

# ***Chordjacks and Density management***

DourGent, 05/01/2022

## **Introduction**

This document is going to be entirely focused on how I personally approach density management in chordjacks, since it's very often an overlooked aspect of that style. It's very common for people to dismiss chordjacks as "lazy charting" or "free charting", among other things when they've only ever seen 1 type of chordjack patterning. I don't agree with this sentiment, and would like to talk a little bit about what goes into making sure chordjacks aren't boring to people who **don't** already love playing these files.

Of course, I'm not claiming to be objectively correct in anything I say in this document, I'm just going to be talking about my own approach to this topic and how it benefits me personally. Not everyone will agree with my approach, or even agree with the core sentiment I'm sharing, and that's completely reasonable. [April's recent document on 'Pattern Flow'](#) was what inspired me to write this in the first place, and as such my formatting will likely be very similar.

This document will likely go over a lot of aspects of density management, along with examples of it, since while it sounds very cut and dry, there's many variables that you can look out for while layering, that may seem un-intuitive at first but are actually recommended. I'll mostly be using examples from my own charts, and Sheenoboo's, since we learnt to chart chordjacks together, so our ways of approaching stuff in this area are extremely similar.

With all of that said, this likely won't be that long of a document, since it's only a single focused topic I want to talk about, so while I may have a lot to say for just a single topic, there is a small chance that I end up going on to talk about different topics and how they link to density management. I've wanted to write this document since 2018, but I felt like I still had a lot to learn before I was confident enough to share my approach, so I shelved it.

## Density Management

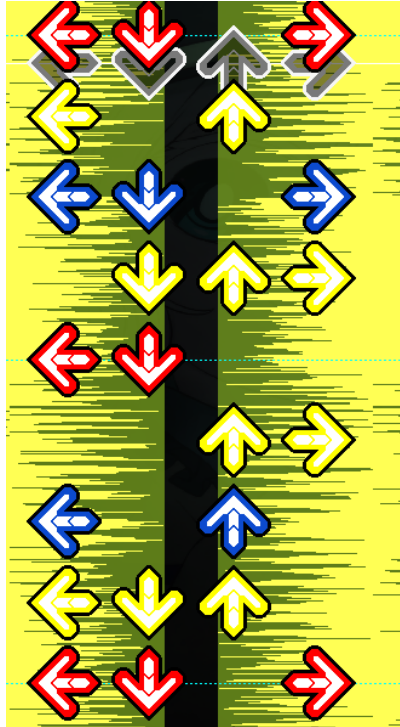
Density management is something that almost everyone recognises the basic concept of - A noise gets louder or more intense, so you make the layering denser. What a lot of people miss is that density isn't just a tool to use once, it's something you can incorporate into your layering on a fundamental level for Chordjacks. You don't have to return to your previous layering after the intense part. For example, if you're charting Chordjacks and a new instrument is layered into the song, on a very basic level you could turn what was previously a single note into a jump when that sound plays to represent the intensity increasing. Of course this is the most basic example, but if you keep this type of layering rule set up throughout your file it can become part of your layering for the file, and as such becomes more than just a tool used to make 1 section more intense.

The issue that I faced originally when approaching this, and what I've noticed a lot of other charters face, is that of over-layering. This is an extremely common complaint levied at chordjacks. While a lot of the time, the complaint is in bad faith, there's some cases where it is an actual problem. When I first started charting chordjacks, I wasn't aware when to tone down the density again if the song didn't actually tone itself down musically, which led to files with a lot of quads and hands being used where other options for representation was available and would've felt better for the majority of players.

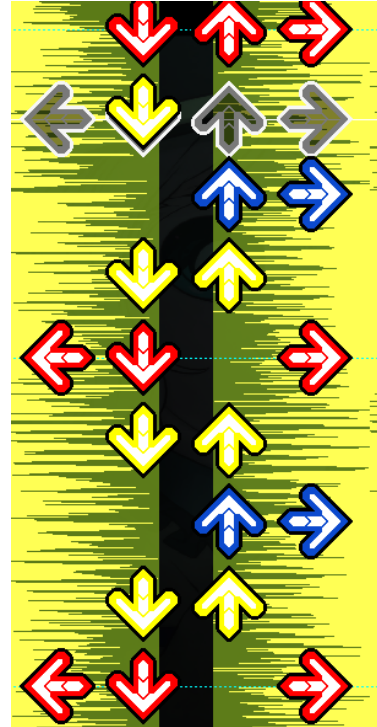
To put it more simply, your layering with chordjacks does NOT need to be super strict. You can change your own rules and break your own layering scheme a lot easier with chordjacks than you can other types of charts - and as such, you're given a lot more freedom to experiment with the feel of patterns representing stuff rather than the actual layering. It's a lot closer to dumping in how you can approach it. You could have your layering be really light, then gradually get denser, but instead of it getting too dense near the climax, you could change your layering so that the patterning itself is harder instead. This gives the illusion of a density shift to the player, as they're feeling more stressed out from the extra stamina drain through patterning. Using this, you can technically get more freedom in how to change your density, since this gives you more levels to work with in it.

An example of this layering scheme put on full display is in my Valedumps 3 (Route B) file "Existence". In this file, I gradually build up the density as the song grows more intense, but rather than making the most intense parts super dense, I instead lower the density, and make the patterns more control-oriented instead. By doing this, the player feels the intensity shift, but the actual density itself was lowered. This is what density management is, you don't have to represent sounds and intensity by just making things denser, but rather, by constantly shifting the density and patterning itself to make it feel like the density and difficulty is shifting to be more intense or less intense depending on the song. There's extremely dense but easy patterns, and extremely light but difficult patterns, and both can be used alongside actual density changes to represent a lot of things.

