

Tiptop Audio — TOMS909

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[Tiptop Audio TOMS909 Manual \(PDF\)](#)

Using the Tiptop Audio TOMS909 for Full Length Eurorack Songs

The Tiptop Audio TOMS909 is a powerful analog TR-909 style tom drum module for eurorack, offering classic, punchy toms with extended features like separate voltage control (VC) of pitch (TUNE) and accent per drum. While it's easy to create great-sounding beats or loop-based patterns with it, evolving these parts into full-fledged songs requires intentional modulation, sequencing, dynamics, and arrangement techniques. Here are practical ways to achieve song structure and progression using the TOMS909, along with other eurorack modules.

1. Polyrhythms and Pattern Variations

- **Sequencers:** Use multiple independent or interrelated sequencers (e.g. Tiptop Trigger Riot, Intellijel Metropolis, or Mutable Instruments Grids) to drive the toms. Vary the step lengths or clock divisions for each tom to create polyrhythms/polymeters that evolve beyond standard 16-step loops.
- **Pattern Switching:** Use a switch or sequential switch module (e.g. Doepfer A-151, WMD Sequential Switch) to change the order or selection of gate/cv patterns sent to the toms—for breakdowns, fills, or section changes.

- **Randomness/Generative:** Occasional triggers from random modules (e.g. Make Noise Wogglebug, Mutable Marbles) can provide subtle or dramatic fills, breakbeats, and surprise moments in your arrangement.

2. Dynamic Arrangement

- **Accent Automation:** Since the TOMS909 allows voltage-control over each tom's accent, sequencing different accent patterns (or sequencing accent only for some sections) allows you to dynamically shape verse/chorus/bridge energies. Accent CV can be rhythmically modulated for expressive, evolving feel.
- **Decay Modulation:** Use envelopes, LFOs, or stepped CV from a sequencer to modulate tom decay times. Short decay for verses, long for breakdowns, or auto-percussive build-ups for transitions.
- **Volume Fading:** Attenuate tom levels with VCAs and slow envelopes/LFOs for fades, mutes, or to bring toms in and out during arrangements effortlessly.
- **Mute Switching:** Use manual or automated mute switches to instantly change the drum arrangement between song sections.

3. Melodic & Harmonic Integration

- **FM and Pitch Modulation:** Per the manual, the VC-TUNE inputs can accept audio rate signals (from oscillators or other sources) for frequency modulation, and also CV for melodic/harmonic sequencing.
 - **Tuned Percussion:** Use a sequencer to send carefully tuned CV to toms for bass lines or percussive melodic motifs. Not 1V/Oct, but with calibration you can “tune” toms for specific pitches/notes.
 - **FM Rhythmic Transitions:** Modulating VC-TUNE with another drum or synth voice for risers, “machine breakdowns,” or metallic crescendos during fills/transitions.

4. Stereo Imaging & Effects Processing

- **Panning:** Patch each tom to a different mixer input and pan them across the stereo field. Dynamically modulate panning with LFOs/envelopes for song evolution and interest.
- **Send/Return FX:** Route toms (individually or together) to effects such as delay (stereo Z-DSP PingPong recommended), reverb, chorus or bitcrusher. Sync FX to song sections.
- **MIX OUT Automation:** Use the MIX OUT into a send for “all toms to effects” during breakdowns or climaxes, then dry in other sections.

5. Song Structuring with Modulators and Utilities

- **Macro Modulation:** Use voltage-controlled switches, sequential addressers (e.g. Malekko Voltage Block), or morphing macro controllers to sweep multiple parameters (tune, decay, accent, VCA) simultaneously by scene.
- **Scene Recall/Presets:** Some sequencers or preset modules enable fast switching between programmed states—sudden or gradual changes guide your live or recorded arrangement.
- **Clock/Transport Sync:** Use master clock sources for all sequencers, effects, and LFOs to keep everything locked for tight transitions between song parts.

Example Song Workflow with TOMS909

1. Intro:

- Just High Tom with subtle delay, panned center, short decay.

2. Verse:

- Add Low and Mid toms, bring in with longer decay, low accent. Keep patterns simpler.

3. Chorus:

- Increase accent modulation (CV in), open decays, FM tune modulation for bursts of metallic harmonics.
- Use more syncopation or polyrhythms.

4. Breakdown/Bridge:

- Mute Low/Mid, drown High in reverb/delay, modulate TUNE with slow LFO for rising pitch ramps.
- Solo or FX-heavy tom fills using random triggers.

5. Build-up:

- Shorten all decays, increase trigger/gate density, automate volume/accent with envelopes.

6. Drop/Final Chorus:

- All toms in, max accent, stereo panning, and FM/VC-TUNE modulating at audio rate for aggressive, energetic drum timbres.

Final Thoughts & Pro Tips

- Combine the TOMS909's modulation capabilities with performance-oriented modules (e.g. manual gates, tactile controllers, or scene-based macro controls) for hands-on live arrangement and expressive song transitions.
- Pre-plan scenes or sections with different modulation routings, or improvise via manual switches and mutes.
- Pair with sampling, melodic CV step sequencers, MIDI-to-CV, or DAW control for deeper integration into larger compositions.

The key: **Don't just set-and-forget your toms—actively modulate, sequence, and “play” them as compositional instruments throughout your song.**
