OPERATION MANUAL



XERXES MK2

8 VOICE POLYPHONIC SYNTHESIZER BY BLACK CORPORATION

FCC COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

This device complies with part 15 of the FCC rules. Operation is subject to the following two conditions: (1) This device may not cause harmful interference, and (2) this device must accept any interference received, including interference that may cause undesired operation.

EUROPEAN UNION REGULATION COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

This product complies with the Low Voltage Directive 2006/95/EC and the Electromagnetic Compatibility Directive 2004/108/EC. The product meets the requirements of RoHS 2 Directive 2011/65/EU.

This product must be disposed of properly according to local laws and regulations.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Read these instructions.
- 2. Keep these instructions.
- 3. Heed all warnings.
- 4. Follow all instructions.
- 5. Do not use this apparatus near water.
- 6. Clean only with dry cloth.

7. Do not block any ventilation openings. Install in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

8. Do not install near any heat sources such as radiators, heat registers, stoves, or other apparatus (including amplifiers) that produce heat.

9. Do not defeat the safety purpose of a polarized or grounding-type plug. A polarized plug has two blades with one wider than the other. A grounding type plug has two blades and a third grounding prong. The wide blade or the third prong are provided for your safety. If the provided plug does not fit into your outlet, consult an electrician for replacement of the obsolete outlet. 10. Protect the power cord from being walked on or pinched particularly at plugs, convenience receptacles, and the point where they exit from the apparatus.

11. Only use attachments/accessories specified by the manufacturer.

12. Use only with the cart, stand, tripod, bracket, or table specified by the manufacturer, or sold with the apparatus. When a cart is used, use caution when moving the cart/apparatus combination to avoid injury from tip-over.

13. Unplug this apparatus during lightning storms or when unused for long periods of time.

14. Refer all servicing to qualified service personnel. Servicing is required when the apparatus has been damaged in any way, such as power-supply cord or plug is damaged, liquid has been spilled or objects have fallen into the apparatus, the apparatus has been exposed to rain or moisture, does not operate normally, or has been dropped.

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INTRODUCTION

XERXES is an 8-voice polyphonic synthesizer with two numerically controlled analog oscillators per voice. Its analog voice architecture is inspired by the Elka Synthex. While Xerxes can produce very similar sounds, its sonic palette and capabilities have been significantly enhanced. It has additional modulation options such as oscillator sync with variable phase control, pulse amplitude cross modulation (PAM), two independent, MIDI syncable LFOs with added waveforms, greatly extended fundamental frequency range, and compatibility with polyphonic aftertouch and MIDI polyphonic expression (MPE) controllers. Xerxes has 16 stable numerically-controlled analog oscillators which can be independently and precisely controlled without requiring tuning or calibration.

The convenient desktop format can also be converted into a 4U rack-mounted unit with included rack ears and screws.

FEATURES AND SPECIFICATIONS

Polyphony:	8 voices
Oscillators:	16 (2 per voice)
Oscillator Type:	Hybrid digitally controlled analog oscillators
Oscillator Frequency Range:	0.1Hz to 20kHz
Oscillator Waveforms:	Triangle, Saw, Square, and adjustable Pulse
Oscillator Controls:	Octave (1'-16'), Transpose, Pulse Width, Volume
Oscillator Modulations:	Pulse Width (PWM), Pulse Amplitude (PAM), Ring Mod
Low Frequency Oscillators (LFO):	2 MIDI syncable, independent LFOs with frequency
LFO Waveforms:	Sine, Triangle, Saw, Ramp, Square, Random
LFO Destinations:	Osc 1/2 pitch, Amplifier, Filter, Pulse Width 1/2, Osc 2 Sync Phase
LFO Controls:	Frequency, Depth, Delay, Aftertouch
Filter:	1 multi-mode filter per voice
Filter Options:	24db/oct Low Pass, 6db/oct Band Pass, 12db/oct Band Pass, 12db/ oct High Pass selections
Filter Modulations:	LFO 1 and 2, Velocity, Aftertouch, Envelope, Keyboard tracking
Preset Memory:	1320 Total – 128 in Factory Bank, 40 in Vintage Bank, 9 User Banks of 128 Patches each
Keyboard Touch Response: Connections:	Velocity, Aftertouch (Channel and Polyphonic), MPE MIDI IN/OUT/THRU, AUDIO L+R, USB (isolated), Headphones
Power:	+12VDC, 2.5A
Dimensions:	460 W, 175 H, 50 D (mm) (Wood panels attached)

INITIAL SETUP

Xerxes requires an external MIDI controller to produce sounds. It may be necessary to adjust settings appropriately to match the synthesizer to the type of MIDI controller used. To enter Settings, press SHIFT + BACK. Use the Encoder to select an item in the list, press the Encoder to enter a submenu or save a new setting, press the Back button to exit the submenu and Settings. Options in the Settings menu are explained in more detail later in this manual and there is a full menu tree at the end of this document, but here are the MIDI settings to get things started.

MODE:

- POLY AFTERTOUCH: Mono or Polyphonic aftertouch controller
- MPE: Midi Polyphonic Expression capable controller

CHANNEL (1-16, ALL)

CC Receive (OFF, ON)

CC# 74 REPLACE (MPE mode only):

• NONE, LFO FREQ, LFO DEPTH, OSC2 SYNC, VCF FREQ, VCF RESO, VCA

KNOBS/CC:

- PICK UP: Knob/CC value must reach saved value first before it takes effect
- MERGE: Knob/CC value gradually reaches saved value
- INSTANT: Knob/CC responds instantly from saved value

MODWHEEL DESTINATION:

 FILTER FREQ, FILTER RESO, PULSE WIDTH, OCTAVE, SYNC PHASE, GLIDE SPEED, AMPL+FILTER, NONE

MODWHEEL POLARITY (POSITIVE, NEGATIVE)

PITCHBEND RANGE (1-99 Semitones)

KBRD TRCKING (48 <-> 72) This is to set the position of middle C for keyboard tracking)

TRANSPOSE (-24 <-> 24)

VELOCITY/AFTERTOUCH CURVES:

• LINEAR, LOGARITHMIC, EXPONENTIAL, STYPE, NTYPE

FRONT PANEL



Xerxes is designed to be intuitive and straightforward. Most of the functionality can be easily controlled in real time using the buttons and knobs on the front panel. For some buttons, the current selection is indicated with a row of lights next to the button. Others serve multiple functions as indicated by a combination of lights on that button. Pressing the same button multiple times will cycle thru the available combinations. The functionality for each control is described in the following sections.

