

EnergyXT 2

Free your music from the tired world of tracks and faders. **Graham Morrison** looks at a piece of software where you create the signal path.

In brief...

» Modular music composition with real-time effects and software synthesis. See also: *Ardour* or *LMMS*.

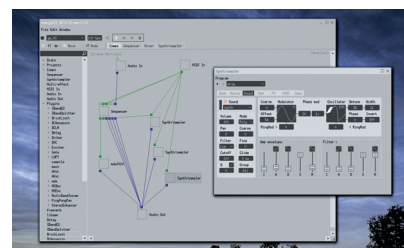
The original *EnergyXT* was a fantastic tool for MS Windows. It enabled you to tie together your collection of software synthesizers and audio effects in a single window, using the output from one process as the input for another, as you would in a modular synthesizer. Your creations could then be used as new sound sources and effects within your audio recording software, or even *EnergyXT* itself, the only limit being the power of your CPU. *EnergyXT* was a great success for the author, Jørgen Aase, but he had something particularly special planned for the sequel: Linux support.

And it's here, a native Linux version of *EnergyXT 2* – and it looks a little

Ableton Live than *Ardour* is that you can manipulate the data for each track directly from the arrangement view, rather than loading a separate window each time. This makes it much more intuitive to work with, and the entire interface scales well. For example, if you create a drum track you can click to add each hit and drag a slider up and down to change the volume. With a MIDI track, you can draw note and controller data all from the same view and even click on the virtual keys of a keyboard to generate notes in real time. If you need finer control, double-clicking on the data will open a window to easily fine tune the position and duration of notes.

Construction time

EnergyXT's real strength is the modularity it inherits from its predecessor. Switch from the arrangement view (labelled Sequencer) to the patch bay (labelled as Comps) and you see a diagrammatic overview of your setup. Each track is a module with input and outputs for audio and MIDI data. Virtual cables connect each module to the sequencer and to each other, but you're free to re-patch the setup according to your requirements. *EnergyFX* bundles three modules: the sequencer used on the arrangement view, a multi-effects unit and a synth/sampler. The synth



» You can do the virtual equivalent of rewiring all the equipment connections.

is actually very good, and can be edited in real time to vary the timbre between sharp and raspy sounds to warm, analogue-sounding squelchiness, while the multi-effects module can be used to thicken the sound with delay, reverb, phaser and chorus effects. If this isn't enough for you, you can download dozens of other effects and synth modules, the result of an initiative to recompile Windows VST plugins for Linux. This includes the highly desirable 'MDA' collection by Paul Kellet, which features a wide range of audio mutating effects and a couple of great synthesizers.

There must be an equivalence equation between flexibility and ease of use, because applications with this kind of modularity are always difficult to use. If you restrict yourself to dragging modules into the sequencer window, you could fool yourself into thinking this is an ordinary piece of music software. But one click on the Comps button opens up such a world of possibilities that you'll never go back to simply entering one note after another. You might never finish another piece of music again. But you will have a lot of fun in the while you try. [LXF](#)

“Opens up such a world of possibilities that you'll never go back.”

intimidating. The main window is basically the same kind of arrangement view used by everything from the open source *Ardour* to industry leader *Ableton Live*. Tracks of audio, drum and MIDI data are stacked vertically, while the data each track contains stretches in blocks to the right. But what makes *EnergyXT 2* more like

Exploring the EnergyXT interface

- Drum editor**
Create beats by clicking on a drum track.
- Matrix editor**
Notes can be added and edited from the main window.
- Control date**
Draw volume curves and any other control data directly.
- Real-time synth**
EnergyXT features its own, programmable synthesizer.
- Sampler**
Each drum sound uses its own sample.
- Effects rack**
Change your sound with various built-in audio effects.
- Matrix window**
For finer control of editing, open a new window.
- JX10 synth...**
... but its real strength is loading third-party instruments.

LINUX FORMAT Verdict

EnergyXT 2
 Developer: XT Software
 Web: www.energy-xt.com
 Price: €39 (£27.50)

Features	9/10
Performance	9/10
Ease of use	7/10
Value for money	9/10

» Uses real-time effects and synthesizers in the same way that Windows and OS X users have been enjoying for years.

Rating 9/10