ROLAND R8/R8M PERCUSSION GRINDING PATCHBOX

The circuitbenders.co.uk R8/R8M percussion grinding patch box is an external patchbay case that plugs into the main unit via the sound ROM expansion ports using a custom sound card as an interface. This allows the creation of circuit bent glitching effects without the need to perform any invasive mods on the machine itself.

The glitching R8/R8M is very keen on brutally savage, but also sometimes strangely beautiful distortion sounds. It also excels at strange digital gurgling and shuddering sequenced effects on the longer sounds such as the cymbals and some snares. The R8/R8M takes a little more work than most circuit bent drum machines as many of the possible patchbay connections will produce variations on distortions rather than the common effects found on similar machines, but with a little patience there are plenty of interesting and more complex sounds available.

The first time you use this box you'll probably be thinking 'this is useless, it only does horrible distortion', but stick with it. Once you have a feel for which sockets might produce certain effects and how to combine them with other sockets, you'll be able to produce subtle alterations and more interesting percussion glitching than just flat out wall to wall noise. Although if you're after a jamboree of face melting audio destruction, then thats also available!
With most circuit bent drum machines it is easiest to produce a drum loop and then process it with the patchbay, but on the R8 it often pays to take the time to produce the bent effects first, and then create a pattern and edit sounds specifically for those effects.

INSTALLATION

First make sure everything is in the box. You should have:

R8/R8M patch box
R8/R8M card interface
25 way cable
6 x patch cables

Plug the 25 way cable into the socket on the back of the patchbox and tighten up the thumbscrews that hold the plug onto the socket. Tightening the screws isn't 100% necessary but it makes everything feel more solid. Only one end of the cable will fit in the patchbox socket.
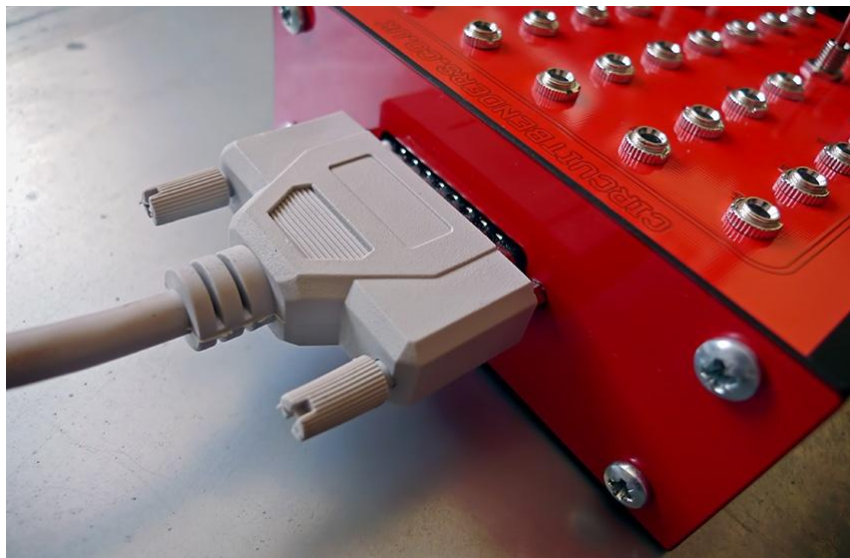
Connect the other end of the cable to the card interface. Again, its probably advisable to tighten up the thumbscrews to hold things together properly.
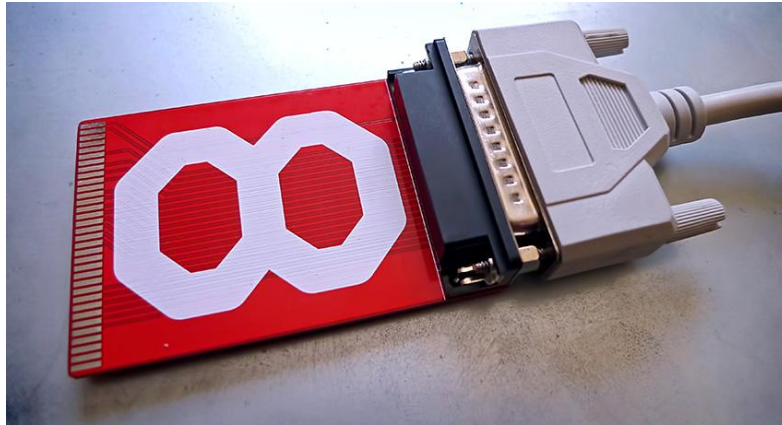
Plug the card into the ROM card port on the R8, or any of the PCM card slots on the R8M, and push it firmly into place, then turn the machine on. Make sure you take note of the 'THIS WAY UP' written on one side of the card and **DO NOT** plug it into the RAM card port.

Unfortunately on the R8 this means you can't use another ROM card at the same time as it only has one ROM slot, but with the R8M it doesn't matter which PCM card port you use and the other two can still be used for extra sound cards.

If the card is seated in the socket properly the red 'CONNECT' LED will light up, and one or more of the switch indicators on the patch box will light depending on the switch positions.

THE PATCH BOX

When there are no cables in the patchbay the machine will function as normal.

