Cameo Gallery. They had me play one extra song—I made the track faster and realized that [changing tempo] is a good way to play and communicate with the audience."

Hebden never tours with a planned setlist, preferring to decide on the fly what his opening songs should be based on the previous act. "Every show is different. Live electronic music has the potential to be very experimental and improvised. At the end of the day, the crowd doesn't know what's going on or what to expect." **-OLIVIA GRAHAM**