The panel controls are grouped together into sections:

- **LFO:** Controls the Low Frequency Oscillators, which modify parameters of the oscillators and filters. The two independent LFOs are selected by the A/B switch, and their frequencies can be either independent or synchronized with the Sync button. They can also be synced to an incoming MIDI clock.
- **TUNING:** Adjusts tuning of the entire instrument and detune of oscillator 2.
- **DRIFT:** Introduces very small changes to the oscillator frequencies over time to add warmth and desired imperfections to Xerxes' clinically precise tuning.
- OSC 2 SYNC: Synchronizes oscillator 2 to oscillator 1, with separate phase control.
- **NOISE:** Allows white or pink noise to be added to the oscillators before the filter circuit.
- **OSCILLATOR 1 and 2:** Selects the frequencies, waveforms, modulations, pulse width and volume for oscillators.
- **MULTIMODE FILTER:** Selects the type of filter and controls its frequency, resonance, and modulation.

- EG CONTROLS: Enables/disables note hold and release envelope functions.
- **PORTAMENTO / GLIDE:** Controls note pitch movement at the beginning or from note to note.
- **CHORUS EFFECTS:** Selects 3 different types of chorus effects that are applied to the audio output.
- **DYNAMICS:** Controls how note velocity and aftertouch affect the volume and filter settings.
- **AMPLIFIER ENVELOPE:** Controls attack, decay, sustain, and release parameters for the volume envelope.
- **FILTER ENVELOPE:** Controls attack, decay, sustain, and release parameters for the filter envelope.
- **OLED DISPLAY:** Displays status and knob value, allows access to patch memory, settings, and additional parameters.
- **VOLUME:** Contains the master volume control, headphones output, and power switch.

SYSTEM MEMORY AND CONTROL PANEL

This section allows patch saving and recall, system settings changes, setup, and calibration functions. The Enter, Back, and Shift buttons together with the encoder knob allow for easy navigation. Depending on function, the display will show the current functionality for each button as applicable.



PANEL MODE

Panel Mode produces sound based on all the currently selected panel knob and switch positions. This is indicated with **PNL** on the display. To toggle Panel Mode on or off, press the encoder knob.

SELECTING BANKS

Xerxes has 11 built-in memory banks. 10 banks have 128 patch locations each, and a special Vintage Bank has 40 patches. To select a new bank, press and hold Shift and press the Enter key repeatedly (shows BANK on the display button image). Each press cycles to the next bank. The selected bank is shown on the display directly above the patch number. After the desired bank is selected, rotate the Encoder to select a patch from this bank. Only the user banks 1-9 are editable.

- FCTR Factory bank, patches numbered 1-128 (read only)
- **VNT** Vintage bank, patches numbered 10-49 (read only)
- BNKx User banks 1 to 9, each holding patches numbered 1-128



NOTE: The Vintage Bank contains sounds closely modeled after Elka Synthex factory patches. Due to tuning differences of individual vintage synthesizers, the patches may sound slightly different from the original. To compensate for these tuning differences, the Detune knob can be used to make the vintage patch to match better with the original's tuning variations.

A very helpful feature introduced in Firmware 1.1.0 adds knob value as they are adjusted. While adjusting parameters of a preset, an indicator (< on the left, > on the right) to guide you to the original value of the preset. These guides, for obvious reasons, do not appear in PANEL mode.

SELECTING/RECALLING PATCHES

To select a patch in the selected bank, turn the encoder. The selected patch number is shown in the display.

To select a certain patch without scrolling through the patches, press the Back button (shows LOAD on the display button image), use the Encoder to select the patch, and then press the Encoder or ENTER button. This is very useful in live settings.

SAVING PATCHES

To save a patch to the currently selected patch number, press the Enter button once to go into SAVE, then press it again to commit it to that patch number.

To save a patch to a different location within the same bank, press the Enter button ONCE, use the Encoder to select the target patch number, and then press the Enter button again. Note that this will permanently overwrite any previously saved sound in that location.

To save the current sound to a different bank, first select the target bank as described above (SHIFT + ENTER until reaching the desired bank). *At this point DO NOT turn the Encoder or the current sound is lost!* Next, press the Enter button ONCE, use the Encoder to select a target patch number, and then press the Enter button again. Note that this will permanently overwrite any previously saved sound in that location.

BACKING UP PATCH BANKS USING SYSEX LIBRARIAN

To back up a patch bank to your computer, connect it by USB or DIN MIDI. Open Sysex Librarian (<u>https://www.snoize.com/sysexlibrarian/</u>) on the computer and set it to connect with Xerxes or the appropriate connection if using DIN MIDI. Set the librarian to "Record Many". On Xerxes, press SHIFT+ENCODER. Xerxes will send the bank in one burst. It can be renamed in the librarian. To restore, again confirm the connection to Xerxes. Select the bank to be restored and press Play in Sysex Librarian. It will be returned to its original bank.

OSCILLATOR 1 AND 2



Xerxes has 16 advanced digitally controlled, analog oscillators, two of which are used for each played note. The oscillator waveforms are free-running, however oscillator 2 can also be synced to oscillator 1, where oscillator 2 is reset at the beginning of each cycle of oscillator 1, and the Phase can be adjusted between them for some complex sonic results. This may require some experimentation to fully understand how these functions will match user tastes and music sensibilities.

Individual note frequencies can also be very precisely controlled outside standard Western musical scales when using microtuning tables which maybe be uploaded to the instrument via a MIDI SysEx Librarian or when used with mictrotuning software such as the Oddsound MTS software. The frequencies can also slightly drift with the Drift feature and modulated with LFO, portamento, and glide features.

A NOTE ON SYNC AND PHASE: The oscillator 1 and 2 phase relationship may stay locked in use, causing each note or voice to sound slightly different with a different phase creating undesirable musical results. Using detune, LFO, or drift to slightly detune the oscillators from each other is a useful technique to improve its sonic character, however this is a matter of taste. Sometimes those undesirable musical results are exactly what we are looking for.

