Quanalog Instruments — Boubou

- Manual PDF

Manual PDF / source

Quanalog Boubou: using the drum voices as melodic building blocks

Although **Boubou** is presented as a 5-voice analog drum synth, the manual makes it clear that the module is really a collection of **filter-based resonant sound generators and signal processors**. That means it can do much more than percussion: it can create **basslines, tuned percussion, resonant tones, noisy pitched textures, and audio-processed melodic layers**.

Why Boubou can be melodic

The key idea running through the manual is:

- each voice is built around an **analog resonant filter structure**
- several voices have **pitch/frequency/tune CV control**
- some voices can **self-resonate**
- several sections can act as **processors** when fed audio instead of triggers
- unpatched trigger inputs can cause one section to become part of another section's tone shaping

In practice, that makes Boubou feel less like a fixed drum module and more like a **semi-patchable bank of resonant analog voices**.

The melodic roles of each section

1. Kick as bass oscillator / bass synth voice

The manual says the kick core is a **pure sine wave generated by an analog low-pass filter excited to resonance**. That is already the basis of a melodic voice.

Melodic uses

- **Sub bass voice**
- **Acid-like sine/overdriven bass**
- **Tuned kick-bass hybrid**
- **FM-ish bass modulation source**
- **Drone or sine oscillator when pushed into self resonance**

Important manual clues

- Kick has **Tune CV** and **Decay CV** in the newer version.
- The **overdrive** can move from soft 808-like behavior toward 909/ Vermona-like aggression.
- It can be **cranked until it self-resonates and be used as a sine oscillator for generating bass sound**.
- If you feed **audio or waveform into the trig input**, it becomes a **wavefolder/bit crusher**.

How to use it melodically

- Patch a sequencer CV into the **tune/fm input** and use short triggers for plucky bass notes.
- Increase decay for longer note sustain.
- Use lower overdrive for clean sub notes, higher overdrive for more harmonics so the pitch reads better in a mix.
- Push it near self-resonance for a stable sine-like tone, then sequence it as a bassline.

Best musical result

This will excel at: - techno bass pulses - tuned low-end riffs - tom-like melodic percussion - mono bass drones

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2. Dual Tom as tuned percussion pair or interval generator

The **Lo Tom** and **Hi Tom** use the same core engine as the kick and have **CV control for the resonance point**, which the manual says affects drum pitch.

This makes the dual tom section one of the most obviously melodic parts of the module.

Melodic uses

- **Two-note tuned percussion**
- **Bongo melodies**
- **Call-and-response tom riffs**
- **Interval drones**
- **Pitched resonator pair**
- **Dual notch filter processor for external melodic audio**

Important manual clues

- Lo Tom ranges from **low kick territory to hi tom/bongo**.
- Hi Tom can go **very high pitch** and can become a **rimshot**.
- Gate length and the **Retrig** control can create flam/roll/hand-play effects.
- Like the kick, the toms can become a **sound processor**.
- Without trig behavior, they can act as **dual notch filters** with low/high frequency ranges.

How to use it melodically

- Send related pitch CV to both toms for tuned percussion lines.
- Offset one voice relative to the other for intervals like:

- root + fifth
- root + octave
- close minor/major third for melodic fills
- Use varying gate lengths to make some notes retrigger and produce more articulated patterns.
- Feed external VCO audio through the tom section to impose resonant pitched coloration.

Best musical result

This section is ideal for: - melodic tribal percussion - tuned tom fills - pseudo-marimba lines - interlocking ostinatos - resonant tonal percussion in polyrhythms

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3. Snare as pitched noise voice / filtered percussion synth

The snare is described as **analog white noise through a decay VCA, then triggering a band-pass filter** with **frequency and resonance** controlling the pitch/body.

That means it is not just noise—it is a **tunable resonant noisy voice**.

Melodic uses

- **Noisy tuned plucks**
- **Clap/snare hybrids with pitch contour**
- **High percussion melodies**
- **Band-pass struck resonator**
- **Textural counter-melody**

Important manual clues

- Frequency and resonance define **snare pitch**.
- Lower/higher settings can move it from **hi tom to hand clap to second hi-hats**.

