Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl

Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/11 12:31

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It's all Anders Bergdahl's fault: My GAS and subsequent acquisition of this Octatrack of mine. After investing in the Octatrack, I am committed to learning how to use it as a live looper. It is a natural part of the learning process to imitate someone, and then later, perhaps, develop a more individual approach. Thus, here is a blog which may amuse some of you.

Summary of what happened so far:

I followed the Pickup Machine tutorial in the manual. But the audio was always playing back one octave below what I'd actually played into the Octatrack. The answer was that I'd put the Octatrack into Demo mode a few weeks back and forgot. I could not find in the manual how to get out of demo mode :huh:. So I inserted the Compact Flash card that I got with the Octatrack and power cycled it. That got me out of demo mode. Afterward, loop playback was fine as expected. Next I installed the OS update with the new reverb effects and bug fixes.

What I did today:

- Looked for the new reverbs under Effect 1. Did not find them, so I turned the Octatrack off, then turned it back on with the Function key held to get to the Early Startup menu. I then selected Test Mode. It said everything was OK. Ok, great, but now what do I do? The manual didn't say how to get out of Test Mode. :huh: I pressed various keys, but nothing happened. So I turned the Octatrack off then on again. That seemed to get me out of Test Mode.

- I then looked under Effect 2. Oh, that's where the 3 reverbs are! :P To be fair to Elektron, the readme with the OS update actually DID say they were under Effect 2. Silly me! :silly:

- Track 1 was still set up as the master loop with Pickup Machine assigned. Track 2 was set up as a slave loop with Pickup Machine assigned. I recorded loops on Tracks 1 and 2

- I tried Anders' trick of assigning Flex Machine to Track 3. BTW, when I double-click a Track to assign a machine to it, I have to click the Recording2. :huh:

- Next was to figure out how to sample into Track 3. I set SRC to Track 2. Cool, that was simple. Manual says hit MIDI-Track 2. :huh: Uh, okay... Track 3 appears to record...

- Next was to figure out how to get Track 3 to play back the audio assigned to it. Manual is not clear on how to do that. :huh: I hit the sequencer Play button and audio seemed to play on Track 3, but it was only a 1 second sample. I was sure I recorded more than that. :huh:

Man, this machine is hard as fuck to learn how to loop on. Count how many :huh: I posted. :silly: But as I said, I'm committed to learning...

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl

Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/12 12:22

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Tonight's session was a disaster.

As before, I have pickup machines assigned to Tracks 1 and 2.

I have a Flex Machine assigned to Track 3, with its SRC set to T2 and the sample slot set to R2. According to the manual, I should be able to press MIDI+T3 and sample. However, this is not happening.

I sent a support request to Elektron. I guess if nobody else is having trouble with track recorder sampling after updating to OS 1.25, I have a hardware problem with my Octatrack.

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I was hoping to create a piece consisting entirely of looped/sampled viola within a couple of weeks, using just the Octatrack, but I'm afraid it's not going to happen. Back to the iPad to do the job...

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/12 13:07
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My pain is the gain of future Octatrack looper users... Somebody's got to document this in detail, right?

I was frustrated because I was not hearing playback from Track 3.

Here are my Recorder Setup settings for Track 3:

Setup 1:
INAB = -, INCD = -, RLEN = MAX
TRIG = ONE2, SRC3 = T2, LOOP = ON

Setup 2:
FIN = 0.063, FOUT = 0.125 (doesn't have to be this), AB = 127 (probably useless)
QREC = OFF, QPL = OFF, CD = 0

I guess the T3 + MIDI combo does work after all for recording. I was confused because nothing appeared to be happening in the LCD display.

What I was unable to glean from the manual (probably have to read it 50 more times) was how to PLAYBACK the damn audio from T3. The answer - Press the K T3 button in the trigger section. This is without the sequencer running.

I then was able to get the Audio Editor to pop up and take me to the Slice section, but I was too mentally and emotionally drained from my struggles tonight to go further.

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/14 13:37
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Tonight's session went more smoothly.

I found Tarekith's slice tutorial. It drastically simplified the learning process for me.

Steps I took:

1. Verify Tracks 1 and 2 are still configured as before (Pickup machines assigned, Recorder settings, etc.).

2. Record oops into Tracks 1 and 2

3. Hit button to enter Grid Recording mode

4. Set triggers just like in Tarekith's video, except I just set 8 triggers.

5. Press + to sample Track 2 output to Track 3 (still configured with Flex Machine and Sample Slot set to R2, which is Track 2's Recorder).