Each 3.5mm patchbay socket in the main patching area is home to a certain audio process or effect which either combines with the effect from another socket when they are patched together, or sometimes just produces an entirely new effect you've never heard before. Multiple simultaneous connections may also combine in unexpected ways to produce a brand new unexpected effect, giving you a virtually unlimited number of warped alterations and audio mutations. The only limit on the number of connections you can make at any one time are how many sockets and patch cables you have available.

Connections can be made at any time or even switched in and out using the patchable switches (see below). Effects produced by the patchbay might be applied to one sound, several sounds or the whole mix depending on which patch cables you have in place.


The sockets below the main patching area are the patchable switches and multiples. The A sockets and the C sockets are arranged in the same way. Socket A1 is always connected to socket A2, but socket A3 can also be connected to sockets A1 & A2 or not, depending on the position of the switch S1. This means you could take a patch cable from the main patchbay into A2, and then take one back from A3 to the patchbay and you'd have a simple switch to turn the connection on and off. Alternatively you could leave the switch turned on and the A sockets would all be connected together to form a 3 way passive patching multiple to join 3 main patchbay sockets together at the same time, You can also connect two patchbay sockets together via A1 and A2, and then another socket can be switched in an out of the connection via A3 using the switch.

The round indicator between the sockets will light up when the two sockets are connected
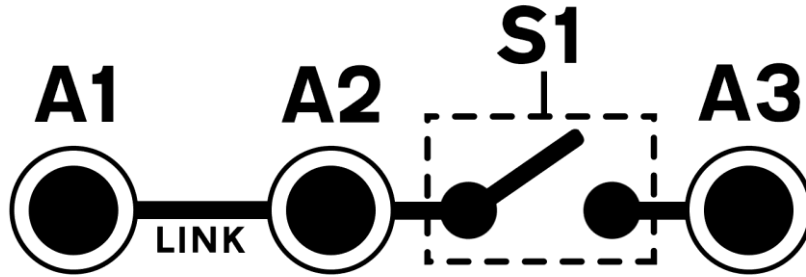
A simple diagram of the A sockets and switch can be seen above. The sockets C1, C2, C3 and the switch S4 are arranged exactly the same, as shown below.
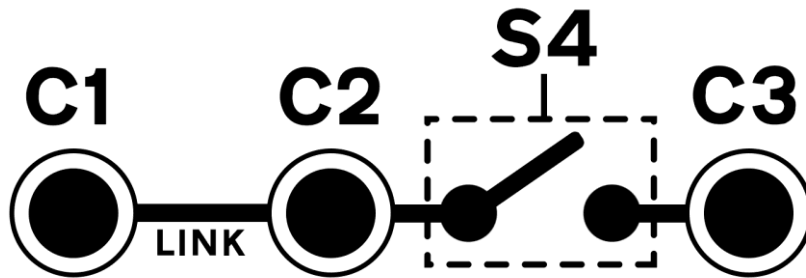
The B1, B2 and B3 sockets are slightly more complicated. The switch at S3 simply connects or disconnects the B1 and B2 sockets, so they can be used as a simple on/off switch.
The switch at S2 connects the middle B2 socket either to B1 above it, or to B3 below it. This means that a cable can be taken from a patchbay socket to B2, and then rapidly switched between two different connections back to the main patchbay via B1 and B3. With both switches switched down all three B sockets are connected together like a patching multiple..
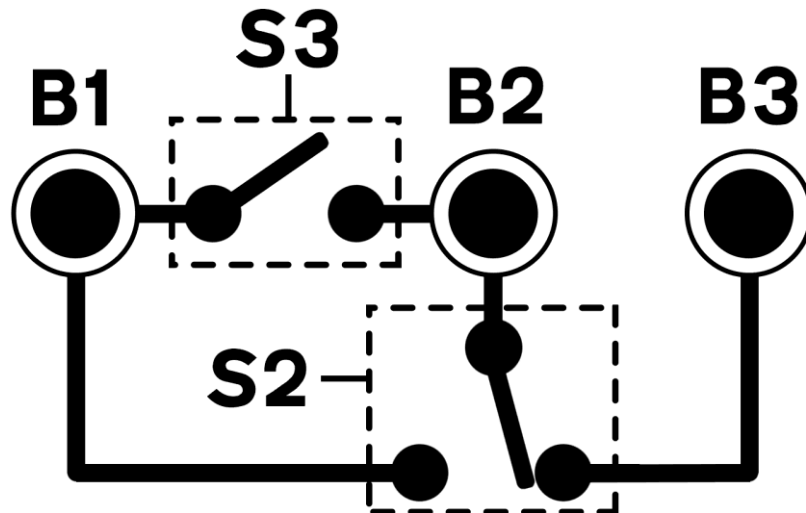
This is a lot more difficult and unnecessarily confusing to describe than it is to actually use! It shouldn't take very long until you've figured out whats going on.

TIP: Socket 1 on the main patchbay acts as a kind of basic connection point that can demonstrate the most common effects that each other socket is home to. Plugging a cable into socket 1 and then testing the other end in other sockets while a pattern is playing can give a good range of possibilities.