

THE
MUSIC
TECHNOLOGY
MAGAZINE

March 1993

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sweet
harmony**

Ultravox

Goodnight Vienna?

Terry Riley

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TASCAM DA-88

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DIGITAL IN

REMOTE

FORMAT

44.1k 48k



REC FUNCTION

CHASE

INT

CLOCK

WORD

VIDEO

TC GENERATE

TC REC

SHUTTLE

WARNING

REC INHIBIT

ERROR

MEMO 1

MEMO 2

LOC 1

LOC 2

00 17 33 12

DISPLAY

ALL INPUT

AUTO INPUT

REPEAT

CLEAR

AUTO INPUT

PLAY

STOP

F FWD

RECORD



WHEN THE REST SIMPLY AREN'T GOOD ENOUGH

DEFINING THE FUTURE

For a generation of engineers TASCAM has defined the future of recording. TASCAM is committed to pushing forward the boundaries of recording technology, developing formats to suit applications. From the first three-head, three motor stereo tape deck, the first slow-motion video recorder, the first Dolby B equipped cassette deck, the first affordable multitrack recorder, the first portastudio, the first Dolby S equipped 16 and 24 track recorders, the first eight track recorders on cassette, the first MIDISTudio, the first affordable automated mixing console through to the DA-88, (the world's first truly professional 8 track digital audio recorder utilising the Hi-8 format), TASCAM has led the way. Every format developed by TASCAM has become an industry standard and the recorders themselves have established a benchmark of quality, professional features and affordability which other manufacturers can only attempt to emulate.

SETTING THE STANDARDS

In the real world of professional audio two things matter absolutely, sound quality and reliability. The DA-88 sets new standards in sonic

performance and is designed from the ground up to withstand the rigours of the recording process.

TASCAM recorders are renowned for their reliability and sound quality and this reputation has only been achieved by an absolute commitment to quality over price, experience over enthusiasm and engineering over expedience.

BUILT TO PERFORM

As one of the world's leading manufacturers of tape transports TASCAM was uniquely placed to develop the drive used in the DA-88. The company's recorders are used in applications as diverse as space shuttles and hospitals, military aircraft and recording studios, computer backup devices and HiFi systems. As the world's leading manufacturer of computer disk drives, digital technology and the recording and reproduction of digital data are second nature. As a result the DA-88 offers flawless handling of both tape and data and carries all the features which a recording engineer would expect to see on a professional digital audio recorder. Switchable sampling rates, digital dubbing and editing, shuttle and scrub editing, auto punch in/out and track slipping are all standard features accessible

from the front panel of the DA-88. The sophistication of the design of the DA-88 means that it has the ability to record a hundred minutes of multitrack audio on a standard Hi-8 90 minute video cassette.

DESIGNED FOR TODAY

In today's multi-media environment the ability to synchronise to video recorders is an essential requirement of any audio recorder. The SY-88 synchroniser board not only provides transport synchronisation but also allows direct control of the DA-88 from a video editor, seamlessly integrating audio and video post production. Timecode generation (all formats) and MIDI machine control are also provided.

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Although up to 16 DA-88's can be locked together to provide a total of 128 tracks, standard systems are typically between 8 and 48 tracks. The RC-848 will control up to 6 DA-88s with full transport record function and autolocate control. A unique feature of the RC-848 is the ability to directly control a master video recorder or analogue multitrack as well as multiple DA-088s.

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In over thirty-five years at the forefront of analogue and digital recording technology TASCAM has become the world's largest manufacturer of recording equipment, deservedly gaining a unique reputation for innovation, quality and reliability. With unrivalled knowledge of the demands placed upon equipment in a professional recording environment TASCAM has refined the DA-88 to a level that makes it probably the finest digital multitrack system at any price.

This is the machine that the recording industry has been waiting for. It's proven, built and on the way. So, if you are planning the purchase of a digital multitrack recording system contact TASCAM - It's your future.

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PLEASE SHUTTLE ME DETAILS OF THE DA-88

NAME

ADDRESS

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COMMENT

Something of a bumper crop of product reviews this month, which is perhaps surprising given that this is the pre and not post-Frankfurt issue. Traditionally, this is a fairly lean period for new products and yet here we are with major new equipment releases from the likes of Akai, Tascam and Yamaha. Does this mark a shift away from reliance on the major international music events for the unveiling of new products? Or is it simply a handful of manufacturers jumping the gun and trying to steal a little of the limelight before it is scattered across a hundred other new products?

I suspect it's a little of both. There can be no doubt that the influence of international music fairs – be it Frankfurt, NAMM or any other – has waned in recent years, possibly because they have come to be seen as the rather wearying events they are. But also, faced with the spiralling cost of R&D, punitive interest rates and intense competition, manufacturers are no longer in a position to 'hold out' on new product releases until the next available international event. And why should they? It's difficult enough gaining enthusiasm for hi-tech products these days without sharing the oxygen of publicity with dozens of other manufacturers.

And thinking about it, this is perhaps no bad thing. A feeling of real cynicism has begun to surround events like Frankfurt. Stories of empty cabinets representing unfinished designs, products 'ready for shipping' which don't materialise for another nine months and others which never see the light of day... these things do nothing for the image of the international music fair as a showcase for the latest and best in hi-tech equipment. Perhaps it's time their influence was diminished.

Despite these reservations, there will, I'm sure, be plenty of interest at this year's show and you can rest assured this will be brought to your attention at the very earliest opportunity. The review of new products remains the backbone of this magazine's coverage and the objectivity we strive to achieve hasn't been compromised at any time during our twelve-year history.

Helping us maintain that unblemished record is our Technical Consultant, Vic Lennard, whose association with the magazine is now some five years old. Vic's uncompromisingly high standards have often made him the target of disgruntled manufacturers, and his virtual retirement from any aspect of human existence which doesn't involve interconnecting MIDI leads does mean that he has become something of a low-priority party guest. But he accepts this with good grace, knowing that where MT's readership is concerned, no sacrifice is too great.

A big hand if you please. for...

