
Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by SLX - 2013/08/30 03:36

I do own an Octatrack and a Monomachine.

With every machine on its own i feel now comfortable to compose a piece or song.

Both together are a complete new beast (not to think about the trinity or quadrinity, at least not for me).

My first approach was to use the song mode on both machines with the MM as slave.

While you are in song mode and select a line then the MM in song mode jumps to the same line and i was really happy with that.

But i really love to explore a good song structure while playing and tweaking and muting along and thats were i had a hard time with both machines.

Since yesterday i try to use the MM as a kind of sound module and control every aspect from the OT (i really love the "cc direct connect" setting). I search for a good sound on the MM but the I make the patterns, p-locks and song structure only from the OT.

I am very interested what is your approach to control and compose with 2 elektron machines.

Best,
SLX

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Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by TrondC - 2013/08/30 04:34

I know exactly what you mean. I own all four, but very rarely use more than two in one track, and even then usually 90% comes from one of the machines. I find it much easier to compose within a single box, so I can't really give you any tips :p

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Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by seenfromspace - 2013/08/30 04:47

I have the OT and Analog 4. Fairly new to Elektron so haven't worked out how to combine them effectively in projects. When I load an OT project, how do I get the matching song/kit/pattern to load up on the A4? Program change obviously I guess, but the manuals are hopeless on this! Thanks for any advice.

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Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by daffydub - 2013/08/30 04:58

I have all 4
MD is master, and sends clock/start/stop/program change
The 3 other machines receive these commands and are all slaved
I work in pattern mode only

When MD plays pattern A1 - so do all the other 3... And so forth

I sequence each machine by it's own sequenser...and some additional synths get sequenced by MnM.... Then I run them into a Desk with a couple fx on.. And presto:laugh:

It's really smooth.... Except for the Octa which is new to me, and still confusing with the parts and whatnot.... They should have kept the same structure to make the 4some work perfectly together IMOB)

For 1 song I never use more than 8 patterns so there's plenty room for a whole set!

Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by SLX - 2013/08/30 05:45

Daffydub, that sounds interesting. I never used program change messages, in my 1st approach i realized a pattern change with the song mode.

I have really high expectations on my new approach (OT controls everything, MM is soundmodule only more or less) and thinking about the possibilities i am feeling like i am on drugs ... MM with variable pattern length, p-locking MM parameters and OT effects for the same output all on one machine ... and the OTs "cc direct connect" is just fantastic, like you turn a knob on the MM and the cc number is automatically dialed in in a specific cc slot in midi mode. Wow.

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Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by daffydub - 2013/08/30 07:35

Slx
That sounds wicked... But it's a few months down the road for me to get the Octa right :huh:

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Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by Ihatederekreed - 2013/08/30 08:12

I perform currently with a4 and MDUW, alongside my friend Christian who also uses an a4 and MDUW. I had an OT in the mix for a while, until a month ago. He also has a MnM that gets thrown in at times. With my OT, it was master and ran clock to everything else down the line (currently my a4 is master, but has the same job). If interested in technical stuff, ask.

Anyway, we do live improv sets. In this setting they each become independent, but still connected for clock/transport. The 4-6 elektrons are sequenced in live time as one of us sees fit. We only use 1 pattern and we basically play them as instruments as we progress through 1hr or so lengths of audio. Obviously this is different than composing, but it works for us. I start clock and we just play. Live, the 4-6 elektrons are also accompanied by an op1, tt303, 2 marsynth boards, iPads, and kp3. When jamming at one of our places, many additional synths and toys ranging from an arp odyssey to slim patty and sh101 are always on and ready for whatever. We each have handheld recorders and we record directly from mixer tape outs. Different handhelds and mixers in each respective setting. I start clock and we just play, and record. I then put audio into ableton, compress slightly and some other basic processing. Upload online.

I know this isn't exactly what you are trying to do, but as I said, it works for us. Get them synced and just make noise/music. The elektrons are some of the greatest improvisational tools I've ever owned.

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Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by shemp - 2013/08/30 11:58

IHDR,

What made you take the OT out of the set up recently?

