

Intellijel — Metropolis

- [Manual PDF](#)
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[Metropolis Manual PDF \(Firmware 1.4\)](#)

How to Create Full-Length Songs with Intellijel Metropolis

The **Intellijel Metropolis** is not just a step sequencer—it's a deeply performative, compositional instrument, designed to generate, modulate, and structure evolving sequences. To move beyond cool grooves and into “full songs”, you need ways to introduce **variation**, **structure**, and **performability**. Here's an analysis of strategies, techniques, and creative workflows using the Metropolis in combination with other Eurorack modules.

Core Features for Song Creation

Metropolis includes:

- **Two independent, deeply modifiable pitch/gate tracks** (TRK 1 & 2)
- **Eight simultaneous MOD lanes** for internal/external modulation of virtually any parameter (think: automation lanes)
- **64 presets & 8 chainable preset banks** for “scene” or section switching
- **Extensive randomization, probability, accumulation (transposition), and ratcheting**

- **CV/AUX inputs & CTRL knobs**—modulate parameters live or from other modules
 - **MIDI I/O (USB)** for clocking, sync, and DAW interaction
 - **Loopy mode** for live improvisation, fills, and on-the-fly rearrangement
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Techniques for Building Full-Length Arrangements

1. Preset Chaining: Sections and Song Forms

Preset Chains allow you to structure a full set or song from 64 sequence/preset “scenes” (Intro, Verse, Chorus, Bridge, Fills, etc.).

- **Design each section** as its own preset (melodic material, rhythm, modulation, mutes).
- **Chain them together** in the Preset Chain screen: select bank/color, slot, how many times it repeats, and which tracks or MOD lanes are muted for each section.
- **Automate evolutions**—for example: “Verse 1” is sparse, “Verse 2” brings in MOD lane-driven variations, “Chorus” changes track lengths or swing.
- **Instant/multibar transitions:** Use ‘Total Pulses’ or ‘Queue Pulses’ in global setup so transitions happen after a musical amount of bars, ensuring smooth phrase changes.

TIP: Think of Preset Chains as a non-linear DAW timeline—sections are linked, repeated, and can have their own muting, length, and arrangement logic.

2. Song Variation via Modulation & Automation

Most step-sequencers loop—the Metropolis becomes a song machine by using:

- **MOD Lanes:** assign to parameters like “root”, “order”, “length”, “slide”, “swing”, or external CV/gate outputs.
 - Evolve melodies by modulating scales, roots, or slide amounts per section.
 - Drastically alter grooves by crossfading between play orders or skipped steps.
- **AUX Inputs:** use LFOs, envelopes, a MIDI controller, or external modulation sources to:
 - Animate chord changes (assign a MOD lane, CTRL knob, or AUX input to “Scale (User)” or “Root”)
 - Create evolving bass lines/melodies by modulating “Pitch Pre”, “Pitch Post”, or “Accumulate”
 - Control fill triggers or mutes (assign to “Mute”, “Skip Invert”, or Loopy/Reset)
- **CTRL Knobs:** as performance macros—assign to modulate musical “scene” parameters, i.e., fade from straight rhythm to swung, change sequence lengths, invert play orders, etc.

Combine: Use a function generator/envelope to open up filter cutoff, *and* turn up Metropolis “Gate Length” for a break, then snap both back for the drop!

3. Live Improvisation: Loopy, Stage Player, and Performance Macros

- **Loopy Mode:** Instantly “punch in” to a sub-loop, useful for breakdowns, fills, or live variations—repetition glues sections or provides surprise. Use 2-finger loopy for snare rolls or repeat phrases.
- **Stage Player:** Trigger individual steps as notes—use as manual fills, drum triggers, or soundboard during a jam.

4. Randomization, Probability, and Generative Structure

- **Per-stage Randomization** (ALT + AUX X/Y): Introduce subtle to radical variations in pitch, ratchet, gate type, probability, etc.
 - **Probability**: Humanize or thin out sequences; assign probability to drum steps for swingy, “not-quite-the-same” patterns.
 - **Accumulator/Transposition**: Diatonically transpose sequences automatically over time—mimic classic 303 and Berlin school sequences that “spiral upwards/downwards”.
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5. Integration with Other Eurorack Modules

- **CV Clock & Reset:**
 - Use external clock for tight sync (DAW/Drum machine) or internal clock for hands-on jamming.
 - Insert clock dividers/multipliers upstream or downstream for polyrhythm/polymeter.
- **Envelope Followers/Gate Processors:**
 - Use logic (AND/OR/XOR), sequential switches, or gate mutes to route, combine, or remix Metropolis outputs for greater complexity.
 - Use switch modules to toggle voices, process triggers from MOD lanes or stage gates to switch basslines, melodies, or percussion on the fly.
- **Effects & VCAs:**
 - Automate or perform transitions/reverb/delay/fx on mix elements by assigning Metropolis outputs or MOD lanes (with gate or voltage CV) to FX parameters or mixer VCAs for dramatic effect.

- **Complex Voices, Filters, & Drum Modules:**

- Route Track 1 and 2 as melody/bass, assign MOD lane (or even CV lanes as gates) to drum triggers or timbral modulation.

- **MIDI/DAW:**

- Record pattern and preset transitions as MIDI notes or CC into your DAW, use DAW to sequence “meta” events.
 - Program external synths with MIDI output per track for hybrid setups; combine Metropolis generative structure with polished studio sound.
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6. Performance Strategy Examples

- **“Mute Automation”:** Use preset chains or MOD lane automation to gradually build up/layer tracks for verse/chorus/bridge breakdowns.
 - **“Scale/Chord Progression”:** Set up a mod lane to selection of custom scales/user banks; modulate with an LFO, envelope, or sequence for chord progressions and key changes.
 - **“Polyrhythmic Evolution”:** Use different clock dividers and sequence lengths for each track/MOD lane; results in constantly shifting interplay.
 - **“Live Remix”:** Randomize or morph certain step parameters via AUX Y or X in “ALT” mode for spontaneous, unrepeatable versions of your song.
 - **“CTRL Knob DJ Moves”:** Assign one knob to “track swap,” “skip invert,” or “swing” for dramatic, drop-like moments or live breakbeats.
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Final Recommendations

- **Design Themes per Preset/Section:** Think of each Preset as a “scene” in the song.

- **Choreograph Macro Changes:** Use Preset Chaining for structure, MOD lanes for micro-automation, and CTRL/CV for live gestures.
- **Integrate Other Modules:** Use clocking, logic, CV processing, and effects for mixing/mastering-quality dynamics and transitions.
- **Perform and Record:** Use Metropolis as the live brains in a studio or on stage—capture its outputs directly or the MIDI for later multitracking.

With these capabilities, **Metropolis can drive a set that evolves, develops, and grooves as well as any computer DAW-based sequencer—each performance, even with the same presets, can be unique.**

Further Reading

- [Metropolis Manual PDF \(Firmware 1.4\)](#)
- [Generated With Eurorack Processor](#)