The MT Staff – 2 Vic 'Doc' Lennard



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MUSIC EDITOR

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TECHNICAL

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Akai S2800 Sampler
Akai S3000 Sampler
Akai S3200 Sampler
Akai CD3000
Akai S950 Sampler
Akai S1000 Sampler
Akai MX1000 Mother Keyboard
Akai FM76 Module
Akai library available and in stock

| NORMAL PRICE | CREDIT CARD PRICE |
|--------------|-------------------|
| £799 | £789 |
| £2199 | £POA |
| £2999 | £POA |
| £3999 | £POA |
| £2399 | £POA |
| £1199 | £999 |
| £2400 | POA |
| £1099 | POA |
| £499 | £479 |



Ensoniq ASR 10
Ensoniq ASR10R
Ensoniq SQ2 - 32 Voice
Ensoniq SQ1 Plus - 32 Voice
Ensoniq KS32 - Piano Weighted
Yamaha SY99
Yamaha SY35
Yamaha SY85
Yamaha TG500 64 Note Polyphonic

| NORMAL PRICE | CREDIT CARD PRICE |
|--------------|-------------------|
| £1999 | £1895 |
| £1999 | £1850 |
| £1350 | £1299 |
| £1250 | £1135 |
| £1595 | £1530 |
| £2300 | POA |
| £599 | £549 |
| £1399 | £1299 |
| £999 | £899 |



Yamaha TG100 Sound Module
Roland JV1000 synth
Roland JD990
Roland JV80 Synth
Roland JV30 Synth
Roland JW50 Workstation
Roland DJ70 Sampling Workstation
Roland E70 Synth
Roland E15 Synth
Roland E35 Synth
Roland FP8 Piano
Roland PC200GS Keyboard
Roland A30 Master Keyboard
Roland AX1 Remote Keyboard
Roland JV880 Synth Module
Roland SC155 Sound Canvas
Roland SC55 Sound Canvas
BOSS DS330 Dr Synth Sound Module
Korg O1/FD
Korg O1
Korg WS1 Wavestation
Korg M1 Workstation

| NORMAL PRICE | CREDIT CARD PRICE |
|--------------|-------------------|
| £349 | £325 |
| £1850 | taking orders |
| £1450 | taking orders |
| £1245 | £1225 |
| £759 | £POA |
| £1349 | £POA |
| £1750 | £POA |
| £1250 | £POA |
| £499 | £POA |
| £899 | £POA |
| £1619 | £POA |
| £200 | £POA |
| £449 | £POA |
| £449 | £POA |
| £679 | £POA |
| £595 | £POA |
| £549 | £POA |
| £330 | £299 |
| £1795 | POA |
| £1695 | POA |
| £1299 | £1275 |
| £999 | £985 |

KEYBOARD STANDS

| NORMAL PRICE | CREDIT CARD PRICE |
|--------------|-------------------|
| £63 | £60 |
| £25 | £23 |
| £125 | £120 |

SOFTWARE

| NORMAL PRICE | CREDIT CARD PRICE |
|--------------|-------------------|
| £299 | £279 |
| £449 | £429 |
| £239 | £227 |

ACCESSORIES

| NORMAL PRICE | CREDIT CARD PRICE |
|--------------|-------------------|
| £69 | £65 |
| £38 | £36 |
| £29 | £27 |
| £75 | £69 |
| £40 | £38 |
| £86 | £79 |

EFFECTS

| | NORMAL PRICE | CREDIT CARD PRICE |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Korg A5 Multi Effects | £229 | £219 |
| Korg A5 Bass Multi Effects | £229 | £219 |
| Akai AR900 Digital Reverb | £289 | POA |
| ZOOM 9120 reverbs etc. | £449 | £399 |
| ZOOM 9000 Multi FX + F/switch | | |
| + Power Supply | £285 | £275 |
| ZOOM 9001 Studio Effects | £249 | £239 |
| ZOOM 9000 Power Supply | £20 | £18 |
| ZOOM 9002 Multi Effects | £259 | £255 |
| ZOOM 9030 Multi Effects | £525 | £499 |
| ZOOM 8050 Foot controller | £188 | £170 |
| Yamaha FX500 | £299 | £289 |
| Yamaha FX900 | £595 | £399 |
| Yamaha EMP 700 Effects | £450 | £430 |
| Yamaha EMP100 | £235 | £220 |
| Yamaha R100 Reverb | £179 | £169 |
| Yamaha GSP1000 GS processor | £139 | £129 |
| Yamaha Q100 stereo graphic EQ | £109 | £100 |
| Rolls MIDI Pedal | £85 | £83 |
| Ibanez Sound Tank Effects | £34 | £32 |
| Morley Wah/Volume | £89 | £79 |
| Morley Wah Pedal | £79 | £69 |
| Cry Baby (Jim Dunlop original) | £75 | £365 |
| Alesis MEQ230 | £245 | £229 |
| Alesis Quadverb Plus | £449 | £435 |
| Alesis Midverb III | £299 | £285 |
| Alesis Quadverb GT | £549 | £525 |
| Alesis Microverb III | £229 | £217 |
| Art Multiverb LTX | £179 | £169 |
| Art Multiverb Alpha | £349 | £339 |
| Art X-15 Ultrafoot | £179 | £169 |
| Roland SRV 330 space reverb | £650 | taking orders |
| Roland SDE 330 space delay | £650 | taking orders |
| BOSS SE70 multi-effects | £569 | taking orders |
| BOSS DRP II Drumpad | £55 | £45 |
| BOSS ME6B Bass Effects | £255 | £235 |
| BOSS ME6 Multi Effects | £255 | £235 |
| BOSS ME10 Multi Effects | £545 | £525 |

| | NORMAL PRICE | CREDIT CARD PRICE |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| BOSS SE50 Multi FX Unit | £359 | £339 |
| BOSS AW2 Autowah | £75 | £69 |
| BOSS BF2 Flanger | £120 | £110 |
| BOSS CE5 Chorus | £76 | £69 |
| BOSS CH1 Super Chorus | £88 | £80 |
| BOSS CS3 Compressor | £99 | £95 |
| BOSS DD3 Digital Delay | £135 | £125 |
| BOSS DS2 Distortion | £75 | £69 |
| BOSS DS2 Turbo Distortion | £85 | £79 |
| BOSS FW3 Foot Wah | £85 | £79 |
| BOSS GE7 Graphic EQ | £95 | £89 |
| BOSS HM2 Heavy Metal | £75 | £69 |
| BOSS MT2 Metal Zone | £85 | £79 |
| BOSS MZ2 Metalizer | £120 | £110 |
| BOSS DD2 Turbo Overdrive | £95 | £89 |
| BOSS OS2 Overdrive Distortion | £75 | £69 |
| BOSS PS2 Pitch Shifter | £150 | £140 |
| BOSS PH2 Super Phaser | £95 | £85 |
| BOSS SD1 Super Overdrive | £69 | £63 |
| BOSS FC50 Midi Foot Controller | £150 | £140 |
| Digitech "The Vocalist" VHM5 | £899 | £879 |
| Digitech DSP128P | £299 | £279 |
| Digitech DSP16 | £199 | £189 |
| Digitech GSP7 | £395 | £370 |
| DOD 7 Band EQ | £65 | £63 |
| DOD Overdrive plus | £39 | £37 |
| DOD Classic Tube | £35 | £33 |
| DOD American Metal | £45 | £43 |
| DOD Metal Maniac | £46 | £44 |
| DOD Stereo Chorus | £59 | £57 |
| DOD Stereo Flanger | £69 | £67 |
| DOD Compressor/Sustainer | £45 | £43 |
| DOD Analog Delay | £99 | £97 |
| DOD Wah/Volume | £79 | £77 |

GUITAR SYNTHS

| | | |
|-------------------------|------|------|
| Roland GR1 Guitar Synth | £999 | £950 |
|-------------------------|------|------|

Communiqué

**Send Your Letters To:
Communiqué, Music
Technology, Alexander
House, Forehill, Ely,
Cambs CB7 4AF.**

Dear MT,

MT's free ads are the only reliable marketplace for the private seller of hi-tech gear these days – unless you want to lose a fortune by selling to a store.

