

Turning z3ta+ into a Monster Tweaking Synth using ACT

In this tip, I shall focus on how you can easily change the ACT setup for a particular instrument or effect so that you can have the parameters you want to control at your fingertips. For this example I want to use the powerful z3ta+ soft synth which is bundled with SONAR Producer 8. If you don't have this version you can ask your local Cakewalk by Roland Dealer about how you can upgrade or how you can buy this synth separately. You can apply these tips to any ACT compatible soft synth or effect in SONAR.

If you want to find out more about z3ta+, click [here](#).

I am going to use the Edirol PCR Series Controller which is a great choice of any SONAR user because of the elegant way it interacts with the software. If you use a different brand of Controller you may need to adapt the instructions given here to suit your needs.

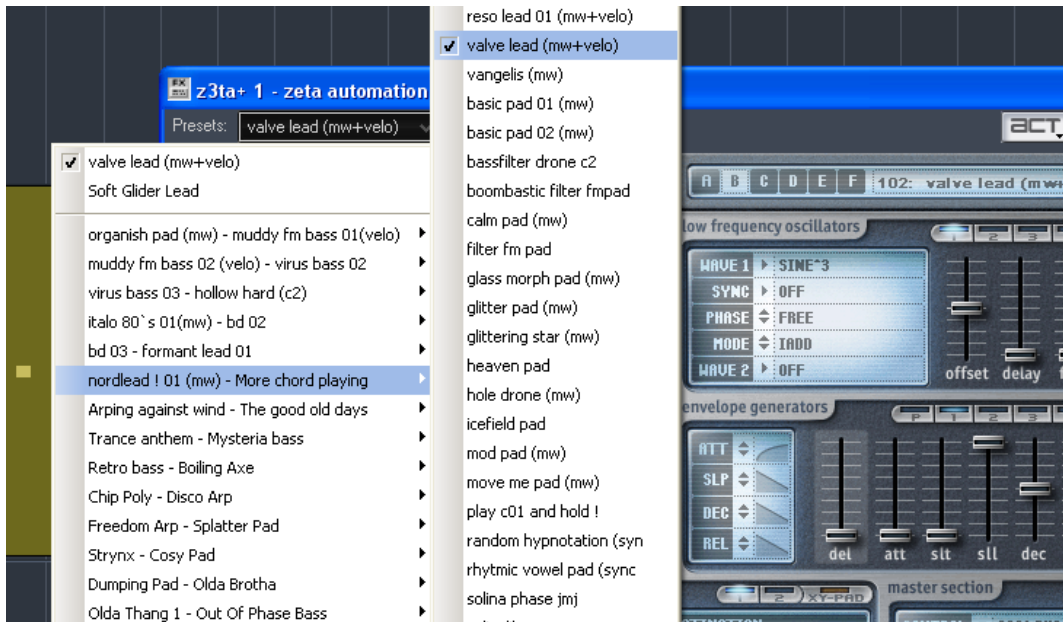


I am assuming that you have your PCR up and running (see my tip [Setting up your Edirol PCR Controller in Sonar](#) for more instructions). Open a Blank Template in SONAR and from the Menu select INSERT then SOFT SYNTHS then z3ta+. In the resulting Options Page, I have ticked the MIDI Source, First Synth Audio Output and Synth Property Page Options and clicked OK. You should now see the z3ta+ synth displayed.