- Snare **Resonance and Decay are CV controllable**.
- Hi Tom can become part of the snare body if its trigger is left unpatched.

How to use it melodically

- Sequence the snare's resonant frequency for tuned noisy hits.
- Use CV over resonance and decay to make "notes" open and close dynamically.
- Leave Hi Tom unpatched and use it as a secondary resonant body to add tone under the noise.
- Tune the snare toward short resonant pings rather than classic snare behavior.

Best musical result

Useful for: - top-line rhythmic melody - ghost-note melodic noise - tuned clap percussion - percussive accents that imply harmony without a stable pitch center

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4. Hats as metallic oscillator companion / external voice shaper

The hats section is especially interesting melodically because it can mix an **external sound source** with its own noise engine and shape it with a **decay VCA** and resonant high-pass structure.

Melodic uses

- **Metallic pitched percussion**
- **Cymbal-like tuned strikes from external VCOs**
- **Decay envelope/VCA for another oscillator**
- **Noisy ring-mod-like textures**
- **Bright transient layer for a melodic voice**

Important manual clues

- Hats use an independent noise source through a **high-pass resonant filter** and **decay-VCA**.
- It includes a mixer for **external sound input**.
- If noise volume is down, this section acts as a **decay VCA for another sound module**.
- With a VCO plugged into trig input, it can make a **noise VCO that follows the root VCO frequency**.
- It can be used to “**ring**” the external input VCO.

How to use it melodically

- Patch a pitched oscillator into **Ext In** and use the hats section as a short-decay contour for plucked notes.
- Mix a little noise with the external tone for metallic attack and articulation.
- Tune the filter to emphasize upper partials, making bell/cymbal/mallet-like timbres.
- Feed a VCO to the trig input for more complex noisy pitched behavior.

Best musical result

This section can create: - plucked metallic lead fragments - cymbal-toned melodic hits - noisy upper-register arpeggios - processed external melodies with percussive articulation

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Cross-patching ideas for melodic composition

The manual strongly encourages feeding sections into one another or using them as processors. That is where Boubou becomes much more than a drum voice.

1. Kick + Lo Tom = bass with resonant body

The manual says that without a trig patched to Lo Tom, it can become part of the kick sound as a **notch filter/body section**.

Musical use

- Create a **bass voice with a second resonant formant**
- Tune the kick as the root/sub
- Tune Lo Tom to emphasize a harmonic region
- Modulate Lo Tom pitch slowly for vowel-like moving bass

This gives you a more melodic, less purely percussive low voice.

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2. Snare + Hi Tom = layered pitched percussion

Without trig in the Hi Tom, it becomes part of the snare's resonance/body.

Musical use

- Make the snare into a **pitched composite voice**
- Use snare for noisy attack
- Use Hi Tom as the tuned resonant tail
- Sequence the Hi Tom CV to make each hit slightly different in pitch

This is great for: - tuned snare riffs - electro percussion melodies - expressive upper-mid rhythmic hooks

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3. Toms as interval pair over kick bass

Because Lo and Hi Tom have pitch-related CV control, you can use them like a primitive melodic pair.

Musical strategy

- Kick: root bass pulse
- Lo Tom: fifth or octave
- Hi Tom: third/seventh/ninth-like accent

Even without exact 1V/oct tracking, relative tuning is enough to build: - modal percussion lines - tonal hooks - repetitive melodic cells

This works especially well in techno, minimal, tribal, and experimental music.

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4. Hats as envelope/VCA for an external oscillator

This is one of the strongest melodic features in the manual.

Patch concept

- External VCO -> Hats Ext In
- Trigger/gate sequence -> Hats trig
- Pitch sequence -> external VCO 1V/oct

Now Boubou becomes a **percussive voice processor** for a proper melodic oscillator.

Result

- short plucks
- metallic stabs
- noisy bells
- closed/open hat style articulation on tuned notes

Add noise to blend drum and melody into one hybrid voice.

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5. Audio into trigger inputs for tone transformation

The kick and hats sections explicitly mention feeding **waveform/audio** into trig input.

Musical use

Instead of thinking “trigger,” think: - transient excitation input - crude audio-rate modulation point - nonlinear processor input

This can yield: - folded basses - crushed tonal signals - resonantly excited pings - unstable but musical analog harmonics

You can use another Boubou voice as the source: - Hi Tom output into Kick trig - Kick into Hats external input - Snare noise into Hats or Tom excitation path

That creates melodic textures with shared timbral DNA across the whole patch.