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Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by Ihatederekreed - 2013/08/30 20:14

I was playing a show in Kansas City in June and Damon Mar (of marsynth) and I got to talking. He had an arp odyssey he wasn't using and was talking about how he wanted an octatrack. By the end of the weekend, we decided to trade. I traded my OT with one of my eit1 stands for a near mint arp odyssey. I didn't really think twice about it, knowing I wouldn't get the same opportunity twice, yet I could buy another OT whenever. I plan to have another OT by the end of

the year.

Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by Tarekith - 2013/08/30 23:17

Personally I find it easier to compose on multiple Elektrons if they specific roles in the song no matter the song. IE, the MD always does the drums, the OT is always the clock master and used for transitions, etc. Also, I try and stick to a similar layout of my sounds on each device, basslines are always track 2 on the OT, leads are track 3, etc.

Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by YNE - 2013/08/31 00:22

Interesting stuff - and lots of different approaches.

I also own all 4. Use the OT as master and the other devices are daisy chained. The sequences I do directly on the different elektrons, because the midi tracks from the OT I usually need for my Virus and a Minitaur.

For composing I work in pattern mode and when I programmed something I like I put it into song mode on all devices. So I can just press play and record everything from my mixer main out when IÁ'm ready. Sometimes that ends up a bit static, because I don't really use the performance features from the OT and the A4. But that's more my still lacking skills.

I also tend to use each device for only a certain part all the time. OT and MD for drums and fx, Minitaur for Bass, Virus, A4 and MM for melodic stuff and chords (but often not all in the same song).

Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by bonde - 2013/08/31 04:51

I have MD and MNM. Most times my tracks are (as others mentioned) 90% one of the units, and the other comes in and adds whatever I find missing in the picture - some bass, perc or pads etc.

I think it's quite complex to control two machines simultaneously. Think I'm in the same boat as YNE. My tweaking skills are poor. I tend to compose patterns with a lot of detailed p-lock. Then when I get to the point where I wanna make a full track out of them, the hard part starts.

I've worked a lot in song mode, but it's just such a boring approach. To me it's more hard work than fun.

I've also used song mode with both units synced, but thats just double up on hard, boring work:(.

I wanna get better at tweaking, so for the moment i'm trying to see it as a part of the process of making a track, to learn to play it on the machines. So I record my tweaks, then listen and find out what I need to do differently, then try again. Tweaking at my poor level, means mostly just fading different sounds in and out, and sometimes the filters. But I really like it when I feel like I'm playing those machines rather than programming them. Thats a whole other experience

Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by bonde - 2013/08/31 04:59

...btw - this is a excellent thread.

Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by SLX - 2013/08/31 05:36

Very exciting all these different approaches. One can see that the elektron machines are open ended, deep and versatile in usage and music making. Pure beauty.

Derek, this composing on the fly is very interesting. You say you use just 1 pattern. So there is nothing prepared before the live impro?

Are you constantly changing the pattern? When i listen to your music, what i am doing at the moment, it does not sound that there is running always a 64 step loop. Maybe you can explain some details here.

Tarekith, everytime i am starting a new piece, i think about to structure the tracks like you mentioned. but then when i start e.g. with a rhythm track and add and add something in the end the first track was only the first splash on the white paper from where everything evolves and its not projectable which machine makes lead, beat or noise. I love that but often the thing that occurs is an exploration or adventure, not a piece (sometime of course an exploration is a piece).

Thanks to all of you so far for all these interesting contributions.

Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by recyclinglostcities - 2013/08/31 06:56

I also have the MD and MM, and use song mode a lot with both machines. I find it is the only way I can actually write tracks without tweaking and never finishing anything (tho I have plenty of songs to finish too...). I jump into it early and start putting together parts line by line with both machines, and will then go back and edit after I have some basic structure put together.

For me, the problems start when i start adding variation. I like to run the MD as slave to the MM, and will chop up MD patterns to make things more interesting. Running playback with the Mono often means jumping back many bars to make sure things are in sync.

