

Tiptop Audio – MA808

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[MA808 Manual \(PDF\)](#)

Making Densely Rhythmic, Hyper Complex Percussion with the MA808

As a Eurorack artist exploring the edge of rhythm, the Tiptop Audio **MA808** is an excellent analog percussion voice—its classic TR-808 Maracas tone can serve as both a textural bed and sharp rhythmic element in modular compositions. Here's how to exploit it for dense, intricate percussion and polyrhythmic complexity:

1. Triggering with Polyrhythmic Gate Sources

- **Use Multiple Gate Sequencers:** Run polyrhythmic/complex time sequence triggers (e.g., 5 against 7, or 4/4 overlayed with 9/8) into the **GATE IN** and **ACCENT IN**. Pair clock dividers/multipliers or trigger sequencers like the Z8000, Pamela's PRO Workout, or Euclidean-based sequencers for varied rhythmic interplay.
- **Layered Patterning:** Combine steady patterns (e.g., 16th notes) with sporadic accents or bursts from a different clocked source for dense, evolving textures.
- **Accent Dynamics:** Route a separate, off-grid gate (from a burst generator or random sequencer) into **ACCENT IN** for unpredictable dynamic spikes.

2. Sculpting with **Attack** for Percussive Variation

- **Automate Attack via CV (with VCA):** Signal path: Use a CV-controlled VCA before the **GATE IN** to modulate gate length or velocity dynamically. This affects how "tight" or "soft" the MA808 responds—short gates = sharp/clicky, long random gates = splashy.
- **Manual or Modulated Changes:** Turn the **ATTACK** knob (or use a hand/foot controller for expressive play) to glide between classic 808 Maracas and tighter hi-hat styles *during* performance. For variety, automate the knob with a parameter mapped to physical control or sequenced LFO/CV using an external VCA to modulate the envelope gate.

3. Unique White Noise Applications

- **W-NOISE Out = Custom Percussion:** Patch **808 W-NOISE OUT** to filter/VCAs for snare, clap, or metallic hits, all triggered by separate, intricate rhythmic events elsewhere in your patch.
- **Random Modulation Source:** Use **W-NOISE OUT** to clock random sources (like S&H or random gates), which can feedback to trigger the MA808's accent or modulate its attack/gate, creating evolving, chaotic rhythmic patterns.

4. Dynamic Level and Accent Control

- **Independent Accent Tweaks:** Unlike the original 808, the MA808 features independent **ACCENT** and *overall* **LEVEL**.
 - For punchy variation, automate the **ACCENT** knob or send it accent triggers that are offset against the main rhythm—e.g., polyrhythmic accent sequences separate from the main gate, emphasizing unexpected notes.
 - Use an LFO or stepped random CV (via a VCA's CV input) to sweep the **LEVEL** or **ACCENT** at audio or sub-audio rates for timbral and volume flux.

5. Complex Patch Ideas

- **Microrhythmic Chopping:** Use clock dividers and micro-timed logic (AND, OR, XOR gates) to flip between several rhythmic inputs to the MA808, creating interlocking 32nd, triplets, or swung grids.
- **Shared Noise Clocking:** Split **W-NOISE OUT**, use one path for clocking random triggers (feeding the accent or main gate) while the other path makes a raw percussive layer, both time-linked by the same "chaos".
- **Accent = Step-Driven Modulation:** Step-modulate the accent level with a sequencer (sending CV-to-gate conversion), sculpting shifting patterns of loud/soft hits within complex time signatures.

6. Performance Techniques

- **Live Tweak:** Manually sweep **ATTACK** and **ACCENT** to perform fills or transform timbre *live* across a pattern repetition.
- **Stack with Other Drums:** Pair with hi-hat, snare, or other 808/909 or synthesized modules, using the MA808 as the bridge for fast, busy upper percussion.
- **Glitch:**
 - Rapidly retrigger (audio-rate gates) for granular/noise effects.
 - e.g. rhythmic gating the **MA OUT** for pseudo-bitcrushed/fractional sampling flavor.

Example Patch for Hyper Complex Grooves

```
[Trigger Sequencer 1] -----\
                         > (LOGIC XOR) --- [MA808 GATE IN]
[Trigger Sequencer 2] -----/
[Euclidean Accent Seq] -----> [MA808 ACCENT IN]
```

```
[808 W-NOISE OUT] -----> [VCF -> VCA -> MIX] --- auxiliary percus  
(LFO or Stepped Random CV) --> [VCA modulating GATE IN or LEVEL]
```

By combining clock manipulation, clever patching, accent tricks, and the analog noise out, the MA808 can underpin or accent hyper-dense, polyrhythmic percussion beds, from crisp digital jitters to lush, rolling analog chaos.

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