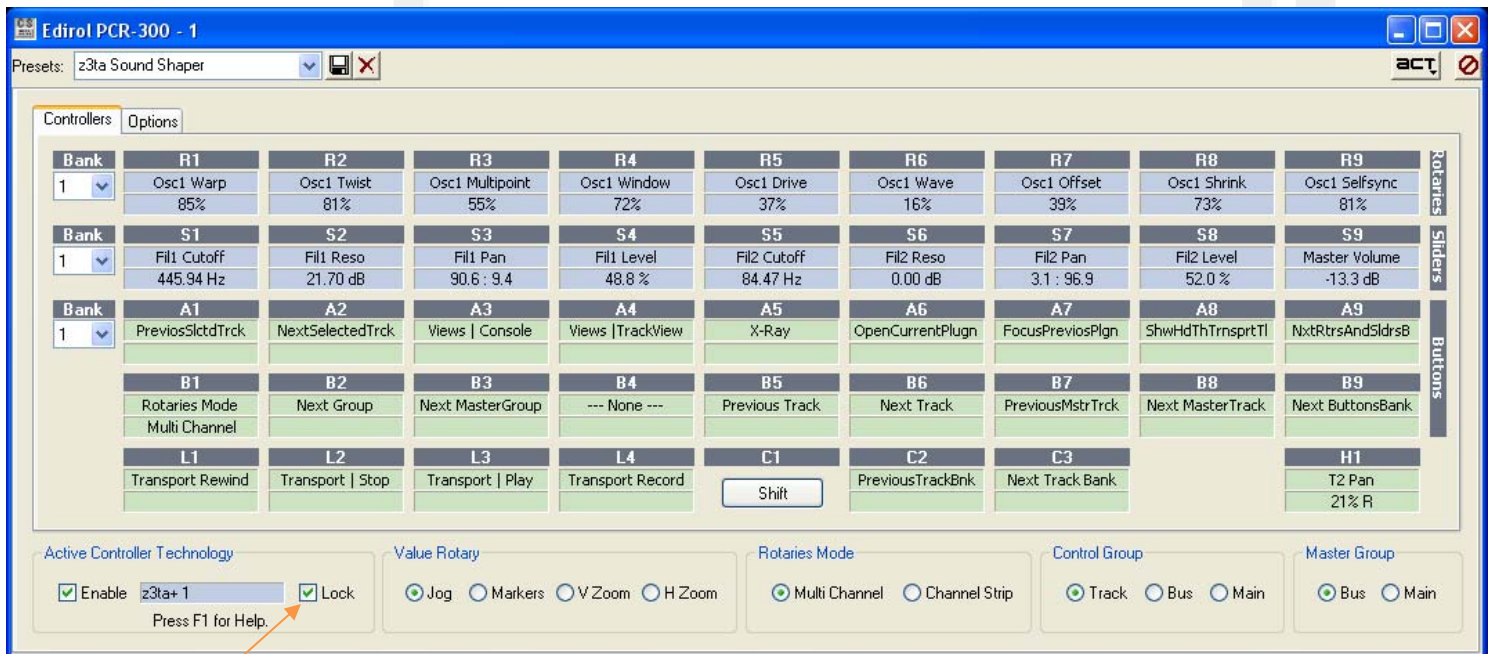
Preset List Shaper Button ACT Button

The screenshot shows the z3ta+ software interface. At the top, there's a title bar with 'z3ta+ 1 - zeta automation' and a 'Presets' dropdown menu set to 'valve lead (mw+velo)'. Below the title bar, there are several sections: 'oscillators', 'low frequency oscillators', 'filters', 'envelope generators', 'modulation matrix', and 'master section'. The 'oscillators' section has controls for 'WAVE', 'TRANSF', 'OCTAVE', 'MODE', and 'GROUP'. The 'low frequency oscillators' section has controls for 'WAVE 1', 'SYNG', 'PHASE', 'MODE', and 'WAVE 2'. The 'filters' section has controls for 'TYPE', 'LIMITER', 'RESO BST', and 'SHAPE'. The 'envelope generators' section has controls for 'ATT', 'SLP', 'DEC', and 'REL'. The 'modulation matrix' section has a table with columns for 'SOURCE', 'RANGE', 'CURVE', 'CONTROL', and 'DESTINATION'. The 'master section' has controls for 'CONTROL', 'VALUE', 'RENDER', 'POLY', and 'VOICES'. There are also buttons for 'EFFECTS', 'BANK', 'LISTER', 'ANALYZER', 'PROGRAM', and 'OPTIONS'.

I am going to use a Patch called *Valve Lead* in this example. Click on PRESETS and from the resulting list, select *Nordlead ! 01(mw) – More chord playing then valve lead (mw+velo)*.