A NOTE ON CROSS MODULATION: For each voice, the two oscillators can be selected and mixed as the same or different waveforms. When further combined in various ways through cross modulation, however, the result is a variety of complex waveforms. Unlike traditional Digitally Controlled Oscillators (DCOs), the waveforms in Xerxes follow fast frequency changes similar to traditional voltage-controlled oscillators (VCOs) by morphing the waveform shape to precisely match the cycle for a particular frequency. This is illustration shows how a sawtooth ramp waveform changes shape with a changing frequency introduced to cross modulate it:



Certain cross-modulation combinations can also cause self-resonance when additional high frequency components are generated within a single waveform cycle via electronic feedback in the oscillator circuit, not in the filter. Oscillator self-resonance, created purely in analog hardware, is one of the unique features responsible for the unique sound of Xerxes.



 TRANSPOSE Transposes the oscillator pitch from -7 (down) to +7 (up) in semitone steps, allowing for quick interval changes between the oscillators. A setting of 0 is neutral and does not transpose the pitch. WAVEFORM Selects the oscillator waveform. Each waveform has a different timbre, which depends on the harmonic content in the waveform: A A 	OCTAVE	Selects the octave in feet (16', 8', 4', 2', 1'), which transposes the keyboard up or down in octaves. The smaller the number the higher the pitch on the keyboard.
 WAVEFORM Selects the oscillator waveform. Each waveform has a different timbre, which depends on the harmonic content in the waveform: A A 	TRANSPOSE	Transposes the oscillator pitch from -7 (down) to +7 (up) in semitone steps, allowing for quick interval changes between the oscillators. A setting of 0 is neutral and does not transpose the pitch.
 Sawtooth wave contains very few out hammenes) containing a very pare sound with few overtones. Sawtooth wave contains all the integer harmonics (both even and odd), making it useful for producing tones that are very rich in overtones. Square wave only contains odd harmonics. It can produce flute-like sounds with certain oscillator frequency combinations. Pulse wave contains harmonics that are dependent on the selected pulse width Pulse width can be controlled with the Pulse Width knob, and it can also change at audio rates when Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) is enabled. Pulse amplitud can vary at audio rates when Pulse Amplitude Modulation (PAM) is enabled. 	WAVEFORM	 Selects the oscillator waveform. Each waveform has a different timbre, which depends on the harmonic content in the waveform: <u>Triangle</u> wave contains very few odd harmonics, containing a very pure sound with few overtones. <u>Sawtooth</u> wave contains all the integer harmonics (both even and odd), making it useful for producing tones that are very rich in overtones. <u>Square</u> wave only contains odd harmonics. It can produce flute-like sounds with certain oscillator frequency combinations. <u>Pulse</u> wave contains harmonics that are dependent on the selected pulse width. Pulse width can be controlled with the Pulse Width knob, and it can also change at audio rates when Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) is enabled. Pulse amplitude can vary at audio rates when Pulse Amplitude Modulation (PAM) is enabled.



RING MOD.	Selects Ring Modulation, which inverts the waveform of the current oscillator with the amplitude of the other oscillator. This is especially useful when used in combination with the Oscillator 2 Sync and Glide functions where it can generate sounds with harsh overtones that vary over time, such as metallic, laser, and bell-like sounds.
	not track the keyboard well from note to note. Use the Pulse Width knobs to fine tune the resulting sound in this case and test each note before using.
PULSE WIDTH	Adjusts the pulse width from 0% to 100% of the currently selected Pulse waveform only. It has no function for other waveforms. At 50% the waveform is a square wave with only odd harmonics, with more harmonic content being added towards the extremes. Pulse width can be controlled automatically at audio rates from the other oscillator by either the Pulse Width Cross-Modulation (PWM) setting, or with the Low Frequency Oscillator (LFO) which can be used to change the timbre slowly over time.
VOLUME	Adjusts the output volume of the oscillator before it's mixed with the other oscillator and sent to the filter circuit. It's recommended that the volume is used in the middle setting (4-6) unless the patch itself has lower than normal volume. Using it at the maximum 10 setting may produce distortion at the output on some modulation settings, especially when using chords.

MULTIMODE FILTER



The filter controls the harmonic content of the raw audio output from the oscillators by changing the frequency ranges of the audio signal. Xerxes has a four mode filter which defines which frequency bands are being shaped. Additionally, the note envelope and keyboard tracking can be changed dynamically based on velocity and keyboard position.

FREQUENCY	Adjusts the filter cutoff point across the frequency spectrum. The lower the knob setting, the lower the cutoff point.
RESONANCE	Resonance amplifies a narrow range of frequencies at the filter cutoff point. When increasing the resonance knob, it intensifies the effect up to approximately 7%, at which point the filter starts self-oscillating with a feedback frequency not related to the oscillator output. This can produce interesting sound effects when used with a frequency envelope.
FILTER TYPES	 Lowpass: Allows lower frequencies to pass below the filter cutoff point. Frequencies above the cutoff point are filtered at a rate of 24db/octave. Bandpass 1: When the left LED is on, only a narrow band of frequencies close to the filter cutoff point pass the filter. Frequencies above and below the cutoff are attenuated at a rate of 6dB/octave. Bandpass 2: When the right LED is on, only a narrow band of frequencies close to the filter cutoff point pass the filter. Frequencies above and below the cutoff are attenuated at a rate of 6dB/octave. Bandpass 2: When the right LED is on, only a narrow band of frequencies close to the filter cutoff point pass the filter. Frequencies above and below the cutoff are attenuated at a rate of 12dB/octave. BP2's filter band is narrower than BP1. Highpass: Allows higher frequencies to pass above the filter cutoff point. Frequencies below the cutoff point are filtered at a rate of 12db/octave.
ENVELOPE	The Envelope knob adjusts the amount a filter envelope will modify the filter cutoff point at the beginning of each note. Turning the envelope clockwise from 0 causes the filter envelope to increase the filter cutoff point, resulting in a brighter attack. Turning it counter-clockwise from 0 has the opposite effect – the filter envelope decreases the filter cutoff point, resulting in a more muted attack at the beginning of the note. Modify the Envelope Amount together with the filter cutoff point to find the best balance for a desired effect.

KEYBOARD	Keyboard knob allows the filter cutoff to track the note's pitch played on the keyboard. When it is turned clockwise from 0, higher pitches have a higher cutoff frequency, and lower pitches have lower cutoff. This results in higher notes on the keyboard having a brighter timbre than lower notes. When it is turned counter-clockwise from 0, the filter cutoff tracks the keyboard position in reverse – lower notes on the keyboard will have brighter timbre than higher notes.

