
Starting my first modular: it's all your fault Elektron

Posted by Poldenstein - 2013/08/21 23:39

Just a few months ago I was in a peaceful and boring digital world of lifeless virtual analogues and software sequencing. One day a friend came to me with a monotron. Had an analogue epiphany and in a week got me an a4, that delights me every day.

But this damn thing has CV outs, and I started to look at things to control with. That's how I dipped my nose in modular world and got involved in the worst GAS-inducing dependence, something like crack for musician (beware candid souls..). Is there anyone using a4 to interact with modulars?

I mean to start as slowly as I can manage.

I am building a case, and just ordered a doepfer DIY kit and a VCO (Intellijel Rubicon :whistle:). Initially I mean to control the VCO with CV/gate from a4, and send VCO's output to a4's EXT IN for modulation and processing, while I wait for the next modules to come.

Is it doable or am I missing something?

Cheers

Re:Starting my first modular: it's all your fault Elektron

Posted by ChevChelios - 2013/08/22 00:14

Poldenstein, I guess great minds think alike.

I recently had the biggest gas inducing epiphany of my life; I realized the my current setup of just an OT and A4 offerers so much potential awesomeness that can be unlocked by pairing it with a basic modular system that I would be stupid not spend some \$ on one, regardless of my current financial situation.

So I plan on testing the waters by building a small eurorack drum machine. I think my initial investment is going to be a one of TipTop Audio's Happy Ending Kits, their 909 drum modules, a clock divider/mult, a 4 to 1 mixer, and some audio outs to route it back into my OT or A4.

That comes in at just under \$1k, and I believe it should provide me with the most awesome and versatile 909 drums ever, and the modules for the 808 drums is just a relatively small \$ add-on i could do down the road.

Now because I'm a modular/cv noob what I'm not totally sure on is what added functionality the cv from the A4 provides. I'm hoping that between the 4 cv outs I'll be able to pipe in clock, and some LFOs/ENVs. But I'm not totally clear on is if the A4's CV capabilities could replace dedicated EG and LFO modules later when I want to add a VCO/VCF.

So to answer your question, I'm still a little foggy on how CV/Gate works in a system to confidently give you an answer. In the system your describing I'm not sure if the Gate signal can go into a CV on the VCO (if your trying to gate the VCO) i think that it may be that you need to run the Gate signal to a VCA which would have the VCO audio running to it... or alternatively to an EG and then use the EG's env to control the VCA.

Not sure about this but in that scenario I think that ideally a basic system with an A4 should be like this:

A4 - CV out to VCO for controlling pitch

A4 - Gate out to an VCA

With the audio path looking like VCO->VCA

Re:Starting my first modular: it's all your fault Elektron

Posted by orangehexagon - 2013/08/22 01:00

Yes it works beautifully. I have a small modular system and don't have a modular sequencer.... I use the A4's CV track.

The way I have it set up is...

CVA - assigned to pitch and patched into my VCO

CVB - assigned to gate and patched into my VCA

CVC - assigned to clock and patched into my Echophon

The Rubicon is a killer VCO by the way. I suggest pairing it with the Dixie II if/when you expand your voices.

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Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by orangehexagon - 2013/08/22 01:04

CV gate advice for the Rubicon in particular... try patching that into the "index" jack on the Rubicon

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Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by tiB - 2013/08/22 01:06

@Poldenstein: yes you can do that. I dont have an A4 but used to do loads with the monomachine/OT along with a midi to CV.

@Chevchelios: You need to think about how you are going to gate each module- you can use a combination of your clock divider and the A4's gate outs, though that is 3 channels of gates, and one for clock. ie you will soon run out of gate sources. You might be able (and I think you can) to trigger a couple of the modules by sending a pulse out sample of the OT. The OT would be a better option for you here (imo at least- it depends how you like your rhythm section) since you have a more flexible sequencer. I would strongly recommend the Analogue solutions MT9 midi to trigger/gate convertor, which would free up your A4 for CV stuff.

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Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by Poldenstein - 2013/08/22 05:03

Yeah right, how came I did not realize it? No vca equals no gate.

I guess I'll do a lot of legato parts for the first months...

It seems I've already come to realize the meaning of the old modular adagio "you can't have too many vcas"

A Dixie II is already planned, but maybe I'll get a vca first.

@ orangehexagon the index patch point seem to control the vca of the tzfm signal, but I'm not exactly shure of what would that mean sonically.

The ecophon must be amazing, I'll definitely get some make noise stuff in the future.

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Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by tiB - 2013/08/22 05:16

You can run back into the a4's inputs and use the VCA, filters, envs and effects in there.

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Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by Poldenstein - 2013/08/22 08:06

Thank tiB for the tiP :)

That was my intention, indeed. I did not consider closely how to actually do it.

Now it's more clear. No need to send gate.

I should sequence V/oct on CV track and sequence accordingly a synth track with osc set to EXT IN

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Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by dionysiananarchy - 2013/08/22 08:29

the a4 sequencer cv was one factor in my choice to get a Pittsburgh modular,,,,, i was out of my mind a few weeks ago when i even contemplating selling or trading it..... i was just frustrated vy other things,

Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by Poldenstein - 2013/08/22 10:18

Another question for modular users.