The only problem is that they are too successful, and as a result it can take up to three months to get your advert into print. This sort of delay can make the bank manager turn a bit ugly if you have ploughed all your money into new a keyboard in the meantime.

I do not want to make myself universally hated by all other MT readers, and I would be very sad to see the end of the free status of these ads, but perhaps MT should consider the system popular with local newspapers, whereby you can pay £5, for example, to guarantee insertion in the next issue. Alternatively, if this is a pain to administer, why not have a higher rate subscription that gives a subscriber a PIN to quote on the telephone system to get a faster service.

I accept that less prosperous readers will protest that this is creating a two-tier system favouring the rich. But what would they rather do, pay a modest sum to MT or lose possibly a hundred pounds plus on selling to a shop?

I know what I would prefer.

**Len Morphew
Faringdon**

Two possible solutions, Len: phone our classified ads department (on 0353 665577 – ext 163) who, for a small fee, will place an ad in the issue of your choice. Alternatively, try not spending money on new gear until you have it to spend. Radical, huh? – NL

Dear MT,

A Cynic Writes...

808 State: "...exactly the same groove – every tune consisted of just four samples."

You guys aren't part of the solution, you're part of the problem – now f**k off and let me listen to *The Yes Album* in peace.

J. Burchill

Wapping

Actually, Julie, I wouldn't have thought you'd have had any difficulties being left in peace listening to *The Yes Album*. Now what is it you want to talk about...? – NL

Dear MT,

I feel I must take issue with Mr Brian Aspirin and his cynical view of hi-tech music stores in the February issue. Whilst the scenario painted may be familiar to many readers, it certainly does not represent all hi-tech stores.

Dear MT,

I have just read the February edition of MT and I think that during the last 6-7 months it has developed an acute case of the 'middle-aged old farts'. Who will be on the next front cover – Phil Collins or maybe Dire Straits?

I realise that MT has to be many things to many people, but it seems to me to have lost direction. MT should be providing coverage of the people who are currently making progressive and innovative use of technology in music. This, to my mind, doesn't include Simply Red or Michael Jackson.

For Nigel Lord to sidestep the responsibility of following the current trend and find its good points, eg. Meat Beat Manifesto, Richard James (Aphex Twin, Polygon Window etc.) as well as the contemporary classical technologists, in favour of middle-of-the-road bands saddens me. MT needs to search for the dynamic edge it had when I first read of Techno music in September 1988 at the age of 13. MT is the greatest magazine in the universe so please don't ruin it, get off your arses!

**Mark Barton
Shaftesbury**

Accepting that we do, occasionally, opt for 'middle of the road' bands as well as those working at the margins of contemporary music, what makes you think, Mark, that securing interviews with them involves any less work? By and large, setting up interviews with the artists you refer to takes far more effort than those out to make a name for themselves.

But the fact is, I don't accept that the inclusion of interviews with a handful of mainstream artists represents any sort of failure on our part to keep abreast – and keep our readers abreast – of what's going on at the cutting edge. Whilst realising the need for a magazine like MT to put its weight behind emergent new styles of music, it is surely incumbent upon us, also, to ensure we maintain a reasonable balance in our editorial coverage and talk to as wide a cross-section of musicians as possible (which, incidentally, will include Meat Beat Manifesto and Richard James in the very near future).

What do I mean by a 'wide cross-section of musicians'? Well, about as wide as Kraftwerk, Michael Brook, Peter Gabriel, The Grid, Philip Glass, Jools Holland, 808 State, Vince Clarke, Inspiral Carpets, Omar, Future Sound of London...

Really, Mark, I think you're suffering from the old Venus de Milo syndrome: only seeing what isn't there. – NL

My own stores make great efforts to ensure that equipment is properly displayed and ready set-up for demonstration by knowledgeable, friendly staff. Most of our staff are musicians themselves; however, during working hours they are professional sales people who take pride in their work, and not the patronising ego maniacs portrayed by Mr Aspirin.

We certainly do not believe the future of retailing is in mail-order. Hi-tech recording and musical equipment demands a high level of training, service and aftersales care that cannot always be bought at the lowest price over the telephone. Phoning around for just the cheapest price could well add to Mr Aspirin's headache; by all means shop around and make sure you visit a reputable hi-tech dealer.

**Kim Joseph
ABC Music**

You'll have to excuse Brian, he's had a bee in his bonnet about music shops ever since he was sold a recorder with two of the holes missing. The constant taunts of "Hey Brian, you're a couple of notes short of a scale" have taken their toll, I'm afraid – NL

Dear MT,

May I wish the Editor a happy tenth anniversary and suggest that the subject matter of your editorial Comment (January '93) could open a whole new forum for fellow readers to express their opinions.

The basis for discussion would be: what form of critique do readers actually want from Demo Takes? The first question may well be whether readers want Phil Ward to be passing opinion on their songs as they would be viewed by an A&R man at a record company, or whether, instead, they wish to have an in-depth analysis of the technical merits of their recordings.

To expand on this, Phil could review a song from a reader's demo purely on an A&R level, ie. does it sound commercial? Does it suit the current market (British or other)? Is it original?

Does the structure work? Are the chorus hooks strong enough? Of course, this assumes that the reader's ambition is to achieve, via the demo, some form of commercial exploitation of the song.

Judgement could also be passed on the performances of the demoed artists, ie. is the singing in tune? Are the vocals delivered with expression and feeling? Are the drums and bass tight? These aspects, I feel, are more closely linked to the job of creating a production, which, in my opinion, should be the main focus of the review, even if the songwriter, performer, engineer and producer happen to be one and the same person. Constructive criticism on choice of instruments, their arrangement in the frequency spectrum, their position in the stereo field, choice of reverbs and other outboard effects as well as the use of dynamic processors would then be the main content of the reviews.

Comments on the technical side of the production and final mix would be of primary interest with, perhaps, hints on coaxing better performances out of the artists as a secondary. This is my point of view and I might well be in a minority, so I would be very interested to hear from other readers as to what they most value from Phil's column.