LFO



The Low Frequency Oscillator on Xerxes is used to modulate pitch, filter, amplifier, pulse width, and oscillator 2 sync phase with adjustable speed, intensity, and delay. There are two independent LFOs selected by the A/B switch, and their frequencies can be either independent or synchronized with the Sync button. They can also each be synced to an incoming MIDI clock and Aftertouch can also be used to control the intensity of the LFO Amount.

FREQUENCY	Adjusts the speed for the selected LFO A or B from 0.02Hz to 40Hz.
SYNC	When enabled, the frequency of LFO B matches that of LFO A. The Frequency knob will affect both at the same time LFO A is selected.

DEPTH	 Adjusts the amplitude (intensity) of the waveform for the selected LFO A or B. Depth control remains independent for each LFO even if SYNC is enabled. Depth can also be modulated by Aftertouch Amount setting. NOTE: When the LFO Amount Mode is set to Individual in settings, the Depth can be applied individually to each destination. To make individual adjustments, hold down the destination button while adjusting the Depth knob.
DELAY	Adjusts the delay for the LFO to take effect, during which the LFO depth is gradually increased to each note up to the depth set by the DEPTH knob. When Delay is 0, the modulation is applied immediately. When Delay is 10, there is an 8-second delay, after which the LFO depth is slowly increased over a 32.47 second interval. If Delay is higher than 1, the first note also restarts the LFO wave; from 0-1 the wave is not restarted. When used with Saw or Ramp LFO waveforms, a short delay will cause a quick ramp-up to the maximum depth value, which sounds like an attack envelope being applied, or glide if the LFO destination is an oscillator.
WAVEFORM	 Selects a waveform for the selected LFO A or B: SINE: Sinusoidal waveform TRIANGLE: Wave ramps up and down SAW: Wave ramps down and resets to high level RAMP: Wave ramps up and resets to low level SQUARE: Oscillates between two levels only RND.: Oscillates among random levels
A/B	Selects which LFO, A or B, is currently selected for the panel controls. All controls and switches are independent for each LFO, except for Frequency control if the SYNC button is enabled. Both LFOs can be active at the same time, modulating the same destinations for more complex results.
OSC 1/2	Selects which oscillator pitch the selected LFO modulates. Select none, 1, 2, or both oscillators. Depth is applied polyphonically and affects each note independently when being controlled with polyphonic aftertouch.
VCF/VCA	Selects whether the selected LFO modulates the Filter (VCF) or Amplifier (VCA, Volume) for the voice. Select none, VCF, VCA, or both. This effect is polyphonic and applies to each note independently with polyphonic aftertouch.
PW 1/2	Selects which oscillator's pulse width the selected LFO modulates. Pulse Waveform must be turned on for the oscillator for this to have any effect. Select none, 1, 2, or both oscillators.

PHASE	Selects the LFO to modulate oscillator 2 sync phase. Phase control must be enabled in the OSC 2 SYNC section for this to have any effect.
AFTERTOUCH AMOUNT	Keyboard aftertouch (either channel or polyphonic) can be used to control the Depth of the currently selected LFO A or B. There are 3 levels of control (left LED, right LED, and both on), and an OFF setting when both LEDs are off. A setting of 1 will increase the Depth control by about 5% from the Depth knob's current position to the knob's maximum with a full range of aftertouch data. A setting of 2 increases Depth by about 25% of the maximum, and a setting of 3 by about 50% of the maximum. If the Depth knob is already at maximum then aftertouch will have no additional effect. When polyphonic aftertouch is enabled, this effect is polyphonic when applied to the oscillator's pitch or VCF. If VCA, PW 1/2, or Phase is selected, the note with the largest received polyphonic aftertouch data value will control the effect.

TUNING



The Tuning section is used to control the master tuning for the entire instrument.

MASTER	Adjusts the global tuning for the entire instrument with a continuous range of 2 semitones up or down, with 0 representing A4 = 440Hz thanks to its digitally controlled oscillators. Master tune is not memorized in any saved patch memory; it always reflects the current panel knob setting. If the instrument is out of tune with the 0 setting, ensure that the knobs are calibrated to their center positions (described later in Calibration section).
DETUNE	Adjusts the pitch of oscillator 2 apart from oscillator 1 with a continuous range of 1 semitone up or down. When Detune is 0, both oscillators maintain the same frequency multiple indefinitely. Since the oscillators are always free-running (unless oscillator 2 sync is turned on), this can result in different voice cards having the oscillator frequencies locked at different phases that do not change, which will make each voice sound consistently different. To remedy that, turn the Detune button ever so slightly to make the oscillators slightly beating, or use the Drift functionality described below.

DRIFT



This is another unique function of Xerxes. While the synthesizer uses analog oscillators, the pitch is controlled digitally, which never drift or go out of tune. While this is certainly an advantage when chromatic precision is necessary, it can also sound too static and lifeless. The controls in the Drift section can be used to simulate analog oscillators by introducing tiny amounts of random but continuous pitch changes independently to each oscillator. This functions like a separate, random LFO for every oscillator slightly affecting the note's pitch randomly like a vintage voltage controlled analog oscillator. Speed and Density must be higher than 0 to have any effect.

SPEED	Adjusts the rate of minuscule pitch changes applied to each note as it is held down. There is no correction with 0 setting. At 10, the changes become more noticeable and applied more often (2 times per second).
DENSITY	Adjusts how far apart each individual note is being detuned, in cents. With a setting of 0 there is no detune and the note frequencies are extremely precise. With a setting of 10 the notes are being detuned to a random value from 0 up to 20 cents maximum with a regularity selected with the Speed knob.

OSC 2 SYNC



The controls in this section can be used to synchronize oscillator 2 with oscillator 1. When enabled, oscillator 2 waveform will restart when oscillator 1's waveform is restarting. Variable phase control allows for adjusting the phase of oscillator 2 by introducing a delay to the phase starting point with respect to oscillator 1. Phase control is most effective if both oscillators are using the same octave settings; if the octaves are further apart it will have a smaller effect. In fact, some combinations will result in no sound at all. When the LFO is set modulate the phase, it can be used to produce small pitch changes to oscillator 2 without changing the actual pitch of the oscillator. This function is better understood by trying it out rather than explained here.