Where did you get the insert cable (1/4 TRS jack to 2 1/8 mono jack) needed to use all four a4's CV outs? A suggestion on a good shop to buy cables from possibly in Europe would be much appreciated

Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by Blumenthal - 2013/08/22 19:42

Poldenstein wrote:

Just a few months ago I was in a peaceful and boring digital world of lifeless virtual analogues and software sequencing. One day a friend came to me with a monotron. Had an analogue epiphany and in a week got me an a4, that delights me every day.

In my case, I blame Teenage Engineering's OP-1, which at the time I thought it was going to be the first and only hardware synth I was ever going to get (now I know that's how I fool myself into debt), and then Oplab's Dark Energy, OT, A4, Sub Phatty, Make Noise... But the OP-1 ended up paying the price of it, as I sold it to afford more modules.
:laugh:

Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by Blumenthal - 2013/08/22 19:49

Poldenstein wrote:

Another question for modular users.

Where did you get the insert cable (1/4 TRS jack to 2 1/8 mono jack) needed to use all four a4's CV outs? A suggestion on a good shop to buy cables from possibly in Europe would be much appreciated

When I first got the A4, I spent weeks looking for the perfect cable. I couldn't believe Elektron would produce something for which there exist no cable... one single cable, without the need for an adaptor... In the end, I resigned myself to buy two 1/8 stereo to 2x 1/8 mono (L/R), and use two 1/4 to 1/8 adaptors to connect the cables to the A4. It's perfect.

Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by Poldenstein - 2013/08/22 23:03

Well, to be fair, it's a quite common cable: an insert cable, commonly used to patch insert fx (as, say, a compressor) in mixer channel strips. I already have one. Stereo jack to double mono. Problem is that it comes in 1/4 format. If you happen to use a 5U modular you don't even need adapters. But for eurocrack you need 1/8. Me too I was trying to avoid adapters, but I'm afraid I'll have to get a couple of 1/4 to 1/8 mono jack adapters, or try to solder the cable myself, but I guess 1/8 would be tricky for its tiny size..

Re:Starting my first modular: it\'s all your fault Elektron

Posted by darenager - 2013/08/22 23:28

^ Definitely avoid using adapters on 1/8 or 3.5mm sockets, aside from possibly introducing jitter due to poor connection it will put way too much mechanical stress on the socket, and invariably lead to lifted traces or other damage, much better to solder some plugs yourself or get someone else to do it.

A while back I was making and selling leads but not many people were interested so I stopped doing them, I won't be doing them again, but would say that anyone using adapters from large plug to small socket is asking for trouble, if you must use an adapter then do it the way Blumenthal suggests at the A4 side, but even then you risk intermittent connection so possibly jittery pitch on your CV etc.

Re:Starting my first modular: it's all your fault Elektron

Posted by Poldenstein - 2013/08/23 10:01

Thanks darenager
What you said makes sense, I'll keep far from adapters.

Re:Starting my first modular: it's all your fault Elektron

Posted by fewture - 2013/09/08 15:32

Be warned: The amount of money you will want to pump into modular/euro is like being on drugs. You start working out ways to get money, any way, for those next set of modules that you NEED!

Also the sound of modular is not necessarily better. Yes its more flexible but so what if the oscillators don't call your name? If, for example, you ever want Moog bass, you are better off getting Moog bass.

I would recommend going really really slow. See if you actually like the sound of what you are buying.

Don't fall for the HYPE that everyone who is on the drug believes. IMO Modular/Euro is worse than your average gear lust. And I feel sorry for those who try to turn their whole setup into modular (like I did). In most cases modular will cost 10x as much to do the same thing and probably more work doing it.

For me personally its not as amazing as I thought it would be and my productivity got less. I have still kept quite a bit though as its hard to let go of ;)

Re:Starting my first modular: it's all your fault Elektron

Posted by fewture - 2013/09/08 16:24

Having said all that, there are still a couple modules that I want to buy (i have to buy.....) ;)

Re:Starting my first modular: it's all your fault Elektron

Posted by Poldenstein - 2013/09/09 06:32

Thanks for your advice Fewture.

I already went through a bad GAS syndrome when a was younger that eventually led me to loose interest in making music. I no longer have musical ambitions, and do not feel the urge to produce music. I can jam for hours without hitting record and not feel guilty about it.

So now, alas, I'm older and I hope wiser, and I mean to move in modular realm with ponderation.

That said I think that with modular it all depends on what one wants to get out from it.

If all one needs is a subtractive synth voice for tracking there are much cheaper options, but if you want, well, modularity, that is being able to send/receive everything to/from everywhere, be it audio or control signal, without any limitation to experiment, you pay for what you get.

I just started with a doepfer supply and rails and one single vco and I have many days of instant and ever renewing fun

behind me. With just one single module. If you dare, you can hear me going crazy on it in the "post your music" section. I cannot imagine how it would be with a bunch of them.

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