FRAGMENTURGY the METHOD: Adapting the idea – and the limitations of technology

Setting out, I had this idea of an ideal workflow; accessing one enormous sound bank live – picking sounds and layering them randomly live as I went along.

This turned out to be, a somewhat naive and close to impossible, method.
I started off, according to the original plan: patiently listening (in real time) to hours and hours of material on old digital audio tapes (so called DATs, organising them in loose categories of atmospheres, interviews, music, noise, hum, odd sounds and so on. This was of course very time consuming and I soon realised I had reached my first "dead end".

As usual, the original idea had to be adapted due to unforeseen circumstances and technical limitations.
This is normal practice for me and it is how I, and I suppose most others, learn.

I went on to exploring which available technology I could use to solve the issues of:
1) Playing back and adding effects to DAT-tapes and analogue sound sources like cassette tapes, live.
2) Managing a very large amount of audio channels at the same time.

I wanted to avoid having to pre-record the old sound media (DATs and cassette tapes) onto modern software for the reason of "authenticity". When things are played back and filtered live there is an uncertainty and "nerve". But also, it saves time.

Recording DAT-tapes in real time onto software would realistically be close to impossible it would take weeks. One single DAT-tape holds more than two hours of material, so it is an extensive job.
Despite this, a lot of my male friends in the scene thought this form of idealism was nuts and strongly advised me to get to do so, through the whole process.

Fortunately for the project – I ignored their opinions this time.

Ultimately, I wanted to keep it simple and hands-on, avoiding using any software at all.
Maybe I could manage the whole operation only using effect pedals and a mixer?

However, when I tried this; using only a few pedals, a regular
sampler and a mixer, it only worked when operating two or
three channels simultaneously. More than that, things got very
awkward.
The share number of channels (16) made it impossible for me to
remember:
1)   Where the sound came from (what channel???).
2)   What it sounded like (its possible qualities and
weaknesses, levels and so on).

For me, a novice of live electronics, the sheer amount of
awkwardness made the research inquiry impossible. This being
listening, using intuition to select and live mix sound to
create new contexts.

It was with a sigh of relief I accepted, that for creators
like myself, using a computer is often necessary. The risk is
otherwise that "the mode of transport" itself (being
technology) totally blocks the way of creation.

Instead, I decided to try out Ableton live, maybe with a
controller, for its easy access and generous amounts of
channels and effects. In the beginning of summer of 2016, I
set up in my studio in order to work out how to make Ableton
do what I wanted. This included playing and filtering analogue
sound fragments such as tapes seamlessly along with digital
media such as, the now ancient DATs, and modern sound files
such as WAVs and Mp3s.
Using only a normal mixer and merching the inputs of two
soundcards, I achieved something close to the original idea.
I started to randomly add sound clips, tapes and DATs and
playing around with it – and it kind of worked!