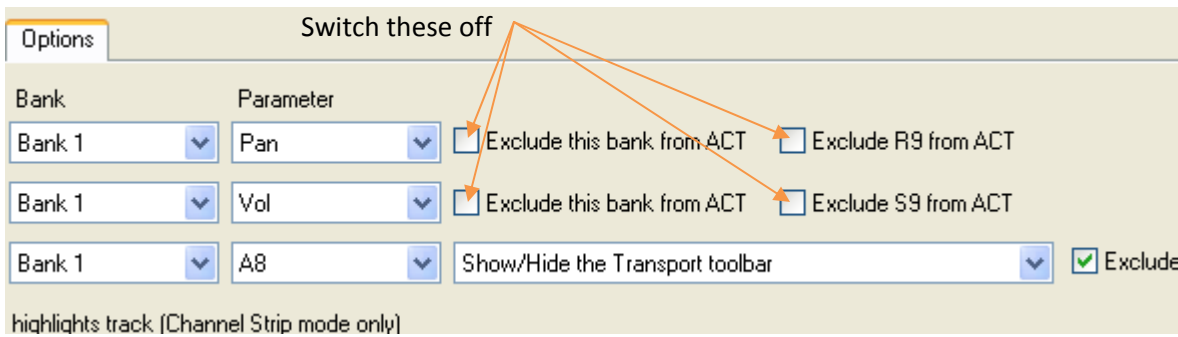


Now I am going to set up my customized ACT assignments for this synth. I want to be able to control the Shaper and Filter Parameters for up to 4 oscillators with my PCR Controller so I have decided on the following ACT Layout.

