STUTTER MATRIX
Select which stutter lengths or particular melodic notes you'd like the Stutter section to use

BUFFER POSITION
Adjust start and end points within the buffer, with an adjustable grid

GLOBAL FILTER
DJ-style high-/low-pass one-knob filter controlled by the pitchbend wheel

GATE MODULE
Gate length and release tails can be set here

SPLIT SLIDER
Use these to set start and end points for each parameter

PALINDROME LOOPING
An incredibly pretentious name for what we all know better as ping-pong looping!

BIT REDUCTION
All modules can be switched on and off – this one's inactive
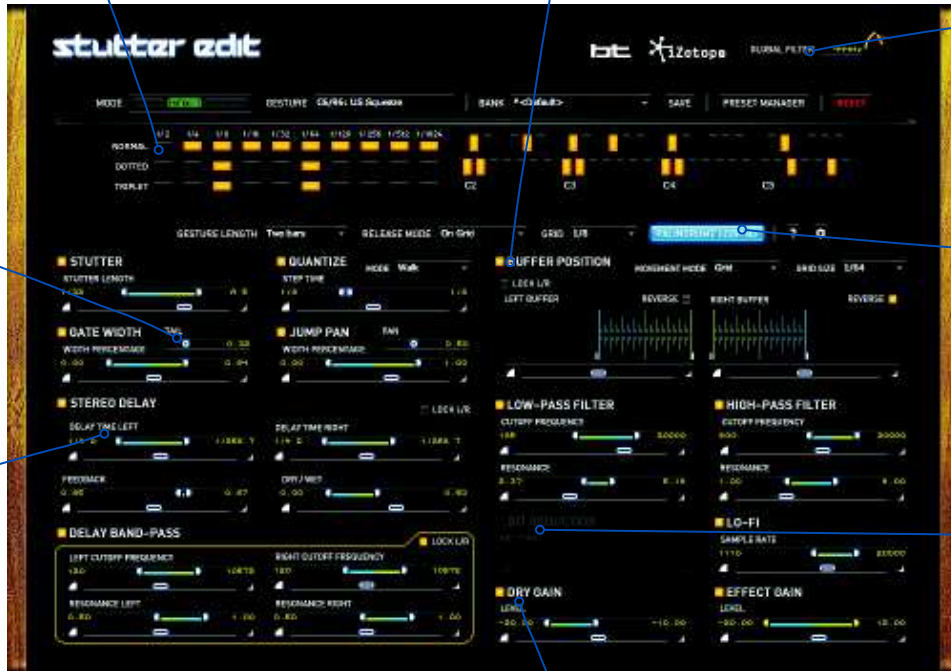
WET AND DRY GAIN
Can be locked like a normal routing or automated in the same way as the other modules

iZotope
Stutter Edit $249 PC MAC

Legendary producer BT teams up with iZotope, but has he arrived at the club only to find that all the cool kids have left for the after-party?

System requirements

PC Windows XP/Vista/7 (32-/64-bit)

Mac OS X 10.5.8

> Electronica legend Brian Transeau – better known as BT – has used and abused the 'stutter edit' technique on a decade's worth of albums, and for some time his secret weapon has been a plug-in of the same name. His collaboration with iZotope sees Stutter Edit finally become a commercially available product.

This MIDI-controlled effects plug-in works by stuffing incoming audio into a buffer and repeating snippets of it in various ways. Further processing modules can be applied: there are gating, panning, filtering, stereo filtered delay, and bit-depth/sample-rate reduction. Each MIDI note will trigger what iZotope call a "gesture" – essentially a preset combination of effects settings and associated patterns. There are numerous tempo-syncing features, so the resulting mayhem will lock up perfectly with your track. The user interface is unmistakably iZotope and easy to navigate.

BT in a box

Stutter Edit is easy to get going, although you do need to route MIDI into it to make it work. Anyone with a basic grip of their DAW's routing will have no problems, and iZotope provide a DAW-specific guide within the comprehensive help documentation for those who need it. There are hundreds of presets from the likes of Richard Devine and BT himself, so it really is a case of plug and play.

We had a couple of hours of self-indulgent fun running tracks through the plug-in and messing with the pitch and mod wheels. By default, these control the global filter (a DJ-style combined low-pass/high-pass affair) and starting point in the gesture. This was all without touching a single control on the front panel. Using even the simplest loops as a starting point, it's possible to go wild with the gestures, and the results are instantly musical.

