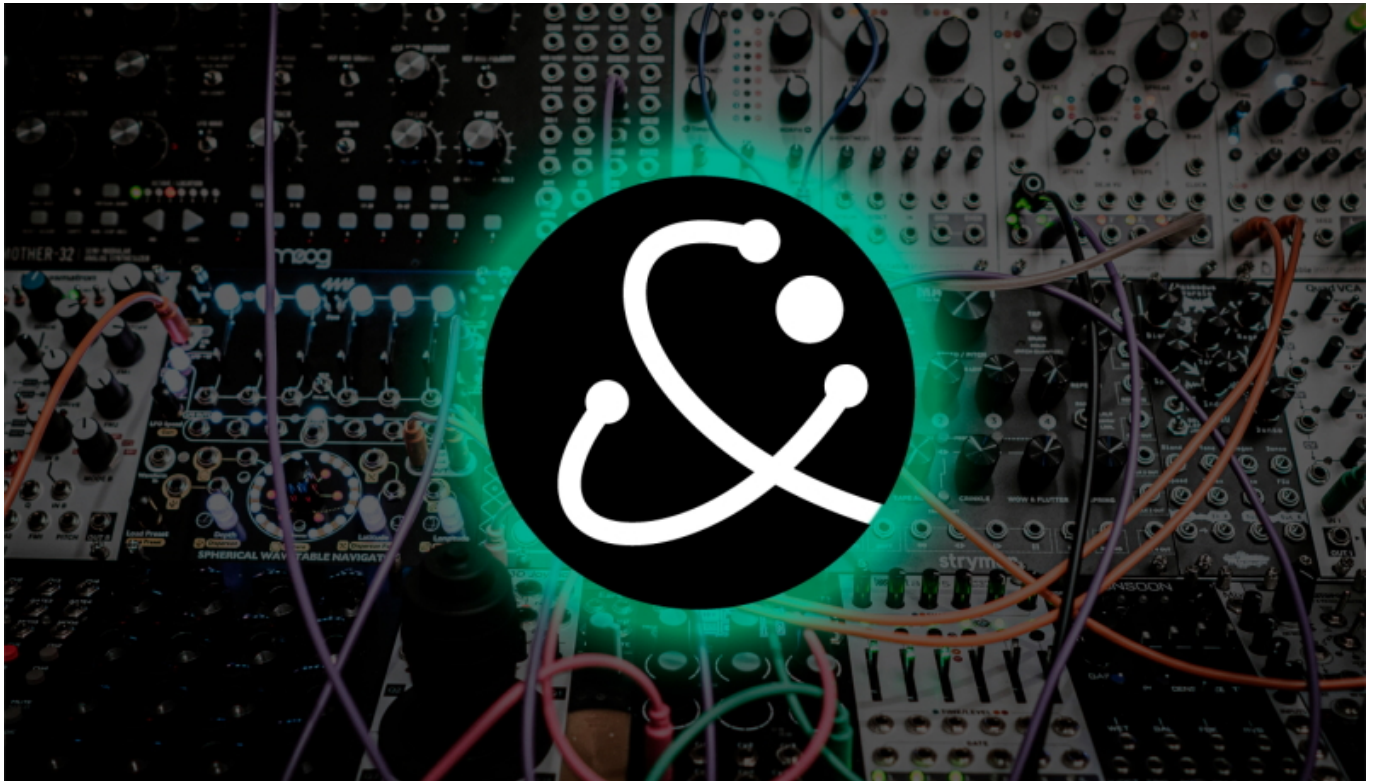


## **Bjooks PATCH & TWEAK Club**



The PATCH & TWEAK Club, an online community curated by Bjooks for synthesizer enthusiasts, has released a series of articles throughout August that together span the history, artistry, and global reach of synthesizers. From a primer on the Minimoog Model D to a guide through Hamamatsu's synth culture, these features capture the depth and diversity of electronic music.

The PATCH & TWEAK Club was created as a natural extension of Bjooks' award-winning book series on synthesizers, pedals, modular systems, and creative sound-making. It offers members monthly articles, patch tips, artist interviews, and historical insights. Synth enthusiasts benefit by gaining both technical knowledge and cultural context: learning how instruments work, seeing how artists push them into new territories, and connecting to the larger tradition of electronic music. The PATCH & TWEAK Club was also awarded "Best in Show" at Gearfest 2025, recognizing its unique role in providing thoughtful editorial content and community for synthesizer fans worldwide. This past month's contributions exemplify this range, balancing fundamentals, artist perspectives, and travel.

The month began with How the Minimoog Makes Sound – a Short Primer on Subtractive Synthesis and Signal Flow. Using the Minimoog Model D as a case study, the article explored the core concepts of subtractive synthesis: how raw oscillator waveforms are shaped through filters, envelopes, and modulation into expressive sounds.

The piece reminds readers that before the Minimoog, synthesizers were often sprawling modular systems, assembled from interchangeable modules without standardized layouts. The Minimoog changed that, cementing a fixed signal flow that has since become the blueprint for nearly every analog synthesizer. The article walks through each section: the oscillator bank with its octave ranges and waveform choices; the mixer with external inputs and feedback loops; the celebrated Moog low-pass filter; the loudness and filter contours; and the left-hand controllers that introduced the now-universal pitch and modulation wheels.