To close, I'd like to raise one more point. I

attended Saturday's Demo Forum at the London Music Show back in November as Tim James' producer and was surprised to hear one of the panel judges express the opinion on one song, that it was "...over-produced for a demo". Surely the current mode of thought is to produce recordings to the highest possible level which, with today's MIDI equipment, means practically master quality. In fact, for dance tracks, many bedroom recordings are being taken as masters by record companies, with vinyl being cut from DATs using minimal MIDI gear and a sampler. So where does a demo end and a master begin? In fact, should there even be such a thing as a demo if we have the facilities to produce a master? I look forward to hearing your comments.

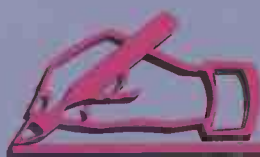
Tony Warren
Espirit Music
Canalot Studios
London

Some interesting points here, Tony. As regards Phil adopting an A&R man's perspective when reviewing demos – yes, this does presuppose that everyone is seeking commercial success for their music. It also throws up the question of what kind of A&R man he should attempt to emulate – an A&R man working for a major label or an A&R man working for one of the

independents. Clearly, the brief would be very different.

And thinking about it, it's debatable whether on his present salary he could ever adopt the perspective of one of the overpaid A&R men of the major labels. (I'm not being glib here, but like many people, I ascribe much of the current malaise of the music business to the practise of grossly overpaying A&R men whilst linking their continued employment to the results they achieve. The outcome of this, of course, is the signing of only 'safe' acts and a reluctance to allow bands to develop at their own pace.)

On the other side of the coin, demo reviews which address themselves solely to technical detail very quickly find themselves parting company with their readers. Though some discussion of technical merit is valid in a magazine of this sort, it's often enough simply to say that a track works or it doesn't. In short, you can adopt the role of A&R man or producer (which, quite coincidentally this month's *Demo Takes* reviewer actually is – check out what Mike Howlett has to say about your demos on page 86). Phil himself is very interested to know what readers want from his 'column'. You can get in contact with him at the editorial address; cleanliness and discretion is assured. – NL



A CYNIC WRITES...

Comment by Hip O'Crit (the hippest crit in town)

BACKLASH FEVER

Not for the first time in recent months, the name Peter Gabriel was taken in considerable vain the other night. The occasion? Some routine music business nonsense. The culprit? Some routine music business nonentity. The reason? Nothing more than a moderate attack of Backlash Fever – a habit-forming indulgence common in mass media pondlife steeped in celebrity culture overload. The current text for the trend-conscious vilifies Gabriel's musical antixenophobia for unpalatable worthiness and piety, and generally reduces World music to some vegetarian caricature. The (World)-weary cry, as ever, is "hypocrisy!"

Now, don't get me wrong. I hate everything, too. Especially early Genesis albums. But the reason Backlash Fever is such a destructive force in the field of creative endeavour is because it

represents prejudice. Not good old-fashioned, over-the-garden-fence, whispering prejudice; but blind, unthinking, pusillanimous, herd-instinct prejudice of the kind that distinguishes the finest brains in the Stretford End on a Saturday afternoon. And this sits rather uncomfortably with the air of all-round smartness with which victims of Backlash Fever normally parade their symptoms.

But the target always has to be moving – never too easy or too established. Backlashers get bored easily, and a reverse process may take place which can even make the unhip hip – witness Abba. In the meantime, countless highly talented individuals must endure repeated mud baths when their turn comes around. The point is this: narrow-mindedness is not the exclusive preserve of those who used to be referred to as 'squares'. Digging The Dirt, indeed.

(Brian Aspirin is unwell)

Incoming Data

A Vocal Sequel



New from DigiTech is Vocalist II, a rackmount voice processor specifically developed for live applications. The new unit offers many of the features found on the Vocalist VHM5, introduced by the company in 1991. Included are DigiTech's exclusive digital splicing system, a method of pitchshifting vocal notes without changing their

overtones or resonance.

Vocalist II offers an editable harmony library with intelligent chordal, scalar and chromatic harmonies provided. You can program the volume of the harmonies, along with speed, depth and attack rate of vibrato. The unit can also be programmed to change chords automatically in

synchronisation with a drum machine or sequencer, and is capable of storing lengthy song lists of sequenced harmony chord changes.

For more information contact UK distributors John Hornby Skewes at Salem House, Parkinson Approach, Garforth, Leeds LS25 2HR, Tel: 0532 865381, Fax: 0532 868515.

The Audio Doctors

Following the recent demise of Thatched Cottage Audio, the former members of the service department have established a new 'service only' company called Sound Surgery.

In addition to servicing a wide range of recording equipment, the new company will be offering a custom cabling service equipped to produce looms and cables to meet customers' individual requirements.

For further details, contact Sound Surgery at 1st Floor, Horizon House, London Road Industrial Estate, Baldock, Herts. SG7 6NG, Tel and Fax: 0462 491222.

Notator Magic

Now operating under the company name Emagic, Gerhard Lengeling and Chris Adam, joint developers of the famous C-Lab Creator and Notator sequencing software, have finally released their long-awaited 'fourth-generation' sequencer, Notator Logic. Initially available for the Apple Macintosh only, the new sequencer will also be released in an Atari ST/TT/Falcon version soon, while a PC version will follow later in the year.

Among the many new features offered by Notator Logic are an unlimited number of user-definable objects (from MIDI instruments to faders to arpeggiators and beyond), an

unlimited number of sequencer tracks, infinite loops within loops, real-time scoring with WYSIWYG page editing, a 960ppqn resolution, a tempo range of 0.05 to 9999.99 bpm (!), and an unlimited number of staves and notation styles. At the same time, existing Creator and Notator users will find many familiar features, including Hyper Edit and Real-time track parameters.

Notator Logic for the Macintosh is priced at £499 including VAT.

For more information, contact Sound Technology at Letchworth Point, Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 1ND, Tel: 0462 480000, Fax: 0462 480800.

Sounds of the City

From 5th-10th April, Sheffield will be playing host to Sound City '93, a six-day music festival featuring live bands, seminars, workshops, films and more.

Jointly run by Radio 1 FM, the British Phonographic Institute and the Musicians Union, Sound City is intended to be an annual event based in a different UK town or

will play at various venues around Sheffield. Radio 1 FM has already committed to broadcast more than 20 hours of live music during the week. In addition, Radio 5 will broadcast excerpts from a series of lunchtime talks to be held at the Crucible Studio.

Among the many events taking place during the week are a PA workshop run by Peavey, a MIDI workshop, a Roland seminar showing off the company's latest instruments, a seminar on copyright, and – appropriately enough for a city with Sheffield's techno credentials – a techno seminar called 'Beats 'n' Basslines' and a discussion titled 'Techno Is Art?'.

For more information, contact the Sound City Hotline from 1st March on 0891 333464.



city each year – the first Sound City took place last year at Norwich, where it attracted some 50,000 visitors.

Each night at Sound City '93, up to six bands – a combination of local outfits and chart names –

ADAT's Expanding World

Following their licensing of ADAT technology to Fostex (see 'Marriage of Convenience' in the December '92 issue of *MT*), Alesis have been busy encouraging other third-party developers into the fold.