Example of the densest part of "Existence" compared to the climax



Densest section



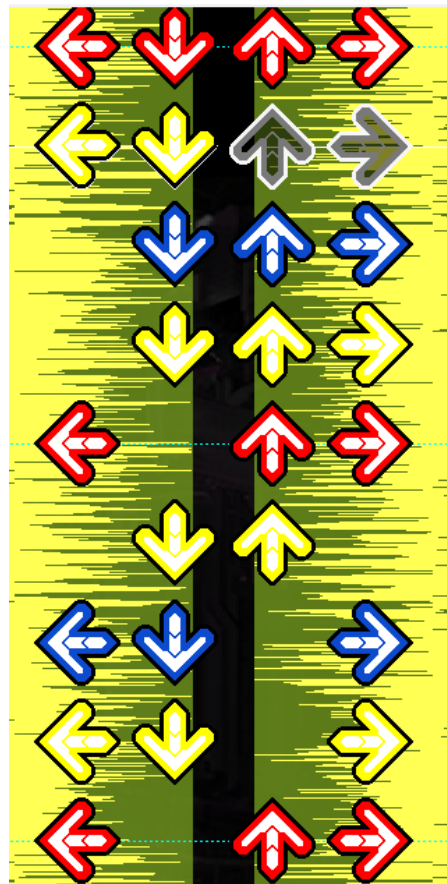
Climax

[Video here](#)

Even though it looks like the denser section is harder, a lot more people ended up struggling on the climax in this situation, as the climax requires more control to hit properly and more experience with this patterning. Of course, this depends entirely on the player's skillset - but that's part of charting. When you're making files, you should consider the type of players you're making your files for. I, for example, make my files for people who like more anchory patterning in their jacks, stuff that might be a bit awkward to hit if you're not used to that type of stuff.

Another aspect of Density management is knowing when to temporarily raise/lower density in bursts. I touched on this above with quad walls and things of that nature, but I more mean in tiny bursts. For example, if there's 1 sound that's way more prominent, but you don't want to represent it as a quad, and you already have dense layering... you could represent it as a handjack. If the note is mildly sustained, representing it as a handjack (Usually kept short to avoid a spike) is a really nice way to give your patterning a very small but effective kick that makes people enjoy hitting that stuff. This is just one example though.

A good example of this concept in action is in my “Affection” chart, where I represent the intense afflictions in the singer’s vocals as handjacks on top of my layering scheme.



The handjacks in ‘Affection’

[Video here](#)

The handjacks in the screenshot each go to a different accentuated word the singer’s making, while seemingly ignoring the less intense words she’s singing between.

This type of management is very important for more stamina-oriented chordjack charting, as you don’t want a segment to be too intense for the player that it’ll overwhelm them when they’re already pushing their stamina, but you also don’t want a chart to be too boring for the player that they have to train their mental stamina for it. The compromise is minor representation like this which feels intense to hit but doesn’t spike too hard.

The last type of density management I'd like to talk about is that of trying to keep your chordjacks light - almost glut/minijack tier light. Keeping this light density is very difficult when you're trying to step this type of chart, and as a result a lot of lighter chordjack files end up having huge spikes in the climaxes from people unintentionally layering it a bit too harshly - I'm guilty of this as well pretty badly (see: [Doll-Dagga Buzz-Buzz Ziggety-Zag](#)).

This type of density management is probably the hardest to get used to doing, but it's still something that's pretty important when it comes to this topic. This is where Pitch Relevancy becomes way more important though (It's important in normal chordjacks too, though, Contrary to popular belief). Lighter chordjacks have to rely on feel a lot more than denser chordjacks, and as a result if you're not sure how a pattern will feel to play, that shows in the final product. The best example of how to layer lighter chordjacks are in Sheenoboo's "Annihilative Instinct". In that file he makes use of almost every technique at least once to express everything. For this document, though, I'll only focus on a few instances on how he handles the buildup into the drop of the song. Over the entire section, his layering changes multiple times, mixing the density shifts with pattern shifts as well to make it feel gradually more intense until it kicks in. Since there's no good way to represent it in a screenshot, I'll hyperlink a video of it below:

[Video here](#)

As the video shows, he constantly swaps his layering as he gets closer to the climax, but doesn't always actually make the patterning dense. Same theory as I talked about early, only now he's using 3 note long anchors on top of the patterning changes and density changes to further make the buildup feel intense. Using 3 note long anchors in this style makes a section feel way more intense than it actually is. In this example specifically, he starts off with only occasional minijacks, before transitioning into all minijacks then layering in the 3-notes as the density increases, but makes sure never to repeat a 3-note anchor unless he needs to. This type of management applies to all styles, but for a reason I'm still not sure - is often forgotten when it comes to chordjacks.

### **Final comment**

Overall, I personally believe density management within chordjacks is far more important than many other styles because of how limited you are already. It's something I would argue is almost fundamental to charting chordjacks (At least, for me personally). The limitations you place on yourself while charting chordjacks make what would normally be a small tool you'd use into something that can make or break a file's flow and feel in a lot of cases. This document may have just been about how I (and my good friend Sheenoboo) approaches the subject, but I still hope that this will be of some use to the people reading this.

Thanks for reading! I look forward to seeing more chordjack charts make use of this technique in the future, as it can make for some extremely, extremely fun segments in charts.