

blanks
Soniccouture
user guide

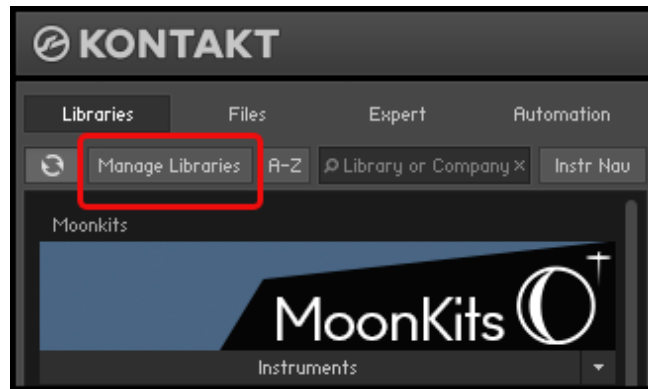
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INSTALLING YOUR SONICCOUTURE PRODUCT		3
BLANKS: CONCEPT		4
THE KONTAKT INSTRUMENT		5
SNAPSHOTS + SAVING YOUR KITS	5	
BUILT-IN HELP	5	
INIT STATE	6	
USING BLANKS	7	
THE BLANKS PANEL		8
SELECTING A PAD	8	
THE EDIT PAGE	9	
VELOCITY MODULATION	11	
THE DRILL EDIT PAGE	12	
THE CHANNEL STRIP	13	
THE MASTER CHANNEL	14	
THE BEAT TOOLS		15
THE BEAT-SHIFTER	15	
EUCLIDEAN BEATS	18	
POLY BEATS	20	
SUPPORT		22
END USER LICENSE AGREEMENT		23



INSTALLING YOUR SONICCOUTURE PRODUCT

If you do not own Kontakt, you can install the free [Kontakt Player](#)



If you have an earlier version of Kontakt, [click here](#)

1. Open NI Kontakt in **standalone mode**.
2. In the *Libraries* tab, click **Manage Libraries**
3. Click **Launch Native Access** : Login or create an account if you don't have one.
4. Click **Add A Serial** (find it in your [SC account](#) with the product download).
5. Copy and paste the number in the box and click **Add Serial**
6. Navigate to the downloaded product folder and select it
7. Click **INSTALL** to complete the process.

NOTE: The login for **NI Native Access** is not the same as your login for the Soniccouture site. You must create an account with Native Instruments if you don't already have one.



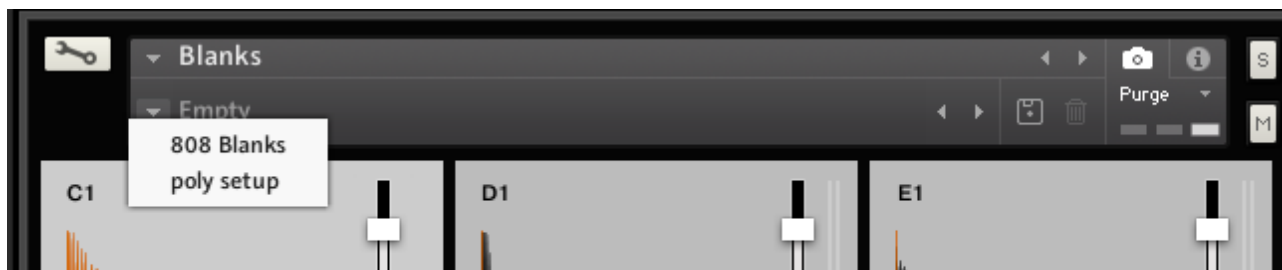
BLANKS: CONCEPT

Ever since we released *Konkrete*, we have always received requests from users to load their own samples. It's been frustrating for us not to be able to offer this function, and when *Kontakt 6.2* was released with DRAG AND DROP USER SAMPLES YAY!, we wasted no time. Work on our own drum machine started, and here it is: *Blanks*. Only 8 pads, but hooked up to all the power and creativity of *Euclid*, *Beat Shifter* and *Poly Beats*.



THE KONTAKT INSTRUMENT

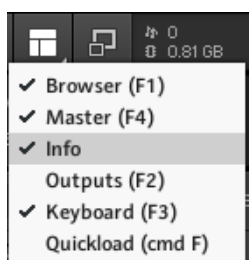
SNAPSHOTS + SAVING YOUR KITS



Kontakt stores presets as Snapshots, and you can use this function to save your own kits in Blanks.