The other frustrating thing is a lack of song mode locks/automation. It would be nice to program in something like a filter sweep on just one bar in a song without having to use a new pattern and lock. The problem comes down to a lack of hands. :(

Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by Ihatederekreed - 2013/09/02 04:57

SLX wrote:

Derek, this composing on the fly is very interesting. You say you use just 1 pattern. So there is nothing prepared before the live impro?

Are you constantly changing the pattern? When i listen to your music, what i am doing at the moment, it does not sound that there is running always a 64 step loop. Maybe you can explain some details here.

Christian and I have a similar way of dealing with this. A4 always runs in infinite mode. My approach to the a4 is start with track 1 and build my way down to track 4. We try to evolve at a pace, so that by the time track 4 is in full swing, I can take out track 1 and start doing something else with it. I typically will start my MDUW in 16 steps to get a basic idea going and then extend that to whatever step length I feel fits, typically 64, and start tweaking drums from there. The OT was easy because I used it primarily for movie samples and 1shots and with as much stuff as we have on our table, I seldom need 8 tracks. I can tweak 3-4 to my liking and by the time I'm ready to move on I just build on the remaining tracks as I fade out the originals. Our typical way of evolving is to start with nothing, try to get a good groove going around the 10 minute mark or so, then destroy it. I will usually wash everything into a reverb noise mess, start fading out parts, and start over. Go from noise to another groove, mess it up and wash it out, then repeat. The idea is to build a groove and then destroy it into mush, then start again. Having the other machines (op1, 303, iPad, marsynths, etc) it's easy because I play them live while we are building up the next part. It's a very organic approach for us. Build it up / tear it down. We don't need to switch patterns with this mode, because we have so much hardware that we can just play with something else while one of us starts sequencing the next movement. The only thought we have before we start is a basic tempo range, and a key. Aside from that, we just do whatever we want.

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Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by SLX - 2013/09/06 04:30

IHATEDEREKREED, thanks for the insightful and detailed description. Many good points.

The last days i am trying to explore the possibilities of sequencing the MM from the OT.

I am using OT input A and C with the MM outputs A and C.

Between OT input B and MM output E are some external effects.

OT MIDI tracks 1-6 are MM tracks 1-6 and so on.

The OT MIDI track is the sound / melody / rhythm layer, the OT "normal" track is the envelope and effect layer. Sound sculpting happens on the MM.

So far i have pretty much fun with the elektrons, but that is what i always have.

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Re:Apporaching 2 elektrons - technical aspects of composing

Posted by HighSage - 2013/09/06 06:47

I use a single pattern =s 'one song' when performing live. Sometimes even just 16 steps is all that's needed to go for 4-5 minutes. 16 parts on the MD, and 7 on the OT and that's more than enough firepower for me. I've even done a one hour set starting with just one pattern and keeping it on that patter for the entire hour as a proof of concept, and to allow myself to settle into the modulations, evolutions, and the energy/tension management of the set. It results in a one hour 'experience' instead of a set of 'songs'... constant and every-changing progression and subtraction like rolling energy waves. This allows you to program "what you hear" in your mind in terms of where the energy and sound needs to move towards. Very liberating, and it never comes out the same way twice, at all. For the MD/percussion, I usually just have one 808 and one 909 ROM pattern each. and just go back and fourth between the two, reprogramming step patterns, tunings, etc. as I go along according to what I'm hearing the track 'want's.

On the OT, I am a little more structured in terms of what sounds are in each part... but i still do a lot of on the fly pattern programming with those sounds. What i do try to avoid is actively loading up a new sound in the middle of a set, so that is what I prepare in the studio instead so I don't have to worry about it.

The less structure the better for me overall...it always ends up better that way and people dance more and harder, and it's what they learned to expect: a journey into the unknown that you experience WITH them, instead of prescribe TO them. Others work differently with equally good results, however...and for some, structure provides liberation and an invitation to explore with confidence within that structure. Everyone works different. I 12+years, I've never once used song mode on an elektron machine. Hell I've never once even used more than one pattern to write or perform 'a song'. Those things scare me, lol. I'm too dumb to pull it off....

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