

Happy Nerding – FM AID

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Making Complex, Percussive, and Polyrhythmic Music with FM AID

As a Eurorack musician aiming for dense, polyrhythmic, and hypercomplex percussion underpinned by the FM AID module, you are in perfect territory for both precision and wild experimentation. Below is a practical guide to get the most out of this module within the boundary-pushing world of advanced rhythms.

1. Understanding & Context: FM AID as a Percussive Voice

FM AID isn't just a waveshaper/folder; it's a full-fledged through-zero linear FM engine that can process *any* waveform and repurpose it in surprisingly rhythmic, rich, and abrasive ways. By manipulating both carrier and modulator signals (which can be percussive, rhythmic, or free-running), you can morph the module into a drum voice, a metallic burst generator, or a rhythmically modulating timbre source.

2. Core Techniques for Percussion & Rhythmic Complexity

a. Carrier and Modulator as Percussive Sources

- Use envelopes, decaying LFOs, or short, snappy function generators as the *Carrier*. Fast transients will become "attacks"—snare hits, rimshots, claps, etc. - Patch triggers/gates, audio-rate pulses or *already rhythmic* sources as the *Modulator* for instant rhythmic interaction.

b. Polyrhythms & Time Signatures

- Feed different triggers (e.g., one at 3/16, one at 4/16) into Carrier and Modulator, so FM depth and tone changes only when both coincide—instant interlocking polyrhythms! - Use rhythmically clocked envelopes/LFOs at different clock divisions for Carrier and Modulator to generate patterns beyond standard 4/4.

c. Modulation for Rhythmic Movement

- Patch complex and/or stepped modulation (random generators, sequencer CVs) into the CV input. Sudden voltage jumps slice through the FM AID's timbral state, creating glitchy, stuttering, or precisely sequenced metallic/wooden percussive colors.

3. Unique, Punchy, Percussive Sound Design Techniques

A. Feedback for Aggressive Percussion

- Feed one of FM AID's outputs (e.g., Square or Sine) BACK into the Modulator input.
- This can add digital-like metallic noise, sizzle, or trashy hats and cymbal-style energy, especially if you use short envelopes or bursts as the Carrier.

B. Strengthen Impact

- Use the “Strengthen the Low End” tips:
 - Try lowering the pitch of the Carrier for heavy, punchy kicks.
 - Use triangle or sine waves as the Modulator for rounder, less harsh transients.
 - Dial in the FM knob to taste for just enough aliasing/noise or clean body.

C. Output Selection

- Use SINE output for low, punchy kicks or toms.
- SQUARE/SW outputs will have extra bite, useful for snares, metallic hits, and hi-hats.
- TRIANGLE is in-between: good for thocks, congas, and woodblocks.

D. Sequencing for Pattern Complexity

- Use clock dividers/multiplier modules to send sequenced patterns to FM AID’s various inputs, constantly shifting the internal polyrhythms.
- Step modulate the FM and CV inputs by clocked or probability-based sequencers for evolving time signatures and pattern density.

E. CV and FM Index Over Time

- Use fast envelopes, stepped random, or even *audio rate* signals into the CV input: The timbral changes can become part of your rhythm.
- Automate “FM” and “CV” knob movement with slow LFOs or manual performance for dramatic rhythm/timbre interplay.

4. Additional Patching Tricks

- **Self-Patch for Useful Mayhem:** Patch SQUARE or SINE output into the MOD input for digital FM feedback squeals; clock or trigger the Carrier for sharp, metallic handclaps or hi-hat bursts.
- **Clocked Modulation:** If you send clock pulses/divided triggers into the Mod input, you get sharp FM artifacts/rhythmic stutters; combine with sloped envelopes for dynamic shape.
- **Layer Multiple Outputs:** Mix SINE and SQUARE out for a hybrid, complex percussion sound, or pan them for stereo drum ‘spread.’

5. Calibration Note

Before recorded tracks or performance, calibrate the module for your typical oscillator(s) per the manual—reduces artifacts and keeps percussion crisp.

Summary

With smart patching and creative CV routing, FM AID is a secret weapon for rhythmically sophisticated, highly unique, and brutally punchy percussion, easily supporting polyrhythms, microtiming, and experimental grooves. Experiment with sources, modulations, and feedback—FM AID isn’t just an effect: it’s a rhythm machine at the core of the rack!

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