

Per Anders Nilsson
Högskolan för scen och musik
Box 210, 405 30 Göteborg
pan@hsm.gu.se

Playing the Octatrack in a Live Jazz Setting

A point of departure for the author Per Anders Nilsson in this project is to investigate man – machine interactions. The improvisation group Natural Artefacts includes a mix of acoustic and electronic instruments. Is it possible to program electronic instruments, such as sequencers, samplers, and synthesizers in such a way that an organic “groove and feel” of jazz occurs? And is it possible to perform with them in a live context, that retain a “true” jazz feeling? No one should however mistake the machines employed for human musicians. The author has composed a number of compositions that in different ways explore this avenue, with an aim to blend elements from diverse musical genres and traditions such as free improvisation, serial music, minimalism, ambient, electronica, and electroacoustic music. At the core of the investigations is a particular machine, the Octatrack sampler/sequencer from the Gothenburg based company Elektron. In order to create creative constraints, Nilsson decided to build the new repertoire almost entirely on this machine. At the outset, the Octatrack is designed for musical genres such as techno, house and other types of beat-based dance music, which means that all sounds are triggered from a pre-defined position in a rhythmical grid. By playing around with function generators, such as random low frequency oscillators, sample and hold, and probability based trig conditions however, it is possible to circumvent the rigidity of the perception of a pre-defined grid. As it turned out, with deliberate programming, the Octatrack can be a flexible musical partner, and mostly acts as a virtual bass player, comprising a jazz sounding rhythm section together with human drummer Anton Jonsson.

Link:

<https://du5hbgm2lcfpf.cloudfront.net/transcodes/okGmak4NtcFMcsKrN/videos/YDAFSJK4A4XkzchBr/YDAFSJK4A4XkzchBr.mp4>