Under the terms of the Alesis Developers' Program, the companies will license the ADAT MultiChannel Optical Digital Interface and/or the ADAT Synchronisation Interface to either produce new products or adapt their current products to interface directly with ADAT.

The new licences will see ADAT interfaced digitally to hard disk-based recorders (Digidesign's

ProTools and Studio 8 systems), professional video recorders (via Timeline's MicroLynx and Lynx synchroniser/controllers) and MIDI sequencers (Steinberg/Jones Marketing plan to convert ADAT's sync output to MIDI Machine Control commands).

Alesis have also introduced the ADAT Worldwide Network Multitrack recording group to make it easier for ADAT users to get in touch with one another.

For more information on ADAT, contact UK distributors Sound Technology at Letchworth Point, Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 1ND, Tel: 0462 480000, Fax: 0462 480800.

Making a Mark



Coming soon from Kurzweil is a new range of digital keyboards, the Mark Series. Three instruments will be available in all: the Mark 5 (£2499, due end of March), the Mark 10 (£3499, due late April/early May) and the Mark 150 (£tba, due June/July). All are presented in piano-styled casings – the Mark 150 in a grand piano-style cabinet.

Each instrument features 32-

note polyphony, an 88-note weighted keyboard, MIDI capabilities, built-in autoplay songs, and a quad amplifier/speaker system which was developed in conjunction with Boston Acoustics (80W, 130W and 200W respectively).

The cheapest instrument, the Mark 5, provides 23 sounds, including acoustic and electric pianos, harpsichords, jazz, rock and pipe organs, string and choir ensembles, basses and drums. Reverb, chorus, echo and symphonic effects are provided, and split and layer functions allow up to three sounds to be played from the keyboard at once.

The Mark 10 adds 63 more sounds, broadening out the instrumental range with the likes of mallet instruments, woodwinds and saxes. Also provided on the Mark 10 is an auto-accompaniment section with 32 preset musical styles and the ability to load in additional styles from disk, an onboard eight-track sequencer and 3.5" disk drive.

The Mark 150 has a superior seven-channel, seven-speaker sound system which has been designed to emulate the sound characteristics of an acoustic grand piano with its lid opened or closed.

For more information, contact UK distributors Washburn at 15 Amor Way, Letchworth, Herts. SG6 1UJ, Tel: 0462 482466, Fax: 0462 482977.

Cheetah Roll Over

As this issue was about to go to press, news came in of Cheetah's surprise withdrawal from the hi-tech musical instrument market. From now on, they will concentrate solely on producing joysticks for the computer market, their traditional moneyspinner.

Coming so soon after the company's announcement of several significant new musical products (see *Incoming Data* in last month's *MT*), this move seems contrary to say the least. However, a spot of digging beneath the surface reveals a depressingly familiar situation. Read on...

Cheetah is owned lock, stock and barrel by a British investment company called Cannon Street Investments. Altogether, CSI own about 50 companies, including hotels and leisure chains. In the current recession, with share prices

well down, the company have been indulging in a spot of rationalisation – at which point the brutal realities of the business world enter stage left, and Cheetah, along with a number of other CSI investments, exit stage right.

But why were Cheetah on the hit list? It seems that they hadn't been making any money during the past two years – which isn't altogether surprising, given the current economic climate and the fact that new products from the company were thin on the ground.

The aborted Zeus megasynth, scuppered by problems with the developers, didn't help matters. But other development work was about to come to fruition. The MS6 MkII analogue synth module was set to be a big seller, while the new MS7000 and MS8000 MIDI controller keyboards stood a real chance of taking over the

controller keyboard market – and the company were set to break new ground with a competitively priced PC-based hard disk recording system.

So, to any company prepared to take a long-term view, Cheetah's future looked promising. The trouble is, British investment institutions are not known for their ability to take the long-term view – and so Cheetah had the plug pulled on them.

All is not lost, however. Some former Cheetah employees are in the process of setting up a new company which will take over the two MIDI controller keyboards, the Soundscape digital recording system, and possibly the MS6 MkII. The new company may also take on the servicing of existing Cheetah products.

We will of course keep you posted on further developments.

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Ensoniq Sophistication

Following the release of the ASR-10 keyboard sampler, Ensoniq are bringing out a 3U 19" rackmount version with the spellbindingly original name of ASR-10R. The new module offers all the sampling features of the keyboard version, but adds a SCSI interface as standard, along with eight assignable polyphonic audio outputs.

Recording quality is 16-bit linear utilising 64x oversampling sigma-delta technology, with a choice of 44.1kHz and 29.76kHz sampling rates. The standard 2Mb of sample RAM can be upgraded to a maximum of 16Mb using standard SIMM chips. Ensoniq have also provided for the addition of a direct digital I/O board (the DI-10) which

will allow sampling and recording entirely in the digital domain.

The ASR-10R is compatible with sounds developed for the EPS and EPS-16 Plus. Connected to a CD-ROM player via SCSI, the sampler will be able to read the forthcoming CDR-1 CD ROM disk, which contains 180 floppy disk's worth of sounds drawn from Ensoniq's own extensive sample library.

The ASR-10R is priced at £2345, the CDR-1 at £279 – both prices including VAT. The DI-10's price has yet to be fixed.

For more information, contact UK distributors Sound Technology at Letchworth Point, Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 1ND, Tel: 0462 480000, Fax: 0462 480800.

The Evolving GEM

Owners of Generalmusic's Gem S2 and S3 workstation synths (reviewed in *MT* October '92) can now get new Sample Translator V1.0 software which allows more use to be made of the onboard sample RAM.

With the software loaded off disk as an Option, samples can be loaded into the instrument's onboard sample RAM via MIDI in Sample Dump Standard format, or from floppy disk in Avalon (Atari), Sound Designer (Atari) and Sample Vision (MS-DOS) formats. Sample waveforms can be displayed graphically in the synth's LCD screen, with edit

functions letting you zoom in/out, set loop start and end points, and modify sample intonation and frequency. Up to 16 samples can be assigned to 16 zones on the keyboard. Samples organised in this way can be treated as a source sound for synthesis in the same way as the factory samples stored in ROM.

The Sample Translator V1.0 upgrade costs £79 including VAT and is available from UK distributors Key Audio Systems at Unit D, Robjohn's Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3AG, Tel: 0245 344001, Fax: 0245 344002.

LAND OF PLENTY

The ever-prolific Roland are launching a veritable avalanche of new gear this Spring. This includes Mark II versions of some long-standing favourites – the R8 MkII drum machine and the MC50 MkII dedicated sequencer, both £799 and available now – and yet more permutations of the Sound Canvas – the SC7 at £279, available now, and the TAP-10 £160, due May/June. The SC7 is essentially a module aimed at computer users, modelled along the lines of the CM modules, and as such includes a serial port for direct connection to a computer (SC-7M for the Mac, SC-7P for the PC). The TAP-10 is a sound card designed for use within IBM-AT and compatible computers. Both are angled towards the slowly growing multimedia market.

