

SOFTWARE TIPS: STYLUS RMX

Avoiding bland loops with Stylus is as simple as R.M.X.

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► In this software tips installment we're going to explore a few of the many ways Stylus RMX can mangle, effect and improvise on loops to create a practically infinite number of expressive possibilities...

GROUPS & LAYERING

The real key to RMX's flexibility lies in its ability to layer sounds and separate elements out of sounds into groups.

To layer sounds is fairly easy. In RMX, grab Slot 1 and load a loop. Then load another sound in Slot 2 – bingo you're away.

However, grouping sound elements is a little trickier and often overlooked by many users. To group a sound, first click on the grate on the front panel:



The grate then becomes active and looks like this:



Here's where the fun starts – you can make assignments on the 'Assign' menu. This removes whatever you've assigned from the Main group and places it in a second individual group. For example – select 'Assign (2 and 4) Backbeats' from the Assign menu. Now you have two groups – the Backbeats group (with anything in the loops that's on beats 2 & 4) and the Main group with everything else. You can select groups from the menu that originally says Main (above the Assign menu). You can then solo a group, mute it and send it to different outputs so it comes up on its own set of faders in your host.

Any selection can be grouped. Either select one of the preset groupings or make your own using 'Create Edit Group' and 'Add/Remove Slice'. 'Well, so what?' you might ask... well the cool thing about this is that every group has a completely fresh set of editing options. This means if I adjust the pitch with the Backbeats group selected, only the Backbeats layer is affected by the pitch change. This allows you to start mangling a loop element by element – radically re-pitch snares and kicks, build a pitched pattern in hats or other parts – whatever your track requires.

CUTTING HOLES

The same thing can be done with volume – turning sounds up or down or cutting out various sections of a loop entirely. For example, you could take the snares out of a loop and replace them with another snare on a different layer.

To do this, select the group you want and adjust its level:



By doing this you will only be changing the *volume* of the selected group, nothing else.

THE STEREO FIELD

Loops can also be made to do wild things within the stereo field in RMX. To try it out, make a few groups and then adjust their pan positions for a loop that really moves... combining both volume adjustments and panning can really turn a fairly static loop into a radical and exciting one. The key is to experiment without thinking too much.

FILTERING

The same experimental approach applies to filtering. Try filtering elements of your loops differently. Make your kicks mellow and your snares sharp (or vice versa), or create interesting rhythmic filter patterns within your loops. To do this, simply select a group and adjust the filter – then select another group and create a second layer of different filter setting. This approach can generate all sorts of dynamic movement within your loops to help drag them out of the mundane and into a more sonically compelling space.



REVERSING & SAMPLE START

Reversing sounds can also be approached using this group layering technique.



For example, an open hi-hat on the '3&' upbeat – could be added to its own group and then reversed by selecting the group from the menu and pressing the 'reverse' button.

This could apply to any element in a loop, of course, or even whole groups of elements – try reversing all of your hats perhaps... there's no reason why you wouldn't try it, after all! The key point here is to experiment. Many great sounds are hit upon by experimentation and chance rather than considered forethought.

ENVELOPES & MODULATION

Applying this same approach to envelopes and LFOs can also produce unexpected eye-opening results. Every group can modulate differently!

Simply select your group and then adjust the envelope and LFO settings as you would normally – remembering that you will only be changing the parts of the loop contained in that group. Selecting a different set of envelopes and LFOs on a second group can really turn the loop on its head.

INSERT EFFECTS

Inserting effects to different grouped elements also provides you a practically limitless array of ways to mess with individual elements within a loop.

The same deal applies: select a group, go to the FX page in RMX and add whatever effect you desire. Changing groups will switch between each group's individual effects page – meaning you have the effect slots per group – not per loop.



Distort the kicks, compress or EQ elements individually – the options are truly staggering.

LAYERING

Okay, so every loop can be spilt into bits and mangled in practically any way you can imagine. So now multiply that by eight! Combine loops, mangle them, cut holes in them and make them into a groove that's your own, even if it started life as a fairly ho-hum standard.

SEND EFFECTS

Unfortunately, there's no way in the current version of Stylus RMX to have different sends on different groups. However, you can get around this by opening the same loop on two different parts and using groups to split the loop up, and then applying send effects separately to each part.

For example, let's say you want to add delay to only the snare in a loop. You can of course do this as a group insert by grouping the backbeats and just adding a delay to that group – but let's say you already have a delay set up on an auxiliary that you're using on other parts of your groove, and you want to use the same delay to save some CPU cycles.

If the snare is on beats 2 and 4, open the same loop in Slots 1 and 2 of RMX. Assign the backbeats to a group in both slots using the Assign menu. In Slot 1, select the Backbeats group and adjust the level to zero and in Slot 2 select the Main group and adjust its level to zero. You now have only the backbeats of the loop in Slot 2 and the rest of the loop in Slot 1. You can now send just the backbeats to an Aux containing a delay using the aux sends on the mixer page. Job done.

CHAOS

So how does all this apply to the Chaos Designer in RMX? The answer is, exactly the same way!

Let's say you have a groove that you want to keep fairly steady but you want it to improvise a little. Assign the beats of the bar (quarter notes) to their own group. Grab the Main group (everything left over) and apply some Chaos Designer to that group. You now have a loop where the beats of the bar stay the same – keeping the groove fairly consistent – but the rest of the loop improvises around those beats. This can be applied at any level you want. Only want the off beats to improvise? Make them a group and apply Chaos Designer... adjust to taste.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

I mentioned at the start of this article that layering was easy. Add to that the power of grouping and it also becomes an amazing tool.

So grab your favourite loops, group them into parts, effect them, pitch, pan and filter them. Make them improvise. Cut holes in them. Then layer your creations against each other to create truly original grooves. ■