Using CV for melodic variation

The manual repeatedly highlights CV over: - pitch/tune - decay - resonance - frequency - decay amount on hats/snare

This means the module is especially good for **animated melody**, not just static tuned hits.

Good CV strategies

1. Step CV into trigger input for velocity-like dynamics

The manual specifically says kick, lo tom, and tom can respond to **step CV instead of trig/gate** for velocity-sensitive behavior.

Use this to create: - accented basslines - dynamic melodic toms - phrasing within repeated motifs

2. Slow CV to tune/frequency

Use an LFO, random stepped voltage, or sequencer row to: - slightly detune repeated notes - create evolving melodic percussion - make “human” tonal movement

3. Decay CV as note-length control

Treat decay like note duration: - short decay = staccato - long decay = sustained or boomy

This is especially effective on: - kick bass - snare pings - hat-processed external VCOs

4. Resonance CV as timbre/harmonic articulation

On snare and toms, resonance changes how “pitched” the voice feels. - low resonance = broader/noisier - high resonance = more note-like

That is a powerful way to blur the line between rhythm and melody.

Practical melodic patch recipes

Patch 1: Tuned techno bassline

- Sequencer trigger -> Kick trig
- Pitch CV -> Kick tune/FM
- Modulation lane -> Kick decay CV
- Set overdrive low to medium
- Tune near sine territory

Result: bassline with analog punch and pitch movement.

Patch 2: Bongo melody

- Two trigger lanes -> Lo Tom trig and Hi Tom trig
- Pitch CV or offset voltages -> both tom pitch controls
- Use retrig with varied gate lengths
- Keep decay medium-short

Result: melodic hand-drum patterns with interval relationships.

Patch 3: Noisy lead percussion

- Trigger sequence -> Snare trig
- Stepped CV -> Snare resonance CV
- Slow CV -> Hi Tom tune, with Hi Tom trig left unpatched
- Tune snare frequency high

Result: shifting pitched snare/clap line acting like a lead accent.

Patch 4: Metallic arpeggio processor

- External VCO -> Hats Ext In
- 1V/oct sequence -> external VCO
- Trigger sequence -> Hats trig
- Noise blended in lightly
- Decay CV for articulation changes

Result: bright melodic plucks or metallic arp hits.

Patch 5: Self-contained tonal percussion ensemble

- Kick tuned as root
- Lo Tom tuned as fifth
- Hi Tom tuned as octave or third
- Snare used as noisy upper accent

- Hats used as metallic top layer or external VCA

Result: a whole melodic rhythm section from one module.

Best compositional mindset for Boubou

Boubou is best approached not as: - kick - snare - hats - toms

but as: - **low resonator** - **dual mid/high resonators** - **noisy band-pass resonator** - **high-pass/noise VCA processor** - **cross-patchable excitation network**

If you think in those terms, it becomes easy to extract melodic material.

Strengths for melodic music

Very strong at

- tuned percussion
- bass drones and basslines
- resonant analog pings
- hybrid rhythm/melody patches
- metallic external-oscillator shaping
- evolving timbral sequences

Less ideal for

- precise chromatic 1V/oct playing across many octaves
- conventionally stable lead synth duties
- polyphony in the keyboard sense

So the module is most musically rewarding for: - techno - electro - minimal - tribal - industrial - experimental - ambient percussion - generative tonal rhythm

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Bottom line

From the manual, the most important melodic takeaway is that **Boubou is a bank of resonant analog excitation circuits with CV and audio-processing behavior**, not just a static drum machine voice cluster.

Its most melodic uses are:

1. **Kick as a sine-like bass oscillator**
2. **Lo/Hi Tom as tuned percussion voices**
3. **Snare as a pitched noisy resonator**
4. **Hats as a VCA/metallic processor for external oscillators**
5. **Cross-patching sections to create layered tonal percussion and bass timbres**

Used this way, Boubou can provide not only drums but also: - basslines - tuned percussion motifs - resonant counter-melodies - metallic plucks - textural melodic layers