Important: When you save a Blanks kit as a Snapshot (or an NKI), it is saving the path to your samples on your hard drive. This means that if you move your samples, or move the Snapshots to a different computer, the Snapshot will no longer find its samples.

BUILT-IN HELP



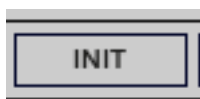
If you activate the Info pane in Kontakt, you can hover over any control in the instrument and a short note will appear in the Info pane at the bottom describing what that control does.



INIT STATE

Blanks loads up with 8 demo samples.

You can drag your own samples over these. If you then save a Snapshot (or NKL) your samples will be loaded next time you open that Snapshot.



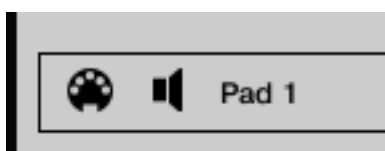
If you click the **INIT** button, it will reset all parameters. If you ALT-click the **INIT** button, it erases all samples and resets parameters. If you SHIFT-click the **INIT** button it will load the eight demo samples.



LINK All controls adjusted will affect all pads at once.



The **PLAY** button will activate the current BeatTools pattern.



SELECT BY MIDI

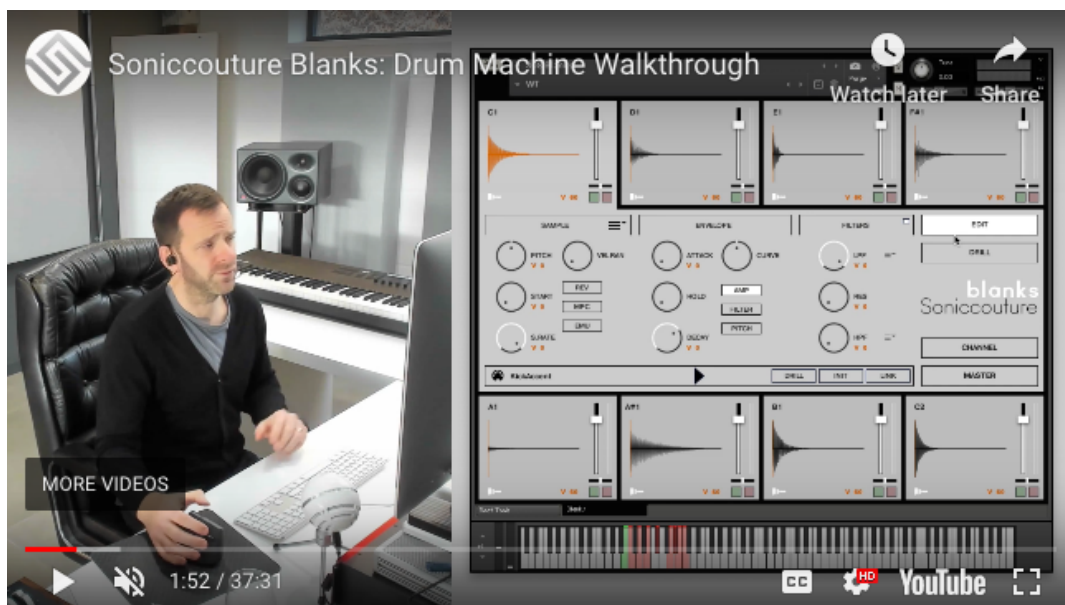
Select the pad by playing its note.

AUDITION Clicking on a pad will play the loaded sample.



USING BLANKS

We recommend watching our comprehensive walkthrough video for a guide to using Blanks. [You can watch it here](#)



THE BLANKS PANEL



The main panel features 8 blank drum pads. Drag and drop your own samples onto these.

SELECTING A PAD

1. Click on a pad in the picture, or
2. Activate SELECT BY MIDI at the bottom right corner of the mixer, and play a note from your MIDI controller or DAW.