SYNC ON	When set to ON (left LED), oscillator 2 is precisely synchronized with oscillator 1, at 0 degrees phase difference. Oscillator 2 waveform always restarts every time oscillator 1 waveform is restarting, regardless of what waveform or modulation is selected.
PHASE	When set to PHASE (left and right LEDs on), oscillator 2 is synchronized with oscillator 1, but the synchronization phase can be adjusted using the DEGREES knob. This can also be modulated by the LFO Phase destination. This can produce phaser- like sound textures, especially when combined with other LFO modulation settings. When Sync is OFF, oscillator 2 is always free-running with respect to oscillator 1.

DEGREES	When PHASE is enabled, the Degrees knob adjusts the oscillator 2 synchronization to a specific phase in oscillator 1 waveform over a range from 0 degrees to almost 360 degrees. If both oscillators are using the same frequency, a mid-point in the knob represents the oscillator frequencies 180 degrees out of phase.
	NOTE: When the knob is set close to minimum 0, or maximum 360 degrees, the oscillator will lose the synchronization lock until the knob is turned back slightly. This is also more pronounced in upper keyboard ranges. Test the entire keyboard range when designing sounds. This feature can be used to produce interesting sound textures when an LFO is set to control the phase, as oscillator 2 will sync and lose sync periodically with the LFO frequency, making it sound like a delay or trill effect.

NOISE



Noise can be added and mixed with the oscillator outputs before they are mixed and routed into the filter section. Two types of noise are available with a level control.

WHITE/PINK	Selects the type of noise. White noise contains a full spectrum from lowest to highest audible frequencies. Pink noise is filtered slightly with a low pass filter and does not sound as "bright." Noise is turned off when no LEDs are lit.
LEVEL	Adjusts the level of noise being routed into the filter.

EG CONTROLS

EG CONTROLS			
	HOLD	RELEASE	_
	0	0	

This section overrides the note envelope generator stages. It is used to hold a note or turn on/ off the release tail of the note for creating drones.

HOLD	Selecting this will cause all notes to be held indefinitely with envelopes at the sustain level until the Hold button is turned off. This can be used to hold the notes in memory and then play with the panel controls using both hands.
RELEASE	Enables the release envelope to function normally when selected. If this button is turned off, release section of the note's envelope does not function, and the sound is turned off immediately when a note is released regardless of the Release knob setting in the Amplifier Envelope section.

PORTAMENTO / GLIDE



This section assigns glide, portamento, and glissando functionality to one or both oscillators.

OSC 1/2	Selects the oscillator(s) that will be affected by Glide, Portamento, or Glissando. Select OFF, Oscillator 1, Oscillator 2, or both 1 and 2.
GLIDE	Selects the Glide effect. When enabled, each note starts the pitch higher or lower, smoothly reaching the actual note pitch. The position and speed of the glide is controlled by Speed and Glide Amount knobs.
PORT (left LED)	Selects the Portamento effect. When enabled, the oscillator pitch moves smoothly from note to note.
GLISS (right LED)	Selects the Glissando effect. When enabled, the oscillator pitch moves from note to note in chromatic semitone steps.
SPEED	Controls the rate for the Glide, Portamento, or Glissando effect. <u>NOTE:</u> In Performance Legato mode (Mono mode only), this controls the slowest rate when notes are played with minimum velocity in legato. When played with maximum velocity, the speed is instantaneous.
GLIDE AMOUNT	Selects the interval where the pitch starts the glide from. The range is -32 to +32 semitones. Turning the knob counterclockwise starts the glide from below the note, clockwise starts from above. If the knob is set to center (0) there is no glide effect as the note starts with the actual pitch. This knob has no effect on Portamento or Glissando, which start the pitch from the last played note.

CHORUS EFFECTS



The Xerxes synthesizer has a stereo analog Bucket Brigade Device (BBD) chorus circuit built-in with 3 different fixed chorus settings. When enabled, this effect is added to the sound before the final output. A single button controls all 3 settings, plus an OFF setting when both LEDs are off. The stereo effect is accomplished with 3 analog BBD delay lines, with two lines routed independently to L and R channels.

No LEDs lit	No chorus effect is active. Sound is unchanged from the filter section.
Left LED on	Chorus effect 1: Two slightly delayed sounds are added to the original sound, one with a smaller amplitude, adding a slight interference, producing a slow chorus effect.
Right LED on	Chorus effect 2: Two slightly delayed sounds with higher amplitude are added to the original sound, adding a slow choral effect to the sound. This sounds more "wet" with a wider stereo image.
Both LEDs on	Chorus effect 3: Two slightly delayed sounds with a faster frequency are added to the original sound, creating a string ensemble effect with a wider stereo image.

DYNAMICS



Dynamics knobs adjust the effect of note velocity and aftertouch on the oscillator volume and filter settings. If the synthesizer is in polyphonic aftertouch or MPE mode, all of these effects are applied polyphonically, affecting both oscillator volume and filter frequency for individual notes. If a channel aftertouch controller is used, the effect is applied to all notes simultaneously. All knobs are bipolar, meaning that the effect can be either positive or negative depending on the knob's direction from the center.

Adjusts how note velocity affects the filter envelope. Turning the knob clockwise from 0 will produce a positive effect; when note is struck faster it causes the filter envelope to have a sharper, brighter tone than slower notes. Turning the knob counterclockwise from 0 will have the opposite effect; notes pressed slower cause the filter envelope to have a sharper, brighter tone than notes pressed faster.
Adjusts how note velocity affects oscillator volume. Turning the knob clockwise from 0 causes a note struck faster to make it louder and slower notes softer. Turning it counterclockwise from 0 will have the opposite effect. <u>NOTE:</u> The default volume level that applies to MIDI velocity data=64 is set in Voice > VCA LEVEL in settings menu. If this is set to 100%, volume will not increase if MIDI velocity data of higher than 64 is received. For velocity to have any effect on volume, reduce the VCA LEVEL to less than 100%.
Adjusts how aftertouch data affects filter cutoff. Turning the knob clockwise from 0 will produce a positive effect; when note is pressed harder it causes the filter cutoff to increase, making the note brighter. Turning the knob counterclockwise from 0 will have the opposite effect; notes pressed harder cause the filter cutoff to decrease, making the note more muted. In Settings there is an option to select whether this controls VCF frequency or VCF envelope.
Adjusts how aftertouch data affects oscillator volume. Turning the knob clockwise from 0 causes a note pressed harder to make it louder. Turning it counterclockwise from 0 will have the opposite effect. <u>NOTE:</u> The default volume level that applies to minimum MIDI aftertouch data is set in VOICE > VCA LEVEL in settings menu. If this is set to 100%, volume will not increase further with aftertouch. For aftertouch to have any effect on volume, reduce the VCA LEVEL to less than 100%.