Also of particular interest to *MT* readers are two powerful new synths, the flagship JV-1000 Music Workstation (£1859, due in June) and the JD-990 Super JD synth module (£1445, due end of March). The JV-1000 has all the

sounds and programming capabilities of the JV-80, and the capacity to use all the ROM cards available for the JV-80/880 and the two SR-JV-series expansion boards. However, it can also be fitted with Roland's new GS voice expander board, the VE-GS-01,



which at £259 gives the synth GS Format compatibility and ups its total polyphony to 56 voices.

The flagship's onboard sequencer would appear to be effectively an MC50 MkII. Intriguingly it even has its own LCD

screen, so that sequencer and synth functions can be monitored at the same time.

Other features of note on the new synth are a 76-note weighted keyboard and eight front-panel sliders for sound editing, Compu-mixing or real-time control of eight

are provided, and you can remotely edit the module's parameters from the JD800's knobs and sliders. New features include Matrix Modulation, Ring Modulation, FXM (Frequency Cross Modulation, introduced on the JV80) and even that old analogue favourite Oscillator Sync.

Also worth looking out for around April/May time are two new rackmount effects processors, the SRV-330 digital reverb (£699) and the SDE-330 digital delay (£699). What makes these two units especially significant is their use of 3D effects processing (presumably drawing on Roland's RSS technology). For instance, without the use of additional speakers the SDE-330 can generate up to eight tap delays, each of which can be positioned at any location in the three-dimensional soundfield.

external sound modules.

The JD-990 3U 19" module appears to combine elements of the JD800 and JV80, and can read patches and sample ROM cards from both synths. The full array of sound parameters from the JD800

For more information, contact Roland (UK) Ltd, at Atlantic Close, Swansea Enterprise Park, Swansea, West Glamorgan SA7 9FJ, Tel: 0792 310247, Fax: 0792 310248.

» The Real Thing?



The Real Drum Company claim they are about to change the sound of electronic percussion forever. With the 600Mb of drum and percussion samples contained on their Masterkit CD-ROM disk, they reckon they have a truly accurate representation of an acoustic drum kit.

Masterkit CD-ROM Volume 1 represents more than two months of recording and editing, and many more months of programming time. The disk comprises three complete drum kits representing more than £20,000 of percussive hardware, including some very rare classic kits.

Recorded in stereo direct to DAT and digitally edited within

SoundTools, Masterkit retains full digital audio quality throughout, without the use of EQ or signal processing. Each instrument has been sampled extensively over its playing surface, with as many as eight sampled positions for each instrument and up to five velocity-level samples for each position.

Three kits are provided – power, studio and funk – along with a variety of performance programs including flams, drags, rolls, presses and loops.

You can find a full review of the Masterkit on page 26 of this issue.

For more information, contact RDC's UK and European distributors, DAC Systems, on 0784 462175.

On Holiday With Cubase

Following in the footsteps of Club Cubase organisations in Los Angeles, New York, Toronto and Germany, an official Cubase users' group is being launched in the UK by Cubase enthusiasts Vic Lennard (*who he? – Ed*), Ofir Gal and Brian Heywood.

Set up with the blessing of both Steinberg and their UK distributors Harman Audio, Club Cubase UK will offer discounts on many Steinberg products, various lines exclusive to Club Cubase

members, special deals on promotional products, and licensed disks containing MIDI Mixer maps and synth sounds in Satellite format.

There will also be a bi-monthly magazine providing advance product news, hints and tips, letters, and advice articles ranging from beginner level to advanced.

Membership costs £16 per year, inclusive of VAT. For more information, contact Club Cubase UK on 081 368 2245.

Medium Rare

The result of a merger between the fanzine *Bamboo* and the Jansen/Barbieri Information Service, *Medium* is a new information service covering Steve Jansen, Richard Barbieri and Mick Karn. The musicians themselves will be overseeing the direction and content of the service, as well as regularly making their own contributions to its quarterly newsletter.

Subscribers to *Medium* will be able to purchase CDs of exclusive material specially

recorded by Jansen, Barbieri, Karn and other artists. The CDs will be released regularly on the Medium Productions label, and will only be available by mail order from *Medium*.

The UK annual subscription rate is £6. Cheques or postal orders made payable to Medium should be sent to Medium, 74 St Lawrence Road, Upminster, Essex RM14 2UW. Alternatively, if you want further details write to Debi Zornes at the same address.

Playing to the Gallery



New Korg gear making its European debut at this year's Frankfurt Music Fair includes the G3 Guitar Processor and the Audio Gallery GM sound module.

The G3 presents compressor, EQ, chorus / flanger / rotary speaker, reverb/delay, noise reduction and overdrive/distortion effects in a compact four-way guitar pedalboard format.

You can select any one of three guitar sounds – clean, crunch and lead – using the pedals, and make quick changes to the effects using five knobs: drive, tone, speed, time and level. The idea is that, instead of you having to fiddle with multiple parameters in order to get the sort of effect you want, the G3 takes care of the detailed editing for you 'behind the scenes' using Korg's new Integrated Parameter Editing System.

The introduction of the Audio

Gallery marks a new direction for Korg. As well as coming up with a name rather than a number for one of their instruments, the company are moving into more affordable territory (around the £500 mark) which will see them competing more effectively against Roland and Yamaha in the GM/GS module stakes.

Advance reports suggest the new module is essentially a scaled-down O3R/W, focusing on the GM aspect of that instrument with 128 GM-compatible sounds – but adding an onboard computer interface with selectable baud rate, making it ideal for connection to a PC or Mac (along TG100 lines).

For more information, contact Korg (UK) Ltd at 8-9 The Crystal Centre, Elm Grove Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2YR, Tel: 081 427 5377, Fax: 081 861 3595.

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● **TWO VOICINGS. FOOTSWITCHABLE.** The Classic's normal channel delivers a sweet, round, vintage sound that could inspire even the most die-hard tone critic. It's the sound you've heard on all those classic records, the sound that gave birth to rock & roll. The lead channel is voiced to create a more modern "British" rock tonality typical of "stacked" systems. More gain, more sustain, more crunch. ● **MASTER VOLUME FOR TOTAL SYSTEM CONTROL.**

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The Classic 50 is available in three versions: two 12 inch speakers, four 10 inch speakers, and a power-pak head version with companion tweed-covered, open-back enclosures; the 115E (one 15 inch speaker) and 410E (four 10 inch speakers).