On August 8 - 808-Day - the PATCH & TWEAK Club spotlighted one of its most resonant legacies with "The immortal TR-808 - an icon of analog sound and fashion." The article revisits how the TR-808, with its striking color palette and intuitively tweakable analog circuitry, didn't merely mark Roland's entry into the 1980s - it redefined what a drum machine could be. Its TR-REC pattern programming, snappy tactile controls, and unmistakable sub-bass kick and cowbell sounds anchored decades of pop, hip-hop, and electronic music, and even permeated fashion as a bold design statement.



Complementing this feature, Bjooks marked 808-Day with a special celebration: new PATCH & TWEAK Pro members who signed up on August 8 received a free hardcover copy of *Inspire the Music: 50 Years of Roland History*, a 400-page chronicle rich with interviews, iconic instruments, and deep dives into Roland's storied past. What Jermaine Dupri describes as the 808's "soul" - that inimitable low-end punch and crisp clap - isn't merely a sonic texture. It's become embedded in the DNA of hip-hop's rhythmic expression. The TR-808 isn't just the pulse behind a track; it's a sonic reference point that other instruments, samples, and producers measure themselves against. Its deep, resonant kicks and sharp, percussive accents did not simply found a genre - they provided a rhythmic vocabulary that generations of artists and listeners have adopted, adapted, and internalized.

Moreover, its influence isn't static; hip-hop producers continue to push its envelope. Whether it's a vintage sample looped in a boom-bap beat or a freshly synthesized 808 tailored for trap and drill, artists treat the machine as both history and canvas.

In this way, the 808 evolves - not just as technology, but as a repository of cultural memory, aesthetic aspiration, and rhythmic authority.

Mid-month brought an interview with Sonic Boom: Highs, Lows and Heavenly LFOs, featuring Pete Kember – better known as Sonic Boom, co-founder of Spacemen 3 and a key figure in modern psychedelic music. Sonic traces his journey from guitars with built-in tremolo to modular systems like the EMS Synthi, Buchla 208, Serge Modular, and the rare Dutch Synton Fenix. His philosophy is one of curiosity and character: every instrument, from toy Casios to high-end modulators, is valuable if it has a unique sonic personality. Sonic Boom's reflections position synthesizers not as an add-on to psychedelic music, but as inherently psychedelic instruments in their capacity to shape sound organically and unpredictably.

The Club turned to history and pedagogy with Electronic Music – Revisiting Allen Strange's Timeless Foundation for Modular Patching. First published in 1972, Strange's Electronic Music: Systems, Techniques, and Controls became a touchstone text for understanding modular synthesis, and the article reflected on its lasting impact. Unlike purely technical manuals, Strange emphasized synthesis as both art and science, presenting symbolic patch diagrams, clear explanations, and a spirit of discovery that encouraged experimentation. His mantra – “try everything” – resonates strongly in today's modular culture. The article traces Strange's influence on generations of musicians, educators, and instrument designers, from Suzanne Ciani and Todd Barton to Tony Rolando of Make Noise. With its 2023 reissue, supported by Patricia Strange and Jason Nolan, a new generation of modular enthusiasts can once again access its teachings.

Closing the month, Japan's Synth City: A Guide to Hamamatsu transports readers to a different kind of synthesis experience – a pilgrimage site. Hamamatsu, a mid-sized city on Japan's Pacific coast, is home to Yamaha, Roland, and Kawai, as well as a UNESCO City of Music designation. The article serves as a guide for visiting synth enthusiasts, pointing to Yamaha's Innovation Road museum – where rare instruments like the GX-1, CS-80, and VP1 can actually be played – and the Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments, which houses treasures like Korg's Prototype 1 and an MS-20 Educational Edition. It also spotlights Kawai's showroom, harmonica factory tours, and Yamaha's piano factory in nearby Kakegawa.

For collectors and bargain hunters, Hamamatsu offers independent shops like Sonix and the ubiquitous “Hard Off” chain of recycle stores, where second-hand synth gems often appear. The article notes that while Roland maintains a private company museum in the city, fans must settle for virtual tours – though Tokyo offers additional destinations like the Roland Store, Five G, and NHK's Broadcasting Museum with Isao Tomita's Moog Modular.

Together, August's articles demonstrated the breadth of what the PATCH & TWEAK Club provides its members: technical primers that build knowledge, artist interviews that inspire, historical essays that contextualize, and cultural guides that expand horizons. Whether one is just beginning to patch a modular synth, seeking artistic

direction, or tracing the global story of electronic instruments, the Club offers continuity and community.

As Bjooks continues to expand on its mission of documenting and celebrating the tools of music-making, the PATCH & TWEAK Club functions as both an archive and a laboratory: a place where synth enthusiasts can revisit the past, explore the present, and imagine the future. And looking ahead, September will bring another highlight: Rick Wakeman in conversation with Joe Silva on the PATCH & TWEAK podcast - an interview sure to inspire fans of both progressive rock and electronic experimentation.

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