AMPLIFIER ENVELOPE



Amplifier Envelope knobs adjust the amplitude and timing of individual sections of the volume curve from the moment each note is played.



ATTACK	Adjusts the time it takes for the note's volume to reach a full level after a note is played. A setting of 10 takes 7 seconds.
DECAY	Adjusts the time it takes for the note's volume to drop from maximum level to a level set by the sustain knob. A setting of 10 takes 46 seconds.
SUSTAIN	Adjusts the level to which the note's decay stops if the key is being held or the Hold button is ON in the EG Controls section. Clockwise rotation of the knob increases the level from 0 to 100% of full level.
RELEASE	Adjusts the time it takes for the note's volume to drop from sustain level to zero after a is released. A setting of 10 takes about 50 seconds. This knob is active only if the Hold button is OFF and the Release button is ON in the EG Controls section.

FILTER ENVELOPE

Similar to the Amplifier Envelope section, the Filter Envelope knobs adjust the filter cutoff and timing of individual sections of the filter cutoff curve from the moment each note is played.



ATTACK	Adjusts the time it takes for the note's filter cutoff frequency to reach maximum after a note is played. A setting of 10 takes about 7 seconds.
DECAY	Adjusts the time it takes for the note's filter cutoff frequency to drop from maximum to a setting set by the sustain knob. A setting of 10 takes about 46 seconds.
SUSTAIN	Adjusts the filter cutoff frequency to which the note's decay stops if the key is being held or the Hold button is ON in the EG Controls section. Clockwise rotation of the knob increases the filter cutoff frequency from 0 to 100% to a level set by the Frequency knob in the Multimode Filter section.
RELEASE	Adjusts the time it takes for the note's filter cutoff frequency to drop from sustain level to minimum after a note is released. A setting of 10 takes about 50 seconds. This knob is active only if the Hold button is OFF and the Release button is ON in the EG Controls section.

VOLUME

The Volume section contains Master volume control, headphones jack, and a power switch.



SPECIAL VOICE MODES

POLYPHONY MODE

There are 3 different modes that select the polyphonic and monophonic voice modes. These are selected under VOICE > MODE in Settings.

- MONOPHONIC: Only one voice is active at all times, effectively turning it into a monosynth
- POLYPHONIC: All 8 voices are independently active for each note
- UNISON: All 8 voices are simultaneously active for every note

VOICE LAYERING

Several voices can be layered that are triggered under a single note. 1, 2, or 4 simultaneous voices per note can be selected under VOICE > CARDS PER VOICE in Settings. Increasing voices per note decreases available polyphony.

VCA LEVEL

This setting is used to give more headroom for velocity and aftertouch control. A setting of 100% has a maximum volume with minimal additional volume used for velocity and aftertouch. By lowering the VCA Level, the overall patch volume is reduced, allowing velocity and aftertouch to have greater increase to volume. This can be changed under VOICE > VCA LEVEL menu.

PRESET VOLUME

This setting sets the overall volume for the preset. It can be used to decrease or increase the volume as needed if the volume is too low or high due to certain filter or modulation settings. This can be changed under PRESET VOLUME menu, and can be adjusted from -6 to +6 dB. The default is 0 dB.

LFO DEPTH AMOUNT MODE

The AMOUNT MODE setting selects how the LFO Depth knob affects the selected destinations.

- COMMON: The Depth control affects all selected destinations equally at the same time.
- INDIVIDUAL: LFO Depth can be customized for each LFO destination individually by holding down the destination button while adjusting the LFO Depth knob.

LFO POLYPHONY MODE

This setting allows the LFO to affect the destinations either monophonically or polyphonically (for oscillator pitch or filter only). This can be selected under TIME > LFO MODE setting.

- MONO: LFO waveform controls all selected destinations at the same time for all voices
- POLY: LFO waveform controls oscillator pitch and filter polyphonically, which restarts a different LFO waveform asynchronously for each note. Other destinations (VCA, PW

1&2, and Phase) are still affected monophonically, synchronized with the first note played in the chord.

SPECIAL PERFORMANCE MODES

Xerxes synthesizer includes several special performance modes that do not have dedicated panel buttons. They can be used to fine-tune the synthesizer's responsiveness to external MIDI controllers and to allow more intuitive control, which are especially useful when performing live. These performance modes can be changed in Settings.

FILTER VELOCITY

This selects how velocity affects the filter. This setting is found under VOICE > FILTER VELOCITY.

- FREQUENCY: Velocity modulates the filter's Frequency parameter, making the sound duller or brighter overall based on note's velocity.
- ENVELOPE: Velocity modulates the filter's ADSR envelope, making it possible for velocity to affect only the Attack/Decay portion of the envelope, depending on how the Envelope knob and the filter ADSR controls are set. This can make the note's attack and decay more natural.

Note that the depth (strength) of how much velocity affects each note is controlled with the Filter knob in the DYNAMICS panel section under VELOCITY.

KEY ASSIGNER MODES

There are 3 different key assigner modes in Xerxes, found under VOICE > PLAYBACK menu. The first two are inherited from the Deckard's Dream synthesizer that replicates the Yamaha CS-80 functionality. The third is a Xerxes-only mode that is functionally similar to Synthex.

- SUSTAIN I: In this mode, all voices are assigned to new notes sequentially, regardless if they are played in legato or staccato (disconnected), or are repeated. In this mode, if a note has a long release tail and it is triggered again, a new voice will play the repeated note, causing two voices of the same note to play in unison.
- SUSTAIN II: This is a special CS-80 mode, which assigns the same voice to disconnected notes and then retriggers the new note's envelope from the previous note's release level. This makes it possible to hold a chord with one hand and play a solo with the other hand similar to a monosynth. This is mostly effective with patches having a longer release tail.
- SUSTAIN III: In this mode, voices are assigned to the notes randomly, but they do not change when the note is repeated, unless more than 8 different notes have been played, in which case a new voice is assigned to the newest note. The main difference between Sustain-I and III modes is that Sustain-III does not assign a new voice to each note unless it's needed. Repeated note with a long release tail will trigger the same voice again, similar to a monosynth. This mode replicates Synthex key assigner.