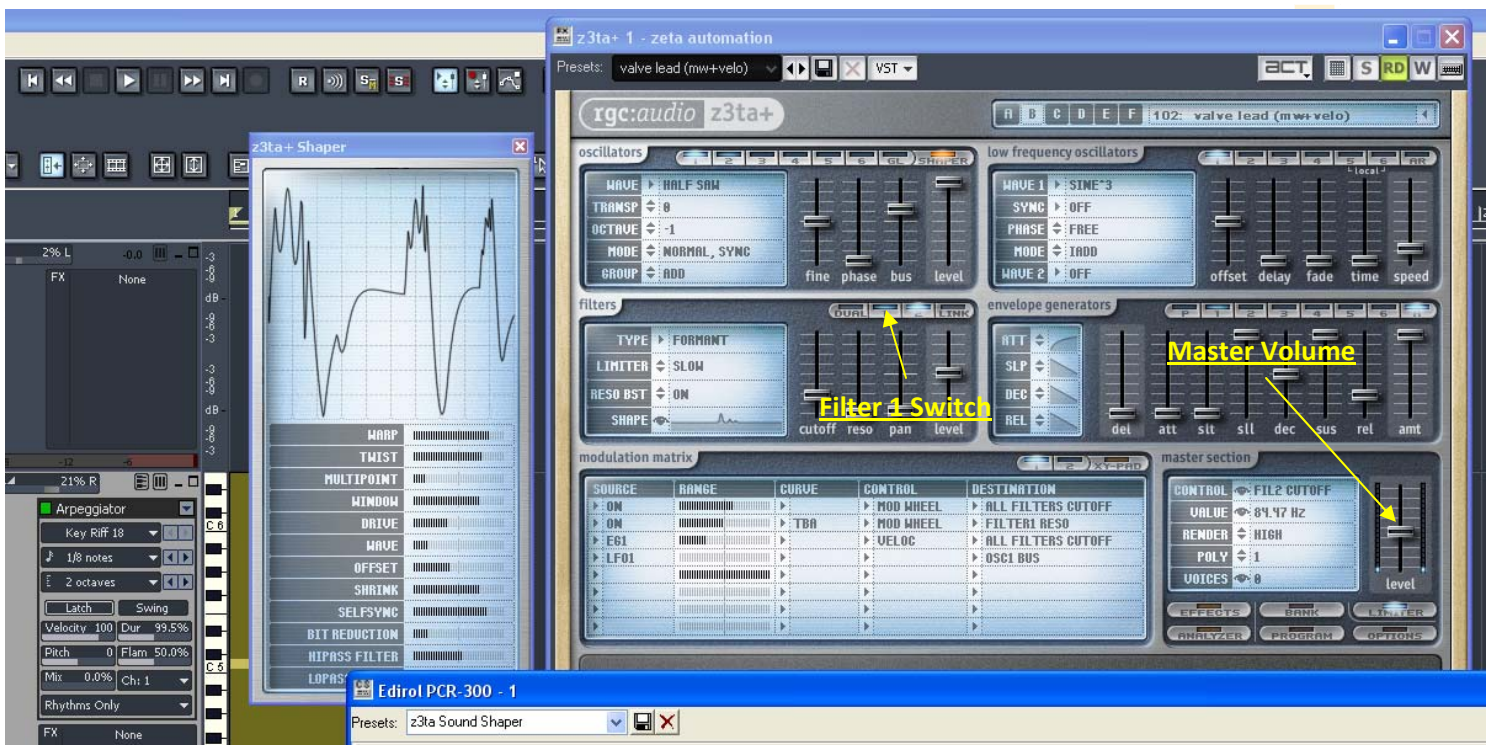


Lock Switch

I have assigned the first 9 Shaper Parameters to the Rotary Knobs and the 2 sets of Filter Parameters to the Faders. The 9th Fader is my Volume Control for the z3ta+ Instrument. Before we start we need to check to see if a few boxes are ticked. Open the ACT Properties Screen by pressing your DYNAMIC MAPPING Button on your PCR or select your Controller from the bottom of the TOOLS Menu. Make sure all Banks on the Properties Screen are set to 1. Click on the z3ta+ synth to make it the active instrument. Then make sure LOCK is ticked at the bottom left hand side of the Properties Screen. Click the OPTIONS Tab in ACT Properties and make sure the Boxes shown below are not ticked.



If you haven't customized ACT before, don't worry, the procedure is quite simple. Make sure you have the Shaper Editor Window open by clicking on SHAPER in the Oscillator Section. And click on the ACT Button on the top right hand side of the z3ta+ synth. The ACT Button should now show a glowing blue colour. Then in turn, use your mouse to click and drag the first 9 Shaper parameters starting with WARP and finishing with SELF SYNC. Now move the first 9 Rotaries on your PCR Controller then click the ACT Button again. You will get a message asking you if you want to keep the assignments. Click the YES Button to confirm. You will notice that the ACT Properties Screen has been updated to show the new Rotary Parameters. Turn each knob in sequence to verify that you have assigned the parameters correctly. You should see the Waveform Display change in the Shaper Window.



Now do the same for the Filter Section. Make sure Filter 1 is selected then switch the ACT Button back on. This time move the 4 faders in the Filter Section from left to right with your Mouse then click the second Filter Button and then move the same 4 sliders from left to right again. Then move the Level Fader which represents the Master Volume with your Mouse. On your PCR Keyboard, move all 9 Faders from left to right then click the ACT Button again. Click YES on the confirmation message. Do the same (if you wish) for Banks 2 to 4 in the ACT Properties Screen. For each Bank you will assign the controls for Oscillator's 2 to 4. As the title suggests, this is going to be a monster tweaking synth to match the creative power of any boutique Hardware Euro Synth.

Save the ACT Properties Screen with the name z3ta Sound Shaper so you can recall it anytime. Now we are ready to go.

If you have SONAR Producer 8.5, switch on the Arpeggiator (*yes, it has an Arpeggiator*) and select a Key Riff (I chose Key Riff 18), set the Note Length to 1/8th Notes and switch the Latch on. Press your favourite chord on the PCR Keyboard to start the Riff. Now start tweaking the knobs and faders and listen to how you can dramatically change the tone of this synth in real time.

Use the A9 Button on your PCR to change the Banks / Oscillators in rotation.

Try switching on Automation Record to record your motions. Every Knob / Fader movement will be faithfully recorded and played back.

Try this method with other synths and effects in SONAR. Select the 18 most tweakable parameters in the instrument / effect and map them across your PCR and start tweaking!