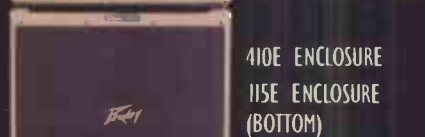
THE CLASSIC 20 is a new addition to the Classic line and, like the Classic 50, is all tube. The 20 features a 15 watt RMS power section, high gain preamp design, volume and master volume, 3-band EQ, and one 10 inch speaker in an ultra compact tweed-covered cabinet.

"I fell in love with the round, clean sound of the Classic 50 almost as soon as I turned it on, and came to appreciate it more when I took it out and played it with my band. I found it hard to believe the amp is only rated at 50 watts." — **DAVID HICKS**

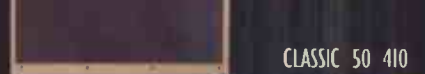
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de



Early Beloved



...We are gathered here today to witness an album of dance-flavoured, optimistic songs from husband and wife team Jon and Helena Marsh; the cosiest home studio in captivity; and the joining together in holy MIDI of sequencer and sampler. And synth. Amen.

It looks very tidy now, but at one point this flat was a sea of bubblewrap within continents of cardboard boxes, rippling the residential calm of this particular corner of South London on the day The Beloved's home studio arrived. With a successful album finally behind them, Jon Marsh and Steve Waddington somewhat surprisingly went their separate ways, and it was Jon's particular home that took custody of the name 'Beloved' – and delivery of the aforementioned cardboard boxes. After several years of '80s guises, beginning with a 1983 trio called 'The Journey' through and including phases of psychedelia and New Order-ish techno-dance, Jon and Steve went to a rave, blissed out and embraced the '90s. With 'The Sun Rising', a single to see out the last decade and herald the dawn of the new, The Beloved caught the mood and commercial success followed. Having 'arrived', it was as though a point had been proved, and they parted.

But The Beloved was not to be a solo act: Jon's marriage has seen to that. It's now a compact husband and wife team, and the studio nestles snugly beneath their superannuated bunk bed sending invisible rays of electronic warmth up into the nuptial chamber. It's a juxtaposition of work and rest that must represent the shortest commuting distance known to man. And woman. Jon and Helena Marsh can literally fall out of bed and start programming. They've brought it all back home for a reason, and that reason is mainly to do with control. Surrounded by, it must be said, a particularly tasteful line in chattel, protecting with all its being the sanctity of house and home, Jon and Helena discuss their domestic arrangements. It's hard not to feel a certain envy.

"The main reason for building a studio at home," begins Jon, "was because when we made *Happiness*, and the *Blissed Out* remix album, we were working with real programmers – including the producer, Martyn Phillips – and it became so fundamentally obvious how reliant we were on these people – particularly me, doing all the keyboards. I really didn't have the slightest idea how it was all working. Playing the parts was fine, but hooking it all up and getting things exactly how you want them... you can come across as a bit of a control freak, but if you can get yourself into a situation where you can do it all, the next step is to then get people





Equipment

Atari Mega 2
 DAC R4000 hard disk
 Seek Model 18:8:2 MkII mixer
 Akai S1100 ("A massive thankyou to Martyn Phillips, who gave us access to his library to get us started...")
 Alesis SR16
 Roland TR808
 Roland Juno 60 (Jon: "Without doubt my favourite; I've had it for ten years. Such an easy machine to use")
 Roland TB303
 Korg T3 ("Good for bass, which I'd never have thought – but you've got to jump in and take the effects off, of course. It's good that the effects are in it, but they should be *off* by default; you shouldn't have to switch them off *before* you can use the sounds. There's no way, when you're multitracking, that you can use any sound with a major effect on it.")
 Sequential Circuits Prophet VS ("The sounds are really rich, but the editing's a pain, having to press so many buttons to get at something. Plus you can't monitor the wave forms as you're editing them. But the preset/programming debate is the same as the digital/analogue one, or quantised/unquantised, or machine

against real person – if you mix and match all of them, you end up with something really good. If you start laying down hard and fast rules... it's like saying there'll be no black notes, and everything's got to be in C major!")
 ARP 2600
 Mini Moog ("When Steve and I split the gear up into fairly equitable groups, he got the Moog, so we had to buy this one. I haven't completely got the hang of it yet, but it looks good...")
 Yamaha DX100 ("Brilliant. It's really noisy, and some of the presets are so horrible, but the bass sounds are wonderful, especially on things like the 'wood piano'. By mixing that with the Mini Moog, you can get the ideal bass sound, with both warmth *and* bite")
 Casio CZ101 ("Cartridges wanted, please", says Jon)
 Alesis Quadraverb
 Yamaha SPX900
 Nakamichi Harmonic Time Alignment amplifier
 Technics SL1210 MkII x 2 decks
 Numark PPD DM1750RM pre-amp/mixer
 Sony DTC1000ES DAT
 JVC TDW30 cassette
 AR Red Box monitors

►► back in to program for you – but at least you understand exactly what all the permutations are."

"And, of course, it saves so much time," points out Helena. "If we had new tracks that needed to be demo'd beforehand that would involve going into a studio, working it all out, putting it all in – a good two or three days." "Yeah," says Jon, "when you've made an album and four or five videos, and you've sold quite a lot of records, and you realise you're still massively unrecovered with your record company, you start to be a bit more careful with your spending. And Helena's really good at that – when she saw how much things were costing..." "Unreal..." she confirms. Jon continues: "To have somebody come in who's not been involved before, and just look at the figures and say 'this is absurd, you're wasting so much money', it's very revealing. You're not trying to run everything on a purely business level, but there has to be some control, because it's a scandalous waste of money. Studio time used well is justifiable, but just to sit around and do half ideas is a waste."

Helena's perception of her recently acquired music biz 'in-laws' puts you in mind of that episode with the Emperor and his new clothes. "Jon just trotted the figures out like it was a few pence, because he was so used to it," she says. "But the fact is, "Jon points out, "that you're paying back all your recording costs out of a fairly small percentage, and you have to sell an awful lot of records to do that. We sold a quarter of a million copies of *Happiness* and nowhere near recouped." So the record company must be happy with the home studio arrangement, too? "It's in their interests, really. You could take the extreme attitude that all record companies are scum, and they just want you in the stocks, massively in debt, so you'll do exactly what they want – but realistically they're not just going to throw money at you forever. Making records is a very costly exercise, and you have to account for what you're spending. Having produced the new album ourselves, we were entirely responsible for our own budget. The amazing thing was that we brought it in £2,000 under! I don't think they knew what was going on, because nobody's ever done that..."