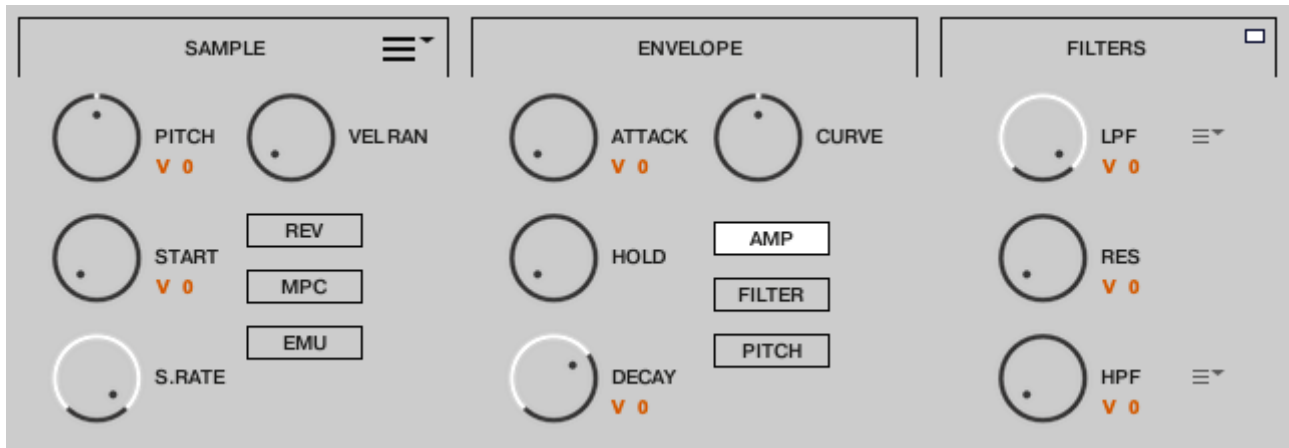
Once you have selected a drum the EDIT panel will change to show the settings for that drum.



EDIT

THE EDIT PAGE

In this page we have several knobs that help you shape the sound of the individual drum you have selected.



PITCH: Tune the sample, + / - 3 octaves.

START: adjust the point at which the sample starts to play: e.g. start playing halfway through.

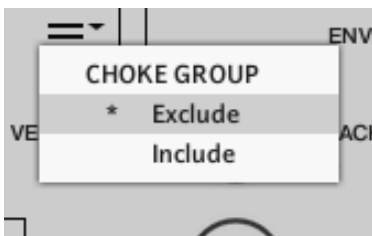
S.RATE: Change the sample-rate, for subtle or extreme effects.

VEL RAN: Randomises the incoming velocity at which the pad plays. Set low for subtle variation, or high for extreme values. This interacts with the red V values below many controls to give modulation effects.

REV: reverses the sample

MPC: Kontakt's modelled MPC60 mode, which gives a lo-fi vintage sampler effect.

EMU: Kontakt's modelled SP1200 mode, which gives a lo-fi vintage sampler effect.



CHOKER GROUP : This causes the pad to cut off any other pads assigned to the choke group create a certain natural performance effect, if desired - usually hi-hats.



ENVELOPE

There are three envelopes, one for each of AMPLITUDE, FILTER, and PITCH.

The controls are generally the same for all three, although CURVE is only on the AMP envelope, and DEPTH is only on the FILTER and PITCH envelopes.

ATTACK: Adjust the start of the envelope from fast to slow.

HOLD: Adjust the amount of time the maximum level of the envelope is held for.

DECAY: Adjust the time it takes for the end of the sound to die away.

CURVE: Changes the shape of the ATTACK curve from convex (turn to left) to concave (turn to right). The centre position is linear.

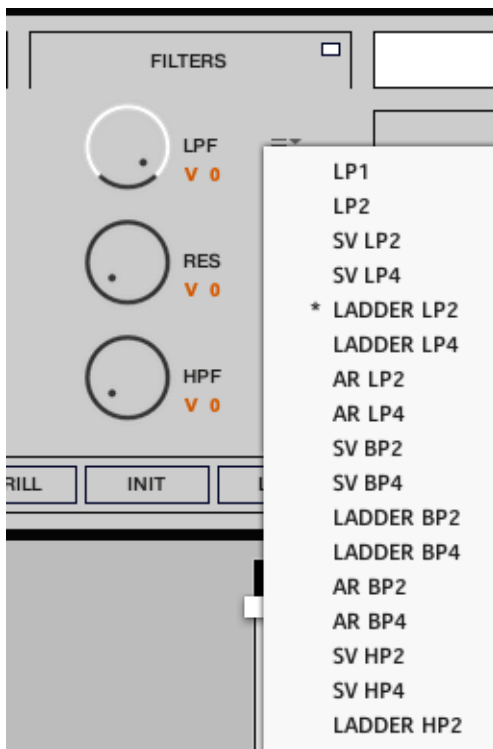
FILTER: switches to Filter envelope page.

DEPTH: Sets the amount (positive or negative) of the FILTER EG.

PITCH: switches to pitch envelope page.

DEPTH: Sets the amount (positive or negative) of the PITCH EG.