MONOPHONIC MODES

Xerxes synthesizer has 3 different monophonic modes. These modes control how note transitions affect the ADSR envelope when playing connected notes (legato). They are only available if the voice mode is set to Monophonic. The 3 modes can be changed under VOICE > MONO MODE setting.

- LEGATO: ADSR envelope does not retrigger on connected notes (when played legato).
- STACCATO: ADSR envelope always retriggers with every note.
- PERF LEGATO: Performance Legato ADSR envelope does not retrigger when played legato. Glide, Portamento, or Glissando speed, when enabled, is based on new note's velocity value when played in legato. When played softly, the pitch glides more slowly, and vice versa. This makes it possible to control note transitions naturally when playing live on the keyboard. In this mode, disconnected notes will not trigger Glide, Portamento, or Glissando.

LEGATO NOTE PRIORITY SETTINGS

Legato note priority can be further refined with VOICE > LEGATO SETTINGS > NOTE PRIORITY menu.

- NO: Only the newest or a last active note will play (recommended)
- LOW: Only lowest note in a chord will play
- HIGH: Only highest note in a chord will play

VELOCITY/AFTERTOUCH CURVES:

• LINEAR, LOGARITHMIC, EXPONENTIAL, STYPE, NTYPE



MICROTUNING

Microtuning allows for usage of an extended range of tuning beyond standard musical scales familiar in Western music. It allows for an expansion of creative expression with a broader range of tunings. Xerxes is designed to encourage exploration in this area, which is why it has been designed with microtuning setting.

MICROTUNING SETTINGS

- ON/OFF
- TUNING PROGRAM selects an uploaded and stored program
- SAVE SCALE selects the preset slot to save an uploaded program
- DELETE ALL PROGRAMS clears all save tunings.

Uploading available and custom Scala files in the form of .scl can be done using an MTS tuning software, such as Oddsound.

ODDSOUND

Alternatively, MTS tuning software, such as Oddsound (<u>https://oddsound.com/</u>) can be used to load programs or in real time.OddSound's MTS-ESP MIDI CLIENT VST or AU plugin can send .mts files directly from your digital audio workstation (DAW) to Xerxes.

- Connect Xerxes to a computer via USB or DIN MIDI
- Make sure Xerxes is enabled in your computer or DAW's MIDI settings
- Open MTS-ESP MIDI Client plugin in your DAW. And set up as described in the Oddsound manual. This method can be done using the licensed version (MTS-ESP Master) or the free version (MTS-ESP Mini). Upload or select a scale.
- Next, open an instance of the MTS-ESP MIDI Client plugin which will connect to the main Master or Mini plug. On the panel of the MIDI Client, select MTS SYSEX from the METHOD pull down menu. Under Output, select Xerxes, or if using DIN MIDI select the correct port.
- Select the .mts file to be sent in the Master/Mini plug and click Send Dump on the MIDI Client. The desired .mts file should now be loaded into Xerxes and can be saved in the desired slot.
- On Xerxes, in the MICROTUNING menu, select SAVE SCALE and select the preset slot to save it to.

CALIBRATION

There may be occasions when the knobs on Xerxes may not behave as expected or Filter self oscillation tuning is not as precise as desire. On these occasions, we visit the CALIBRATION menu in settings.

The CALIBRATION section simply sets knob positions and tunes the filters.

KNOBS

This selection calibrates the physical position of the knobs in relation to the values which they are controlling. Selecting KNOBS results in the following message, "SET CENTER DETENT KNOBS TO MIDDLE AND PRESS ENTER."

Move all 14 of the center detent knobs to the center position. This includes:

- TUNING MASTER
- DETUNE
- OSC SYNC DEGREES
- OSCILLATOR 1&2 TRANSPOSE
- OSCILLATOR 1&2 PULSE WIDTH
- GLIDE AMOUNT
- FILTER ENVELOPE
- FILTER KEYBOARD TRACKING
- All 4 dynamics knobs for VCA and VCF VELOCITY and AFTERTOUCH

After all center detent knobs are centered and ENTER is pressed the display will now read: "SET ALL KNOBS TO MAXIMUM AND PRESS ENTER." Turn ALL knobs, including the center detent knobs to the MAXIMUM position (furthest clockwise) and again press ENTER. Calibration occurs instantly. When complete, the screen will display "DONE." Press CANCEL (OK) to return to the CALIBRATION settings screen. It is not uncommon to forget to turn a knob during this procedure. If that occurs, simply repeat the process until it is done properly.

FILTERS

This selection calibrates the tuning of the filters of all voices so when high resonance settings cause self-oscillation of the filters to be more precise with respect to one another. This is helpful when using filter keyboard tracking to play the self oscillation musically. It might also be necessary when you first receive your unit. To perform this procedure, allow Xerxes to warm up for at least 30 minutes powered on. Next, navigate to CALIBRATION, then FILTERS in the Settings menu. In most cases, selecting ALL will tune all voices for the more precise results, however there may be an instance where only one voice needs tuning and may be selected individually.

FIRMWARE UPDATES

Xerxes 1.1.1 (April 7, 2023) release notes:

1. Knob values displayed on the screen along with an indicator displaying which direction the original value of the preset is in.

- 2. Microtuning capability with Oddsound MTS software. https://oddsound.com/
- 3. LFO sync to MIDI

4. PAT/MPE instead of CHP/PAT/MPE. Xerxes can now automatically determine if the controller is set to polyphonic or monophonic aftertouch.

- 5. Separate PICK UP, MERGE, INSTANT setting for control change (CC)
- 6. Filter aftertouch to envelope/frequency option
- 7. LFO retrigger on/off
- 8. Screensaver
- 9. Aftertouch curve options: Linear, Logarithmic, Exponential, N-type, S-type
- 10.Minor bug fixes

To update, download the appropriate Updater App for OSX or Windows, connect your Xerxes to your computer by USB and open the app.

From there, you should see Xerxes in the Device pulldown menu. Click open device. Next, click open firmware and navigate to this file. Finally click send firmware and wait until completed.

