



Congratulations on the Octatrack. Can you give us an overview of the machine?

Thanks! The Octatrack is essentially a sampler with an Elektron touch. It features eight stereo tracks. All samples are streamed from a Compact Flash card and they can be time-stretched and, without changing the tempo of the sample, pitch-shifted in real-time. All tracks have 2 effect blocks to which you can assign various effects. All tracks also feature one independent LFO which is freely routable to any parameter within that track.

With the Octatrack we also introduce “Scenes.” A Scene contains specific parameter values for all tracks. Think of it as a sort of giant global parameter lock. Two Scenes can be assigned to the crossfader. Scene A is fully activated when the slider is at its leftmost position, Scene B is fully activated when the slider is at its rightmost position. Sliding the crossfader between Scenes A and B will interpolate between the parameter values set by the Scenes. Each bank can hold 16 Scenes, which can be assigned in real-time to the Scene A and B slots. You will also be able to mute Scenes. A lot of interesting results can be had when experimenting with this.

The new functionality of the track pages is also noteworthy. Each track has five pages loaded with parameters. The track page buttons are located under the LCD screen. The nice thing about these track pages is that each page has a setup page. The setup page settings will affect the available parameters on the track page. This makes the Octatrack more customizable, but

without compromising usability.

Storage hierarchy has also been redone. The machine can host a session consisting of 16 banks each linked to a dedicated sample pool. Each bank features 16 patterns. Sessions can be stored on, and recalled from, the Compact Flash card.

What is the driving concept behind the Octatrack?

When we first started thinking about the new machine and what it should be, we came to the conclusion that we first of all wanted to create something that, of course, really didn't exist on the market. Obviously lacking were user-friendly samplers. After a little more thinking we decided that the new machine should allow for as easy as possible real-time sampling, as well as equally easy and rewarding treatment of samples.

On top of that the new machine had to retain the Elektron feel. People used to our gear should be able to get their heads around a new device immediately. At the same time we wanted it to be really easy for those unfamiliar with our previous work to use the machine.

Did Elektron's foray into sampling, through the UW upgrade for the Machinedrum and the Machinedrum UW, whet Elektron's appetite to create a sampler?

Sort of. We saw a lot of potential in the RAM machines of the UW and wanted to refine and evolve that concept. In that process we came up with other ideas (for example Scenes, the Compact Flash card reader, the crossfader, the setup pages plus a lot of other things that can't be revealed just yet) that would make the Octatrack an instrument of its own instead of just an improved RAM machine box.

The Octatrack will likely be compared to the Akai MPC and other phrase samplers on the market – how does the Octatrack differ from these instruments? What sets the Octatrack apart?

The main difference is the speed of the workflow and the extensive sample manipulation possibilities. Just like the Machinedrum and Monomachine we opted to implement a very friendly user interface, while at the same time allowing for really creative sound processing.

The appearance of an optical cross-fader might lead some to believe that the Octatrack is targeted at DJs – is it? Is the Octatrack geared towards live performance? Could the Octatrack also function as a sound design tool in a studio setting?

The Octatrack is suitable for DJs in the sense that it will be very handy when sampling loops from, for example, a turntable. The decision to use a fader instead of a modwheel or pitchstick was based on the fact we wanted to have a very sturdy and durable modulator – we simply picked one of the best optical faders out there. We're also going to implement BPM detection on the inputs, meaning a sampled loop can immediately be lined up on the Octatrack sequencer and time stretched to the BPM of the Octatrack. Instant sync.

That said, the Octatrack can do much more than just sample. Making sure it was capable of some serious sound design was a top priority when coming up with the machine. A simple phrase sampler has its uses, but that wasn't something we had in mind when designing the Octatrack. Rest assured, it will be as powerful as it gets when it comes to sample mangling.

It is also true that the Octatrack is supposed to function well in a live performance context. This has more to do with the user interface rather than the implemented features. The philosophy for the Octatrack was the same as with the Machinedrum/Monomachine. Ease of use is paramount, something that's extra important when you play live and quickly need to find all relevant

functions. This is naturally something studio users benefit from as well.

What kind of users does Elektron anticipate will use the Octatrack?

We think the Octatrack will be especially suited for five categories of musicians (in no certain order), namely:

1. Live performers tired of using laptops on stage
2. Producers who want to get really creative with samples in the studio
3. DJs looking for a way to be very creative with loops/captured sounds when spinning records
4. Musicians needing backing tracks during their performances (each of the eight tracks can stream gigabyte-large samples)
5. Guitarists and multi-instrumentalists looking for the best looper option around

The interface of the Octatrack seems to have retained the classic Elektron look, but with some tweaks. Was the decision to retain a similar panel layout to the Monomachine and Machinedrum intentional?

Yes. We see the Octatrack paired with the Machinedrum and the Monomachine as the ideal gear combo. Therefore, we wanted them to have the same form factor and speedy workflow. The four inputs, configured as two stereo pairs, of the Octatrack will of course be useful when connecting them all together.

Does the Octatrack retain other classic Elektron features, like parameter locks and/or trigless trigs?

Sure does! The trigless trigs will be especially useful when playing around with loops. If you, for example, have a vocal sample you can, using trigless trigs assigned to the pitch parameter, completely change the melody of the vocals while at the same time keep the timing of the sample. Great for remix work. Undeniably fast.

What was Elektron's top priority with respect to designing the front panel?

The top priority was usability. The different pages for each track have dedicated buttons. If you want to sample from the inputs, hold down the input pair you want to sample from and press the track button corresponding to the track you want to sample to and you're done. If you want to lock parameters to a Scene, hold down the corresponding Scene button and lock or unlock the parameter values you want. If you want to pre-listen to tracks or inputs in your headphones, just press and hold the Cue button and any of the input buttons or track buttons. That's just a few examples.

Did ease of use factor into Elektron's decision to include a USB 2.0 connection and a Compact Flash card slot?

The USB port – yes. We could have omitted that as Compact Flash card readers exist, but

doing so would have affected the process of getting samples from your computer to the Octatrack in a negative way. Connect your Octatrack to your computer via USB, drop all your loops and samples on the Compact Flash card and there you go!

When it comes to the Compact Flash card we figured that was the best way to get the functionality we wanted – completely elastic streaming audio.

Can you give us a few more details about the Octatrack? Will the sampling rate/bit depth be static like the UW sampling option, or selectable by the user? What will be the maximum sampling rate/bit depth? Will the Octatrack include new FX algorithms or use existing effects from the Machinedrum and/or Monomachine? Any hints as to what “improved Elektron sequencer” might mean – ping pong, reverse, or random sequencing ?

Maximum sample bit depth/sample rate: 16 bit/44.1 kHz. We will implement a lot of different effects, some of them will be derivatives of what's found in the Machinedrum/Monomachine. All effects will be 24 bit. It's still too early to spill the beans about the sequencer improvements, though. We need to leave something for your imagination!

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Thanks to Jon from Elektron & Papertiger for doing all the hard work.