FILTERS



Blanks features two configurable filters, which can be set to any of Kontakt available filter types using the drop down, set to **LPF + HPF** by default.

RES: resonance control for Filter 1 only.



The PLAY button will activate the current BeatTools pattern.



VELOCITY MODULATION

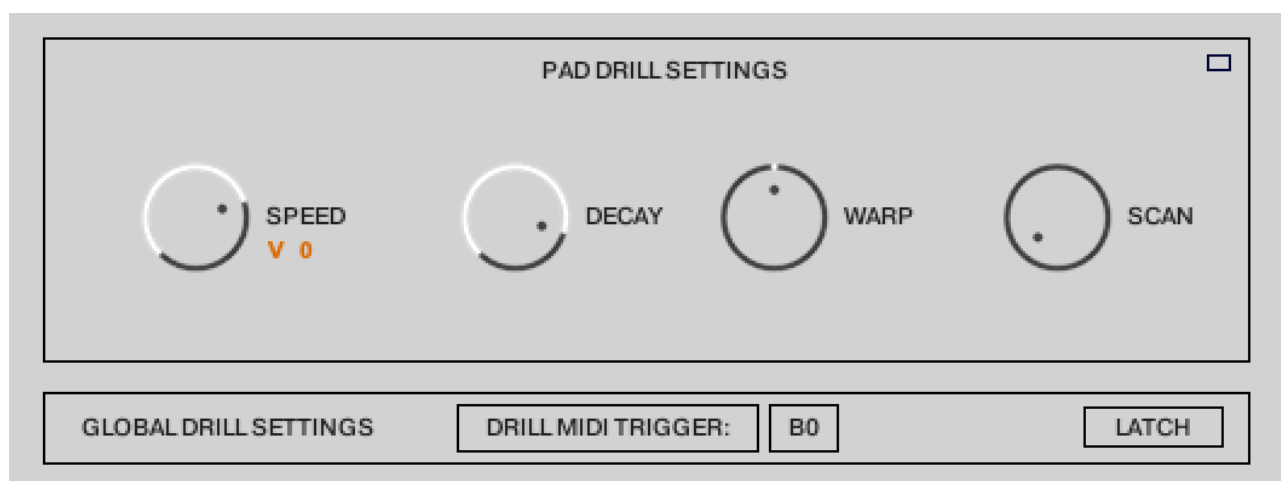
Many of the controls in the **EDIT** page have a small red **V** beside them.

This is velocity modulation depth, and can be either positive or negative for any control it's mapped to.



DRILL**THE DRILL EDIT PAGE**

The DRILL can be enabled or disabled for each drum pad with either the little power switch at the top right of the DRILL edit page, or with the little DRILL icon at the bottom left of each pad. You can set the behaviour of the drill independently for each drum pad. Your controls are:



DRILL is globally turned on or off with either the DRILL KEY or the main DRILL active switch on the control bar below (to the right of the PLAY switch.)

SPEED, the basic speed of the drill. This can be modulated with the small velocity control beside it.

DECAY is how fast the drill decays to nothing.

WARP controls a kind of pitch slide for the drill, either up or down.

SCAN causes the drill to move progressively through the sample as it drills, creating a bit more variety of timbre.

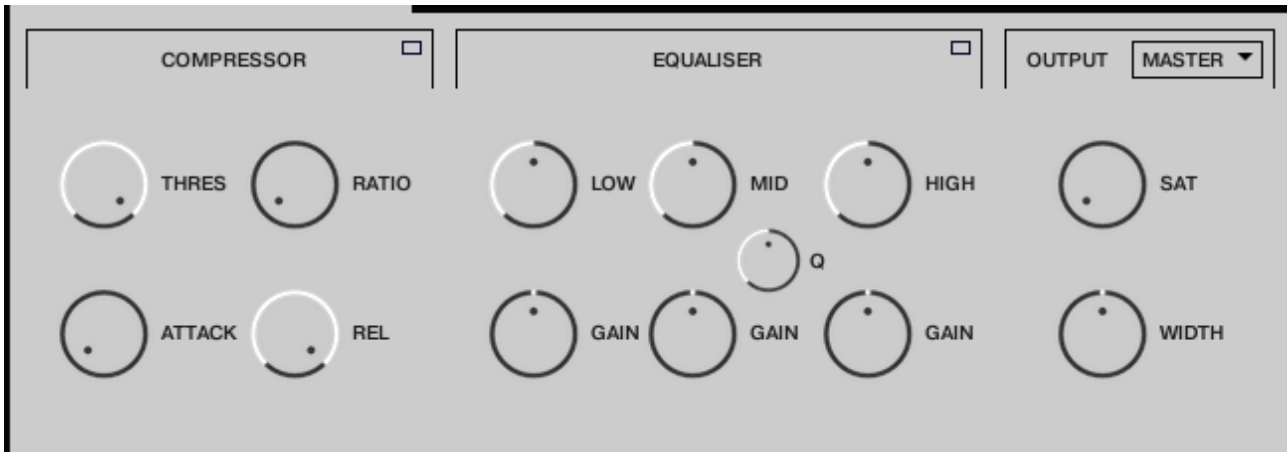
If you **LATCH** the DRILL it will turn on or off with each DRILL TRIGGER KEY. Otherwise it remains active only while the key is held down.