6. Press + to open Audio Editor

7. Press to get into Slice menu

8. Select Create Slice Grid and select 8 Slices (keeping it simple)

9. While in still Slice menu, select Create Random Locks

10. Press on sequencer. Now randomly sliced sample from Track 2 is playing in Track 3.

11. Hold down a random Trigger button and mess with Track parameters to parameter lock

Pressing PAUSE or STOP stops all tracks. I guess next step is to figure out how to stop/pause a Flex Machine Track without stopping the Pickup Machine Tracks too. The Pickup Machine tracks are easy enough to pause/stop individually.

All in all, a more productive session tonight than the previous session. :woohoo:

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/16 07:26
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My first demo:
https://soundcloud.com/governorsilver/octatrack-viola-demo-1

Track 1 - Pickup Machine
Track 2 - Pickup Machine
Track 3 - Flex Machine, Sample set to Track 1 Recorder
Track 4 - Flex Machine, Sample set to Track 2 Recorder

Sounds obvious when I pause to slice audio, but I don't care at this point. Having a blast plaing with parameter locks and such on my Flex Machine tracks.

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by an3 - 2013/06/16 19:01
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is this he 13 minute tutorial.. setting up the OT 4 the right flow is kind of brainbraker,, ive owned many samplers,synths and workstations, an a4 as well. this is 4 the st time ever i say it is pretty tough..

so what a bout a loopstation dummy mode.. 8 internal project templates, and to have it set up the tutorial will not need to be longer then 3 minutes..

B)

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/18 05:14
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an3 wrote:
is this he 13 minute tutorial.. setting up the OT 4 the right flow is kind of brainbraker,, ive owned many samplers,synths and workstations, an a4 as well. this is 4 the st time ever i say it is pretty tough..

Yes, the pickup machine tutorials by Elektron (printed version in manual and Youtube version) are lacking some vital info for those of us who want to use the Octatrack for what it can do, instead of simply replicating the functions of a cheaper looper pedal like a DL4.

At present, there is no complete tutorial for a looping guitarist or other instrumentalist who wants to use the Octatrack to record a loop, then mangle the audio some more in the way that only the Octatrack can do. The information is out there, as well as in the manual, but its so scattered and disorganized that making sense of it all has been difficult for someone who is not as smart as Anders, Merlin, Tarekith, etc. - someone like me!!! One of my goals in this thread is to gather up this information into a tutorial like Merlin did for his tutorial.

an3 wrote:

so what a bout a loopstation dummy mode.. 8 internal project templates, and to have it set up the tutorial will not need to be longer then 3 minutes..
B)

I recall this being suggested before. Perhaps I can eventually create a template looper's project that peeps can download from.

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/20 13:39

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Anders as I recall took some pride in controlling all looping functions by hand rather than using a MIDI pedal. However, I play viola as well as guitar and my timing is really thrown off by not using a pedal controller.

After an epic battle against two formidable foes - Octatrack AND FC-300 pedal - I succeeded in getting the FC-300 to trigger the Combo Rec and Play/Stop functions of a pickup machine on the Octatrack.

The Octatrack may be - in theory - controlled by MIDI Note Number messages or MIDI CC.

I wasted several hours attempting the Note Number route. This required setting the FC-300 in Patch Mode. The problem is my lack of experience in assembling MIDI streams. For a MIDI Note Number message to work, I believe there has to be at least two messages to send - a Note On, then a Note Off, right? Whatever, this route was turning in to a dead end fast.

I then noticed a paragraph in the Octatrack manual stating that MIDI CCs can also be used to trigger Octatrack functions. So I switched the FC-300 to CC Mode. This was tricky too, but I finally got results this way!

Steps to set up Pedals 1 and 2 in accordance with the Octatrack Pickup Machine with MIDI tutorial:

1. Set FC-300 Mode to Control Change Mode
2. Set PDL1:Assign CC# to 59
3. Set PDL1:Range to "0 - 60" (CC# 59 with value of 60 tells Octatrack to toggle Combo Record on the active Track)
4. Set PDL1:Mode to Momentary
5. Press WRITE and confirm WRITE to PEDAL SETTING1 to save
5. Repeat above for PDL2 except set Range to "0-64" and WRITE to PEDAL SETTING2
6. Press Utility and press the Parameter Arrow keys until you get to MIDI:TX Channel. Set it to 11 because that's the Octatrack's default
Auto Channel setting. If this doesn't work, go to Project->MIDI->Channels, look at the Auto Ch setting and set MIDI:TX Channel to that

Now Pedal 1 toggles Record, Pedal 1 toggles Play/Stop.

Both Elektron and Roland are to blame for my struggles tonight. The FC-300 manual does not explain clearly what the Range settings mean. I tried a Range of 60-60 for Pedal 1 and that was a fail. Elektron deserves blame for not adequately explaining what Auto Channel is in the manual.