MENU STRUCTURE

MIDI	
MODE	POLY AFTERTOUCHMPE
CHANNEL	• ALL, 1-16
CC RECEIVE	ONOFF
CC 74 REPLACE*	 NONE LFO A FREQ LFO A DEPTH LFO B FREQ LFO B DEPTH OSC 2 SYNC VCF FREQ VCF RESO VCA
KNOBS	PICK UPMERGEINSTANT
CC	PICK UPMERGEINSTANT
MODWHEEL DESTINATION*	 LFO A SPEED LFO A DEPTH LFO B SPEED LFO B DEPTH FILTER FREQ FILTER RESO PULSE WIDTH 1 PULSE WIDTH 2 OCTAVE 1 OCTAVE 2 SYNC PHASE GLIDE SPEED AMP+FILTER NONE
MODWHEEL POLARITY*	POSITIVENEGATIVE

PITCHBEND RANGE*	• 1-99 SEMITONES
KBRD TRACKING CENTER*	• 48-72
TRANSPOSE	• 1-24 SEMITONES
VELOCITY CURVE	 LINEAR LOGARITHMIC EXPONENTIAL STYPE NTYPE
AFTERTOUCH CURVE	 LINEAR LOGARITHMIC EXPONENTIAL STYPE NTYPE

VOICES		
MODE*	MONOPHONICPOLYPHONICUNISON	
CARDS PER VOICE*	• 1-4	
NUMBER OF VOICES	• 8-1	
VCA LEVEL*	• 10-100%	
FILTER VELOCITY*	FREQUENCYENVELOPE	
FILTER AFTERTOUCH*	FREQUENCYENVELOPE	
PLAYBACK*	 SUSTAIN I SUSTAIN II SUSTAIN III 	

PRESET VOLUME* • -6 DB - +6DB	

LFO*	
LFO MAX	• 1-100 HZ
LFO MIN	• 0.01-0.10 HZ
LFO 1 SYNC	OFFON
LFO 2 SYNC	OFFON
AMMOUNT MODE	COMMONINDIVIDUAL
LFO MODE	MONOPOLY
RETRIG	ONOFF

MICROTUNING*	
STATE	OFFON
PROGRAM	• 1-128
SAVE SCALE	• 1-128
DELETE ALL PROGRAMS	

CALIBRATION	
KNOBS	
FILTERS	TUNE ALL VOICESTUNE VOICE 1-8

TIME*	
GLIDE MAX TIME	• 1-10 S/OCT
ADSR MULT	• X1-4

SCREENSAVER	 NEVER 5 MINUTES 10 MINUTES 30 MINUTES 1 HOUR
ABOUT	DISPLAYS SYSTEM INFORMATION



* **NOTE:** Settings that are saved with each patch are marked with an asterisk

CC LIST

CHANNEL 1	
KNOB LFO A FREQUENCY	CC40
KNOB OSC 2 SYNC PHASE DEGREES	CC41
KNOB OSC 1 GLIDE AMOUNT	CC42
KNOB DYNAMIC VELOCITY AMPLIFIER	CC43
KNOB FILTER ENVELOPE ATTACK	CC44
KNOB DYNAMIC AFTERTOUCH FILTER	CC45
KNOB FILTER ENVELOPE DECAY	CC46
KNOB DYNAMIC AFTERTOUCH AMPLIFIER	CC47
KNOB FILTER ENVELOPE SUSTAIN	CC48
KNOB OSC 2 VOLUME	CC49
KNOB FILTER ENVELOPE RELEASE	CC50
KNOB FILTER MODULATION ENVELOPE	CC51
KNOB AMPLIFIER ENVELOPE ATTACK	CC52
KNOB MASTER VOLUME	CC53
KNOB FILTER MODULATION KEYBOARD	CC54
KNOB AMPLIFIER ENVELOPE DECAY	CC55
KNOB TUNING DETUNE	CC56
KNOB LFO A DEPTH	CC57
KNOB NOISE LEVEL	CC58
KNOB OSC 2 PULSE WIDTH	CC59
KNOB LFO B FREQUENCY	CC60
KNOB LFO B DEPTH	CC61
KNOB LFO B DELAY	CC62
-	CC63
-	CC64
KNOB LFO A DELAY	CC65
KNOB OSC 2 TRANSPOSE	CC66

KNOB OSC 1 PULSE WIDTH	CC67
KNOB TUNING MASTER	CC68
KNOB FILTER FREQ	CC69
KNOB AMPLIFIER ENVELOPE SUSTAIN	CC70
KNOB DRIFT DENSITY	CC71
KNOB FILTER RESONANCE	CC72
KNOB OSC 1 VOLUME	CC73
-	CC74
KNOB AMPLIFIER ENVELOPE RELEASE	CC75
KNOB DRIFT SPEED	CC76
KNOB OSC 1 GLIDE SPEED	CC77
KNOB DYNAMIC FILTER	CC78
KNOB OSC 1 TRANSPOSE	CC79
KNOB LFO B DEPTH	CC80
KNOB LFO B FREQUENCY	CC81
KNOB LFO B DELAY	CC82
KNOB OSC 2 GLIDE SPEED	CC83
KNOB OSC 2 GLIDE AMOUNT	CC84

CHANNEL 2	
BUTTON LFO SYNC	CC40
BUTTON LFO WAVEFORM	CC41
BUTTON LFO OSC12	CC42
BUTTON LFO VCF/VCA	CC43
BUTTON LFO A/B	CC44
BUTTON LFO PW 1/2	CC45
BUTTON LFO PHASE	CC46
BUTTON LFO AFTERTOUCH AMOUNT	CC47
BUTTON OSC2 SYNC	CC48

BUTTON NOISE	CC49
BUTTON OSC 1 OCTAVE	CC50
BUTTON OSC 2 OCTAVE	CC51
BUTTON OSC 1 WAVEFORM	CC52
BUTTON OSC 2 WAVEFORM	CC53
BUTTON OSC 2 PWM	CC54
BUTTON OSC 2 PAM	CC55
BUTTON OSC 1 RINGMOD	CC56
BUTTON OSC 1 PWM	CC57
BUTTON OSC 1 PAM	CC58
BUTTON OSC 2 RINGMOD	CC59
BUTTON FILTER MODE LOWPASS	CC60
BUTTON FILTER MODE BANDPASS	CC61
BUTTON FILTER MODE HIGHPASS	CC62
BUTTON GLIDE OSC 1/2	CC65
BUTTON GLIDE	CC66
BUTTON PORT/GLISS	CC67

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