CHANNEL

THE CHANNEL STRIP

by clicking this button you launch the channel strip for the selected channel. Each channel has its own set of processors. Each module can be switched ON/OFF using the black/white square in the top right of each box.



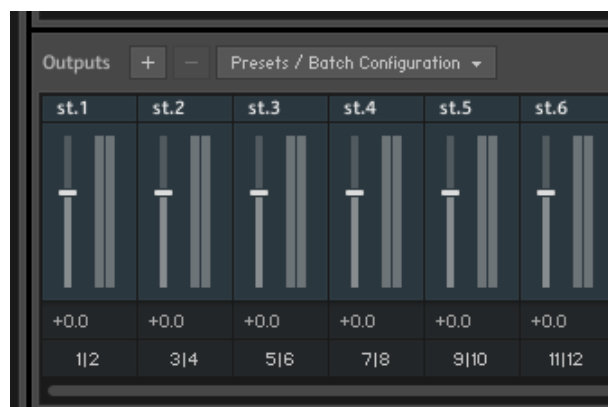
COMPRESSOR: Kontakt's Pro compressor module. Very precise and versatile for shaping and tightening up drum sounds.

EQUALISER: Kontakt Solid BUS EQ - an SSL channel EQ emulation. Shelved High and Low sections (watchable to a Bell curve) with 2 parametric mid-bands.

SAT: A saturation effect. Gentle harmonic distortion can give your sound more presence. Better used at low values.

WIDTH: Increases or decreases the width of stereo signals. Will not affect mono sounds.

OUTPUT: here you can route this channel out to a separate channel in your DAW if you wish. Note that you will need to setup Kontakt's outputs to what you want first. You can do this in the Outputs pane in Kontakt:

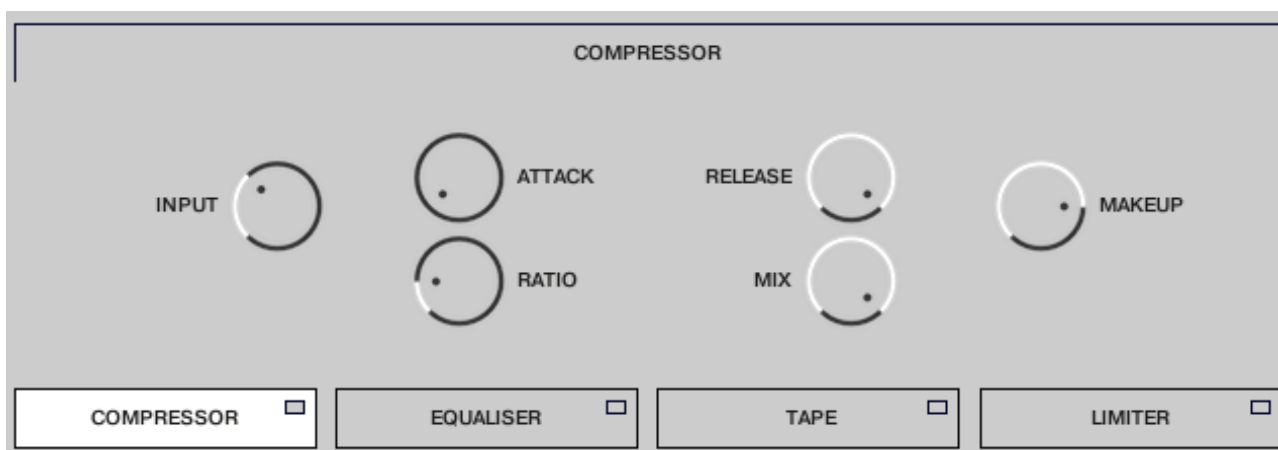


MASTER

THE MASTER CHANNEL

The MSTR channel of the mixer features 4 nice processors for mastering the output of Blanks, and you can get some very nice results here.

