You can now control GarageBand with your face on iPhone X

Apple pushed several updates to its music creation software today, following education-based announcements including a cheaper iPad and new Crayon stylus earlier in the day.

There’s an intriguing new feature that makes use of the iPhone X’s TrueDepth camera and face tracking features. If you’ve got Apple’s flagship phone, you’ll now be able to use your *face* to control effects and synths, hands-free. Yup, GarageBand will read your facial expressions and translate them into instrument controls. If available for use on an instrument or effect, a small smiley face icon will appear. The parameters that can be adjusted are locked and can’t be customized, but there are some fun options. For example, smiling / opening your mouth affects the piano’s vibrato and sustain.

This might seem gimmicky (and could easily be used as such), but I also see it as an interesting step into exploring accessibility in music-making, much like hands-free MIDI controller Jamboxx. Personally, I’ll probably try to find an LFO I can control with my face, and try to not collapse in a fit of giggles when opening my mouth produces modulated wobbles.

In line with Apple’s school-based initiatives is a new downloadable “Toy Box” sound pack for GarageBand. Apple calls it an “educational” sample pack, and it comes with an array of sound effects including animals, vehicles, and voices counting to ten in different languages.

There’s also a new modern wah guitar stompbox effect. (A wah stompbox is what’s known as a “classic” guitar pedal, creating an effect that people associate with rock guitarists.) GarageBand already offers dozens of different pedals, including distortion and wah, so this is just one more to add to the app’s stable.

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