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/20 13:45

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Also, the Octatrack manual got the MIDI note numbers backwards for Pedals 4 and 5, for selecting next and previous track. :laugh:

Its like they wanted to say "fark you" to me one last time tonight. :silly:

One more bit I learned:

If I want to use the OT as an improvisational looping device, particularly for slicing audio and playing back slices. I need to clear all trigs for each flex machine track before starting.

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/06/21 13:28

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Thanks to more experienced forumites Rhizome and GYS, I learned how to simulate Yellofier's quick auto-slice feature in Octatrack. Very happy about that.

Steps:

1. Set up Tracks 1 and 2 just like in the Pickup Machine Tutorial in the manual.
2. Set up Tracks 3 and 4 with Flex Machines that will sample from Tracks 1 and 2 as described previously.
3. Press to activate Grid Recording Mode
4. Press T3 to select Track 3.
5. Press the TRIG buttons you want for Track 3 (eg. all the odd-numbered TRIG buttons)
6. Press T4 to select Track 4
7. Press the TRIG buttons you want for Track 4
8. Record loops into Tracks 1 and 2.
9. Press + to sample out of Track 2's recorder buffer into Track 4.
10. Press again to turn off the LED (not sure if this step is necessary)
11. Run through that 8-button-press procedure to slice the Track 4 audio and assign to TRIGs
12. Repeat steps 9-11 for Track 3
13. Press + to open the Project menu
14. Save the Project
15. For your next looping session, repeat #13 to get back into the Project menu
16. Select CHANGE
17.Choose the Project you just saved. This will clear out your recorder buffers and stuff
18. Press to enable Grid Recording mode
19. Record new loops into Tracks 1 and 2
20. When you're ready, press . You should hear the samples in Tracks 3 and 4 that were automatically recorded and sliced for you.

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/08/24 12:14
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Fired up the Octatrack for the first time in months. I was away on vacation. The master pickup machine kept losing the loop I recorded. It would play the loop once then.... silence...

Lesson learned tonight:

Before a fresh looping session, make sure the Speed and Depth settings for all three LFOs in your pickup machine track are set to zero!

I also figured out how to increase the volume of the loop being played back so that it's not so dramatically lower in volume than the live instrument - Adjust the VOL setting in the Amp page.

Next, to learn how to properly program a pattern in the sequencer to play back my slices...

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/08/26 05:56
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Perhaps somebody can correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm starting to suspect the instruction to hit + (where X=the track number) to sample from another track does not apply if your Track sample slot is set to the Recorder buffer of the other track, and the other track is a Pickup Machine track.

An accident that I had to today, which led to discovering a panning trick:

As usual, I had Track 2 assigned to a slave Pickup Machine, with preamped viola plugged into Input A. I'd left "INAB" in Recording 2 Setup 1 set to "A B". Also as usual, I had Track 4 assigned to a Flex Machine with the Sample Slot set to Recorder 2 (Track 2's recorder buffer). I heard a stereo image coming out of Track 2, but when Track 4 played the slices from Track 2's recorder, the audio was all coming from the left side! I went back to Track 2, set INAB to A , then overdubbed some more onto Track 2. Then Track 4 started playing slices that were panned to the center - all the slices that were taken from the audio I'd just recorded into Track 2 with the A setting for INAB. Now I was hearing audio that was bouncing between left and center. I doubt I'll use this panning trick today, but if I had something else plugged into Input B, maybe it'll be useful.

Another question that came up during the previous study/practice session was "How do I know if my Flex Machine Track really sampled everything from the recorder buffer, and not just the first 2 seconds?". I found the answer in Tarekith's video tutorial:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJ1kMQKt_rY

The answer:
Enter Audio Editor (eg. double-clicking the button for the Track)
Go to Trim menu
Hold down + to listen to the sample.

For today's session, I worked with 32 slices instead of the usual 8.

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Re:Octatrack blog: Learning how to loop like Anders Bergdahl
Posted by GovernorSilver - 2013/09/12 12:58
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I stumbled across the "Dub Rec Aborted" problem while attempting to overdub on a Slave Pickup Machine. Then I found this old thread:

http://elektron-users.com/index.php?option=com_fireboard&Itemid=2&func=view&catid=9&id=199067

The Pitch parameter of my Slave Pickup Machine track was slightly off of 0.

Yet another thing to watch out for as I gain experience using this machine as a looper.

I'm starting to get a bit bored though of using the Pickup Machines for looping. I wasn't interested in the "build a song from scratch" style of looping anyway. The Octatrack could be used that way of course, but it would be a waste of the OT's true potential.

After band practice this weekend, I'm going to look into sampling into Flex Machine instead and also learn how to use the Recorder Trig method so that the sequencer will sample my playing in some automated fashion.

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