NOTE: If you route individual drum channels out into your DAW mixer as outlined in the previous section, you bypass these processors.



COMPRESSOR: Feedback compressor with a MIX control for parallel compression techniques.

TAPE: A tape emulation effect. Drive the GAIN knob until you hear an effect, then back it off a little way. Subtle, but has a nice rounding effect on the bottom end, and the HF ROLL is nice for giving beats a vintage feel.

EQUALISER: The same SOLID EQ as on the individual channels, with an extra parametric band.

LIMITER: Useful mainly for stopping the output of Blanks clipping. Set and leave it alone.



THE BEAT TOOLS

THE BEAT-SHIFTER



BASIC CONTROLS

PLAY: The Beat Shifter is enabled when the play arrow is pressed (bottom right). If Blanks is running within a host DAW, the host transport will control the start and stop of the beat. There are 8 tracks that have identical controls. Firstly, using the drop down menu on the left, you can choose which sound in the current kit you want to trigger with that row, here the first row is set to KICK. The table allows you to draw notes at varying velocities, which will be triggered by the cursor as it moves across the screen.

MIDI DRAG: On all Beat Tools if you drag this icon into your DAW window, it will make a MIDI file of the beat you have created.





BEAT SHIFTING

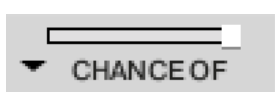
Where things get interesting are with the five small sliders along the bottom of each track, which are labelled **SHIFT**, **STEP**, **DIRECTION**, **RANDOM**, and **CHANCE**. These introduce changes that evolve the pattern while it's repeating.

SHIFT controls the likelihood of the hits in that track moving shifting to the left or right (earlier or later) in time. When it's at zero, all the way left, the pattern hits stay exactly as you drew it, and no shifting will happen. The further right the slider the higher the chance of a SHIFT, the more likely it is that the hits will shift on each repeat. When the pattern SHIFTS, it moves your programmed beat to other positions on the grid, thus altering and evolving the beat based on what you started with.

STEP size tells the generator how far to shift, if a shift is to happen. If STEP is set to 1, then a note can only shift one grid position at a time. If it's set to 2, then if a note shifts, it will shift two grid positions, etc. Note that if you set STEP to even numbers your beat will evolve in more naturally rhythmic ways than if you set STEP to odd numbers.

DIRECTION tells the generator in which direction to shift the beats, if a beat is to be shifted. When it's in the middle (default), the chance of a hit moving to the left or to the right (i.e. earlier or later in the bar) is equal, so beats can move in either direction. If the DIRECTION is set all the way to the right, then beats will ONLY move to the right (later), and if set all the way to the left, beats will only move to the left. Note that hits will "wrap" from the end of the bar to the beginning, or from the beginning to the end, if moved beyond the beat LENGTH.

VELOCITY slider introduces small amounts of randomness to the velocity of the played notes if you want to introduce some more human feel.



CHANCE OF slider sets the percentage chance of a hit happening. If CHANCE is at 100%, the beat will play as you see it, if CHANCE is at 50% then about half of the hits won't play at all.



There are 3 more Chance sliders hidden behind the drop-down menu. **All are active at once.**

CHANCE MISS: If you set a value here, it will increase number of 'miss-hits'; a hit on the key next to the intended one.

CHANCE ROLL: increase this slider to hear occasional rolls. works well with snares. Set to 100% and all hits will be rolls.

CHANCE ALT: The chance of alternate steps sounding. Set to 100% , all steps will be heard, set to 0%, only the first and every alternate step will sound (8ths).

BEAT SHIFTER SETTINGS



EXPORT BARS: here you can set the length of the MIDI file you drag into your DAW.

If you have setup a shifting pattern using the controls outlined above, the shifts that occur on each new bar will be included in the resulting MIDI file, meaning that you can export up to 128 bars of continually evolving beats!



FREEZE sets all SHIFT sliders to zero, freezing the pattern as it is, and stops it evolving on the next repeat. This is useful if you suddenly hear a pattern you like, and want to keep it. You can assign a MIDI note below the FREEZE icon to trigger the FREEZE function if you like.



