

# SYNTH HACKS #01

GOING MOBILE WITH MPE

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**I** LIKE SMALL SYNTHS with big personalities, so I really enjoy the Authothingies MicroMonsta [audiothingies.com; 252€]. This 8-voice polyphonic MIDI module is built in small batches by a one-man company in France and features two digital oscillators that let you load your own wavetables for fantastic burbling textures, along with a sub-oscillator and a noise source for richer sounds. There's also a multi-mode filter, an arpeggiator, and delay effects. Although the MicroMonsta is just 5x7 inches, it includes six editing knobs, four of which you can assign to parameters like cutoff and waveshape for playing live.

The MicroMonsta is also one of the few hardware synths that supports MIDI Polyphonic Expression [MPE], which lets you control each voice independently from compatible controllers like the LinnStrument and Roli Seaboard. For example, you can play a chord and then apply vibrato to just the top note, or bend two notes in opposite directions.

To make all this sonic power even more portable, I did two hacks. First, I added a 5V-to-9V voltage booster so

I could run the MicroMonsta from a 5V USB battery pack. [These adapters cost about \$8 on Amazon; mine is sold under the wonderful brand name "Sparking." I also use it to power 9V guitar pedals from USB.]

The second hack was to set up my iPhone as a Bluetooth USB hub so I could play the MicroMonsta from my Roli Seaboard Block. First I connected the MicroMonsta to the iPhone via the Apple Camera Connection Kit cable, which has a Lighting plug on one end and a USB-A jack on the other. Next I connected the Seaboard to the phone over Bluetooth with Roli's Noise app, then quit the app to free up the MIDI stream. Finally, I used the Midiflow app [midiflow.com; \$6.99] to set the Seaboard as the input and the MicroMonsta as the output. Playing the Seaboard then played the MicroMonsta—no AC power required.

The Midiflow app routes incoming Bluetooth MIDI from the Seaboard to the USB out of the Camera Connection Kit, playing the MicroMonsta.



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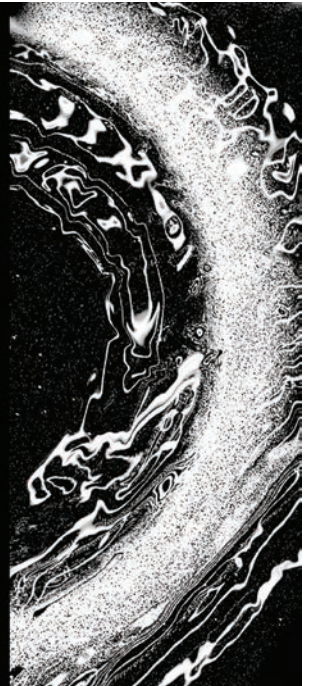
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