

Korg – Volca Bass

- [Manual PDF](#)
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[Link to the manual PDF \(Korg volca bass multi-language manual\)](#)

Using the Korg volca bass in Eurorack Song Composition

Introduction

Many modular synthesists encounter a common hurdle: it's easy to create captivating loops or short phrases on a powerful groovebox or semi-modular, but arranging these into a dynamic, full-length track is much more challenging. The Korg volca bass, though not technically a full Eurorack module, can easily interface with Eurorack and other hardware via MIDI, analog sync, and audio. Let's break down how you can combine the volca bass with other modules to advance from short jams to structured, evolving songs.

volca bass Features Overview (Summary from Manual)

- **3 VCOs** (Analog, Saw/Square, independently mutable and assignable).
- **Step Sequencer** (16 steps, per-VCO sequencing/grouping, memory slots).
- **12dB/oct Analog Low-Pass Filter (LPF)**
- **Envelope Generator (EG)** for amp/filter, LFO with various routings.
- **Sync In/Out (analog pulse)** to sync with other hardware or modular clocks.

- **MIDI In** (for sequencing & control, including clock).
 - **Active Step/Step Mode** for conditional steps, slides, rests.
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Strategies for Full-Length Song Development

1. Pattern Memory & Sequence Chaining

The volca bass can store up to 8 sequences. Pre-program variations: intro, verse, fill, chorus, and breakdown patterns. Use manual pattern changes, or sequence changes via MIDI Program Change messages from a DAW or hardware sequencer.

- **Tip:** In performance, switch patterns in sync with the master clock; or send MIDI Program Change from your modular (via modules like Expert Sleepers FH-2, Polyend Poly, or MIDI-to-CV converters w/USB host).
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2. Muting / Grouping Oscillators for Arrangement

Use the **VCO grouping and muting** to shift from single oscillator “thin” passages to rich, 3-VCO stacked basses. You can automate this via MIDI CC or through hands-on manipulation.

- **Example:** Start with VCO1 only (thin bass), bring in VCO2 for chords or fifths, and finally unmute all for a “chorus” effect.
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3. Step Editing & Active Step for Dynamic Changes

Active Step mode lets you “skip” certain steps, introducing variation (odd meter, fills, glitch, polyrhythm). Slide mode adds smooth movement for acid lines or drum rolls.

- **Automate these via:**
 - **Clocked gates (CV to Sync In):** Use modular sequencers to reset/advance the volca’s sequence.

- **Manual Play:** Use FUNC+Step combos in live performance.
 - **MIDI Control:** Sequence CCs from DAW/hardware.
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4. Sync to Modular or DAW

Sync In/Out let you drive the volca from a Eurorack clock (Pamela's Pro Workout, Tempi, etc.) or have it be the master for analog steps. Sync OUT can clock modular sequencers or drum triggers, enabling tight, evolving grooves.

- **Use case:** Manual or programmed changes in the modular's sequencer can trigger sequence advances/changes on the volca bass for transitions.
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5. MIDI Polyphony & Song Structure

With an external MIDI sequencer, the volca bass is "paraphonic" (three separately sequenced VCOs). Sequence bassline, countermelody, and chord stabs. Sequence pattern changes and mutes per section.

- **Blend with:**
 - **Other voices/modules** for complementary melodies, percussion, or FX changes at section boundaries.
 - **MIDI CC:** Vary cutoff, resonance, EG intensity, and achieve evolving sound/cutups per song section.
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6. Automation via CV and MIDI

- **External MIDI LFOs/Envelope:** Modulate CCs for filter sweeps, VCA, or VCO pitch.
- **CV-to-MIDI modules:** Automate filter cutoff/intensity using Eurorack LFOs or function generators (via, e.g., CV.OCD, Mutant Brain).
- **DAW automation:** Draw dramatic sweeps or drops, synchronize to modular through MIDI-to-analog clock/Reset.

7. Multi-Voice & Layering

Layer the volca's output with modular voices. Use clock dividers, logic modules, and switch modules to mute/unmute parts or send the volca through various FX chains (distortion, reverb for breakdown, raw for drops).

8. Jamming and Overdubbing

Record loops from the volca bass into your DAW or sampler/looper module for arrangement, or use a looper (1010Music Bitbox, Morphagene, or simple delay loops) to break out of the "16-step" limitation and chain longer passages.

Example Songform Outline (with volca bass & modular)

Section	volca bass Pattern	VCOs Active	Filter	Modular Role
Intro	Pattern 1	VCO1	Low	Pads, SFX, slow clocks
Verse	Pattern 2	VCO1+2	Mod	Drums, sequenced lines
Build	Pattern 3	VCO1+2+3	Sweep	More percussion
Chorus	Pattern 4	VCO1+2+3	HiRes	Layered leads
Breakdown	Pattern 5	VCO2	Low	FX, minimal sequencing
Finale	Pattern 6	VCO1+3	Var	Everything in

Switch patterns live or automate by MIDI; use modular to trigger events, fill, FX.

Additional Tips

- **Transitions:** Use filter sweeps and oscillator mutes to build tension and release.
 - **Fill/Breaks:** Employ Active Step and Step Recording to add fills or remove steps.
 - **External Processing:** Run the volca through modular filters, delays, reverbs, or bit crushers for section-to-section contrast.
 - **Synchronization:** Always clock the volca and modular together for tight, song-length sequences.
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Conclusion

The volca bass, especially when paired with modular utilities (sequencers, MIDI/CV, clock dividers, FX, logic), is capable of much more than static grooves. By combining pattern memory, step editing, muting, hands-on controls, and automation via MIDI/CV, you can develop organic, structured, and evolving tracks with clear song sections. Remember, structure can be as much about subtraction (muting, filtering, dropping voices) as addition!

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