REVERT sets the pattern to how it was the last time you hit STORE



STORE stores the current state of the pattern



SAVE saves the pattern to disk, so you can share it with other kits



LOAD loads a pattern from disk

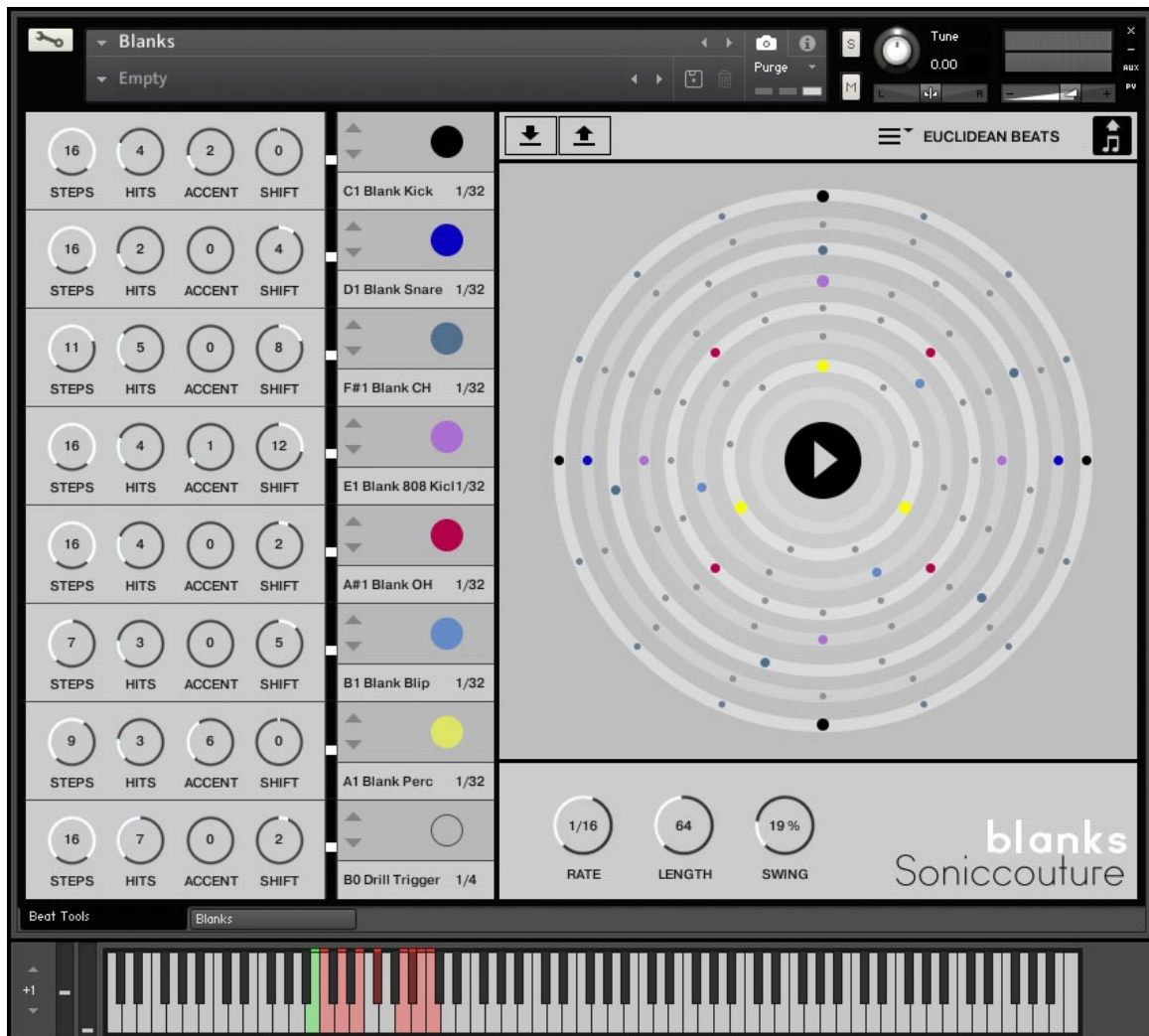
SWING adds swing to the rhythm of the beat.

STEPS is the number of steps in the pattern.

SPEED sets the duration of each step.



EUCLIDEAN BEATS



Euclidean Beats are a way of thinking about rhythm that has become popular over the last few years. Essentially the basic idea is to take a number of STEPS (say a bar of 16 steps) and evenly distribute a number of HITS within those steps. If you use 16 STEPS and evenly distribute 4 HITS, you get a very basic 4 beat bar, since the most even way to divide 4 HITS in 16 STEPS is to put one HIT every 4 STEPS. So far so disco.

