Kaona Instruments — Zazou

Zazou Manual PDF

Using Zazou for Densely Rhythmic, Complex Percussion and Polyrhythms

Zazou is a powerful generative melodic sequencer, but with creativity, it can absolutely drive rhythmically dense, hyper-complex polyrhythmic percussive setups in a Eurorack environment. Here's how to use it for such explorations, especially when pairing it with drum/percussion voices and modules that respond musically to melodic triggers.

1. Zazou is Not a Drum Voice—it's a Note/Trigger Generator

- **Key Point:** Zazou *does not* output sound; it outputs four channels of chromatic notes via MIDI, CV/Gate, and velocity.
- **How to Use:** Route Zazou's four gate outputs (and optionally pitch/velocity CV outs) into drum synth modules, samplers, or percussive synth voices. Many Eurorack percussion modules (like Basimilus Iteritas Alter, Plonk, etc.) react creatively to pitch and velocity modulation!

2. Building Dense, Polyrhythmic Structures

A. Use Gate Inputs Per Track for Independent Polyrhythms

- **Each Zazou Track (Red/Yellow/Green/Blue) is triggered by its own gate input** (e.g., from your modular sequencer, clock divider/multiplier, or rhythm generator like Kaona's Skippy).
- **Set up gate patterns for each track that are different lengths or divisions:** For example, run:
- Track 1 @ 4/4 pulse
- Track 2 @ triplet rhythm
- Track 3 @ 5-step euclidean rhythm
- Track 4 @ 7-step loop

This instantly generates polyrhythmic interaction as Zazou is only triggered when each track's gate input is high.

B. Manipulate Sequence Length, Steps, and "Alternate" Functions

- In the **Sequences** screen (Long press encoder 2), experiment with:
- **STEPS CHANGE:** Use different values per track (e.g., 3, 4, 5, 7 steps). Uneven lengths guarantee phase-shifting and evolving composite rhythms.
- **REPEAT CHORD:** Stretches or abridges the number of fires before changing to next chord/step; use per track.
- **ALTERNATE M/m & RND ALTERNATE:** Generates harmonic/rhythmic variety as sequence steps may flip mode.

C. Apply Advanced Algorithms for Unpredictable Patterns

- **ARPEGGIO**, **CANTOR**, **Sierpinski**, **WalkingBass**—these can all create repeating or self-similar note patterns.
- **Use "Random" algorithm** for unpredictable step lengths and note repetitions.

- **Serial** (chromatic/12-tone row) for maximum complexity and dense note patterns (good for triggering percussion where pitch-value is not semantically musical, but variety is key!).

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3. Gate Lengths, Velocity, and Modulation for Percussion

- **Gate Length:** Set note duration as "Gate" (matches your input gate's length for tight, percussive effects) or experiment with polyrhythmic note durations per track.
- **Velocity CV:** Route to CV input of percussive modules for dynamic accents, expressiveness, and variation.
- **Pitch CV (1V/oct):** Some drum modules change timbre/model with pitch; randomize or algorithmically wiggle this parameter via Zazou for unique hits.

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4. Live Manipulation & Real-Time Improvisation

- **Mute/Unmute in Live Mode:** Use track buttons to remove or bring in streams instantly.
- **Change/Reset/Step by CV or Button:** Manual or CV control for on-the-fly pattern resyncing or "one-shot" percussive fills.
- **Algorithm and Ornament On-the-fly Adjustment:** Select and adjust arpeggio, recursion, or fractal parameters for evolving complexity without stopping the music.

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5. Complex Time Signatures

- **Zazou doesn't provide "meter" but does allow sequences, steps, and gates of arbitrary length/input—so YOU decide the pulse and composite signature.**

- Feed Zazou's tracks odd-length Euclidean patterns, clock multipliers/dividers, or even external polyrhythmic triggers (pam's new workout, Batumi, Tempi, etc).

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6. Tips for Unique, Punchy, Percussive Results

- **Patch one or more tracks to melodic percussion (Plonk, Rings, BIA, etc.) and let Zazou pitch/gate control give complex tuned percussion.**
- **Route velocity to modulate amplitude, filter, or decay for variety.**
- **Ornament/Trill/Repeat ornaments**: Use these to inject machine-gun fills, ratchets, flam effects, or jazzy rolls.
- **Arpeggio "Strum" and "Random" types**: These can emulate burst/vault/hit clusters.
- **Use CV-sequenced changes to jump between algorithms/sequences for "pattern morphing."**

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7. Modular Eco-system Pairings

- **Skippy or any rhythm generator** for dense, Euclidean, or generative gate patterns as input.
- **Switches/mutes for abrupt pattern changes or generative gating.**
- **Clocked effects (delay, reverb) downstream for even more rhythmic complexity.**

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8. Saving and Recalling Hyper-Complex Setups

- **Use the SD card file system to save and recall complex setups fast** (great for performing or A/B comparisons).

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9. Bonus Patch Idea

- Use Zazou's pitch CV as the "model select" on a percussive module (via quantizer/attenuator), so each fire switches drum sound or effect, driven by generative algorithms.
- Use four tracks with different polyrhythms each on a single 4-voice drum synth, for swirling, evolving, dense rhythm beds.

Quick Reference: Key Zazou Manual Pages

- **Gate/Track Inputs:** p.3 / Quick Start
- **Algorithms/Ornaments:** pp. 7–15
- **Sequences/Step Settings:** p.16
- **CV/Gate Output Routing:** p.3, 8, 20

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