Once you get into editing the gestures, the software becomes more than just a novel curiosity. Each module has 'split' sliders for its available parameters (eg, delay time for delays, bit depth for the bitcrusher), and while these can be set at fixed positions, the real fun is had by setting a start and end point. When you hit a MIDI note, the parameter glides smoothly from beginning to end, then starts over. It needn't be

"Stutter Edit comes with some ace presets, but it feels too pricey"

a plain linear transition from minimum to maximum, as there's a setting for curve shape. Each effect can work in a stereo linked manner or with separate settings per channel.

We couldn't resist running three instances of Stutter Edit in series to see how it would hold up – this resulted in a complex sound with smooth transitions. Much of what Stutter Edit does could be done manually in any DAW with some extensive audio chopping and effects routing, but that's nowhere near as simple and fun.

Matrix revolution

There are plenty of 'glitch' plug-ins on the market, but Stutter Edit's Stutter Matrix is one of the features that sets it apart. It enables you to restrict the Stutter module to just the slice sizes that you want to use. You could set it to just eighth-notes and 16th-notes, for simple rhythmic fills; or you could allow only the fastest settings, for crazy IDM-esque buzzing. You can even use slice sizes that correspond to musical notes by clicking on a virtual keyboard – exploit this to create melodies and arpeggios.

The Stutter module can transition smoothly between each possible slice size, which can cause the slices to drift out of time (or key). To this end, there's the Quantize module, which will cause the Stutter module to snap to the specific rhythmic/note values specified in the Stutter Matrix. It offers a number of patterns for traversing the range of values, too. Very cool!

As outstanding as all of this one-finger stuttering business is, it's frustrating that there's no option to assign MIDI CC controls to any of the sliders. This means that to create variations on a gesture, you have to manually set up separate patches or play the plug-in 'live' whilst trying to ride the faders with the mouse. While we appreciate that the point in the plug-in is that it handles most of the manipulations for you, not

The Generator section has the same style of controls as the main panel, making it nice and easy to understand and navigate

Talkin' bout my Generator

So far we've only talked about the Stutter gestures. However, each MIDI note can also be assigned to trigger a Generator sample loop. These are a mixture of hits and looped noise textures that play back on top of your track (rather than muting it, as the Stutters do). Again, everything is tempo-synced, the difference here being that you can have the gesture automatically stop at the start of the next bar (or one, two or three bars after that), making it perfect for build-ups.

The Generator has its own pop-up editing window, and it offers its own selection of split sliders for setting start/end points for its parameters.

Its got its own effects, too: filtering, delay and sample-rate reduction.

We found that the Generator works especially well with sweeping pads and strings, as it can be used to add a little sparkle to the end of a phrase while it's being stuttered.

We would love to be able to load our own audio files into the Generator, but sadly that feature seems to have been overlooked – at least for the moment. It's also a little annoying that the Gain slider's lowest setting is -20dB, so you can't create risers/fallers that fade in from total silence. iZotope reckon that future updates should see these issues laid to rest, however.

being able to manually intervene is a massive oversight that would've made the package a more formidable production and live tool. iZotope say that they're considering adding such functionality, so here's hoping.

Stammer jammer

Aside from those obsessed with composing a BT sound-a-like, who would find Stutter Edit useful? It's a tough one, as the package sits between two very distinct camps. DJs and live performers will find the gestures and tempo-synced automation fantastically simple for adding spice to their mixes. On the flip-side, most studio producers will be able to replicate the type of effects here manually without too much trouble. The lack of automation is a big oversight for studio use.

If we'd seen this package a few years ago, our mind's would've been blown. We can't deny that Stutter Edit is simple to use and has some ace presets, but it feels too pricey for a package that only adds a couple of new twists to proceedings. That said, everyone should give the demo a try – if only for the insane pleasure of st-st-stuttering-ing-ing-ing the hell out of everything. **cm**

Alternatively

Sugar Bytes Artillery 2
cm122 >> 7/10 >> $199
MIDI-controlled 'effects keyboard' with plenty of modules

Audio Damage Replicant 1.5
cm111 >> 10/10 >> $49
Easy beat-slicer/looper with fun randomisation function

Verdict

For	Easy to use
	Perfect for DJs
	Clean interface
	Great Generator
	Instantly musical

Against	A little pricey for what it is
	Lacking in automation/MIDI control
	Can't load custom sounds in generator

Stutter Edit is the Rolls Royce of glitch effects, guaranteeing that your freaky transitions get from A to B in style

8/10

The preset manager displays the key layout for both Stutter and Generator patches in a separate window