It gets more interesting when the numbers are less even. For example, 3 HITS in 8 STEPS gives you a nice funky rhythm that's quite commonly heard in a lot of different musical styles.

Another thing you can then do to those HITS is SHIFT their position. The default is always to start with a HIT, so the first HIT will typically occur on STEP 0. However if you SHIFT earlier or later you get a slightly different rhythm, even though it will still be built from same basic ratio of 3 HITS to 8 STEPS.



TRACK CONTROLS

There are 8 tracks each with identical controls.

STEPS sets the length of the pattern

HITS sets the number of times to strike that drum during those STEPS. You cannot alter how those HITS are distributed within the STEPS, they are always evenly distributed (Euclid's algorithm).

SHIFT moves the position of the hits earlier or later.

ACCENT lets you add a certain number of accents to the hits. ACCENTS are evenly distributed among the HITS using the same algorithm used to distribute the HITS among the STEPS (Euclid again).

GLOBAL CONTROLS

PLAY Clicking on this PLAY control starts the beat pattern. Clicking again on it will stop the beat pattern. Within a DAW the generator will start and stop with your host transport.

RATE is the sync note value (from 1/4 note to 1/32 note), and is always calculated in relation to the host tempo. SWING adds a shuffle to the beat.

LOOP forces the pattern to restart after a certain number of steps. This might not be obvious at first, but you can potentially create a pattern with odd numbered steps needing several years before the sequence would naturally repeats at the beginning again. To force those kind of things into a usable musical time-frame you can set the LOOP as you like. (You can also set LOOP to NEVER if you don't like to dance.)



MIDI DRAG You can drag the pattern as a MIDI file to your DAW using the MIDI drag button at the top right.

If you'd like to read more about Euclidean beats and why they're getting so much attention, Google Godfried Toussaint, he wrote an original paper that started the fad some years ago.



POLY BEATS



Poly Beats is a way to divide the bar into arbitrary subdivisions, or polyrhythms.

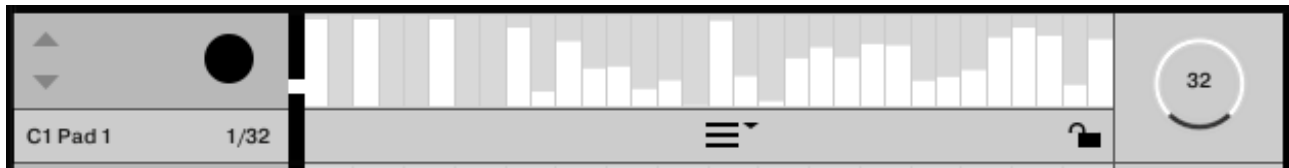
(This is distinct from the *polymetric* behaviour of Euclid, which loops different tracks after various numbers of steps, but in which the steps are all the same duration. In a *polyrhythm* the overall pattern length stays constant, and the duration of the steps is adjusted to fit the required steps into that pattern length. The pattern length in Poly Beats is always one bar.)

Polyrhythms can quickly sound very strange and unnatural, this is definitely the beat programmer for the left field composer.



CONTROLS

There are 8 identical tracks.



ON / OFF

VEL

VELOCITY MENU

LOCK GRID SIZE

DRUM TYPE

Drum type and On/Off switch at the far left of each track. On the far right the large knob with the numerical is the divisor. If you set this to 8, you will divide the bar into 8th notes. Note that you are only adjusting the GRID size... where you choose to draw your beats is still up to you, the velocity etc is still editable.

VELOCITY FADER offsets the velocity values of the entire track

VELOCITY MENU contains quick tools for populating the steps with different patterns.

LOCK Any track with the padlock shut will be excluded from the RANDOMISE function, see below.

GLOBAL CONTROLS

PLAY starts or stops the sequence. If you are in a DAW the host transport control will also start and stop the sequence.

RANDOMISE randomly changes the grid size of each track, and notes occurring on that track. To the right is a menu with some choices about how to randomise the polyrhythmic grids, choosing only powers of 2 or 3, even, or odd values.

MAXIMUM STEPS The maximum grid size that randomise can create.



MIDI DRAG You can drag the pattern as a MIDI file to your DAW using the MIDI drag button at the top right.



SUPPORT

If you have any problems or questions relating to the use of this product, please feel free to contact us. You can email us at :

<http://www.soniccouture.com/en/support/>

We will always endeavour to reply to any enquiry within 24 hours. We are based in the UK, so please bear in mind differences in time zones.

While you are waiting, you will find lots of answers to common questions in our FAQ.



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