When you consider that the home studio was used for pre-production only, and

that Jon and Helena still did their fair share of studio-hopping and engineer-hiring once it was done, their acumen seems even more impressive. The obvious cost-cutting of working at home was confined to those tentative first stages, as Jon explains. "You have to take it out quite early because of equipment restrictions. Most of our synths are not multitimbral, and we're using a lot of old analogue gear, so you're restricted straight away unless you're going to multitrack. You can only have the Juno playing one sound, or the Moog playing one sound, or whatever. You could sit around sampling the sounds, but it's quicker just to define the basics and carry on. Once you've got the nucleus, it's time to move on. What we did with all the new tracks was start with a very simple idea, coax it along, and take that basic idea from here into the studio, put it on tape and start developing it." "We made huge changes," Helena confirms, "once we were at that stage. It's constantly evolving, and it's so easy to make changes at every stage, this way..."

For 'this way', read 'using digital technology', which, as Jon recognises, can make endless tweaking just too tempting by half: "The thing that ultimately disciplines you, and stops you from doing that until the cows come home, is getting other people in to play. We spent about two months here, writing tracks, plus a week's multitracking just to try them out, and when we went into Sarm West we had 12 songs which we stuck one by one, as they were at that point, onto tape. After a few days trying out some ideas, we started getting in guitarists, other keyboard players, or Paul Waller to do extra drum programming – just to get a bit of input from other people. Although we weren't conscious of it at the time, that stops you from completely rewriting the track beyond recognition. What they put onto it defines the way the track's going to go; it's really good to get strong players in. Our guitarist, Neil Taylor, has worked with Tears For Fears, and we thought he'd need several days to do everything. But he did eight tracks in a day..."

Helena was particularly impressed: "He'd just got back from LA and driven from the airport. He'd been working on the sort of album where you go into the studio for three weeks, and maybe get to play for four hours. So we got him at just the right point, where we'd dragged him out of this and he was raring to go." "Once

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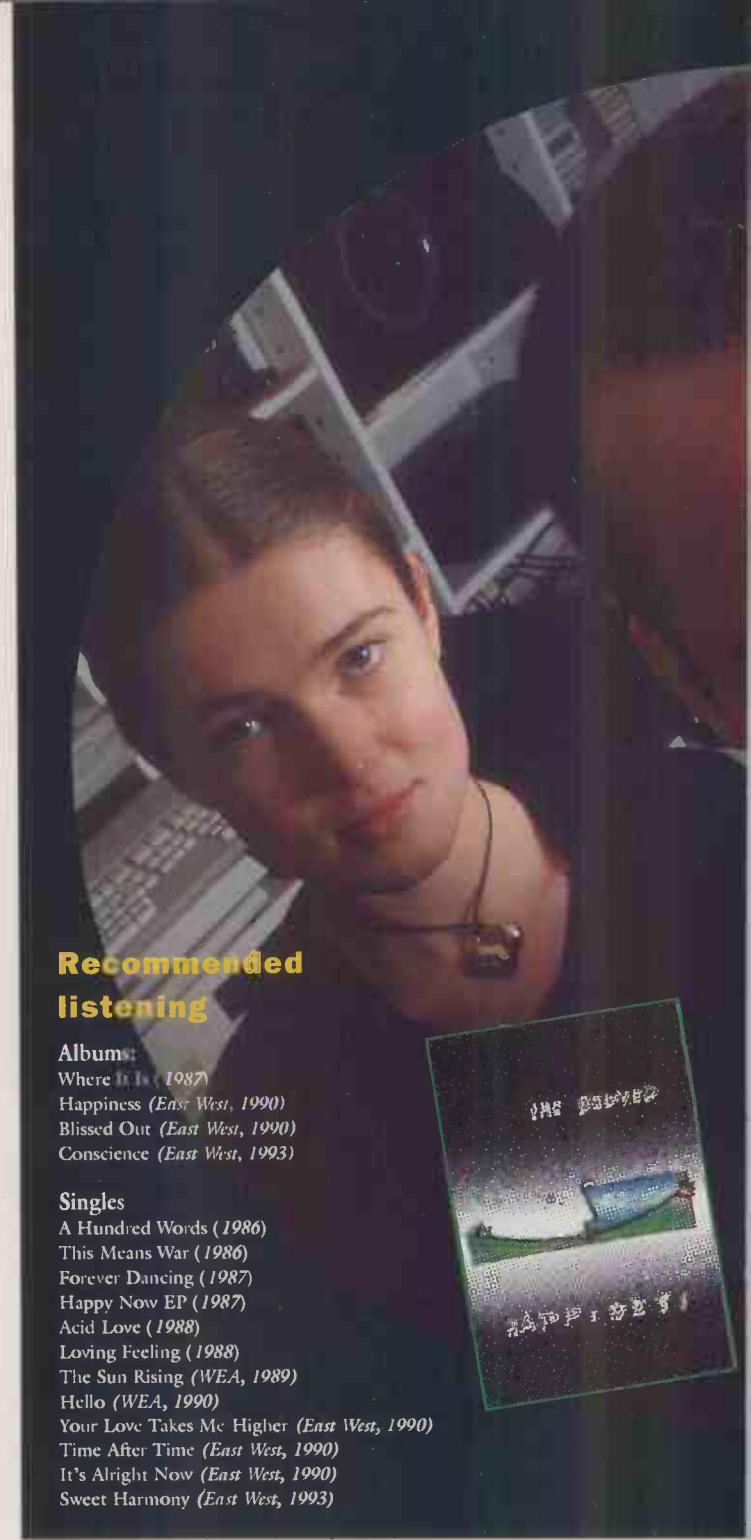
» those things are down,” concludes Jon, “it gives you something that you can’t really alter – you can sample it, and play around with it in that way, but if you start doing that with guitars you really start to lose the feel. The only thing we might do is move a whole section, because it might fit better elsewhere in the track. And we could do that before there were any vocals, especially. Neil would say ‘what’s the chorus?’ and I’d say ‘well, there isn’t one.’ Or he’d ask me to sing it to him, which was probably an awful experience for him and why he got everything done and out of there so quickly! But by and large that interaction really helped to solidify the backing tracks. And it helped us to try and keep a good balance of acoustic and synthetic sounds.”

Striking the right balance between human and machine is the critical mass in Jon’s fissile imagination, and quantising is right at the core... “What’s good about quantising is that if you play something and you know it’s a bit all over the place, to put it back you quantise it, and when you go into ‘edit’ you can drag notes or parts, almost at random, and just put them slightly out. If you look at it before you quantise, you can see the parameters where you’ve gone out with your playing, then quantise, and maybe go back to the same areas and pull a few out again. It’s a sort of de-quantising, along the lines of mistakes you’d make naturally, so that it isn’t too clinical. But it’s still better than your playing. Unless you’re a brilliant keyboard player – and I’m definitely not – you’re always going to be reliant on something like quantising. And if you like sequencing in itself, it’s even better. I mean, one of the joys of electronic music has always been that totally mesmerising, sequential feel, whether it’s Tangerine Dream or The Who – like ‘Baba O’Riley’ or the intro to ‘Won’t Get Fooled Again’. So sequencing and synthesis have really important uses, but again it’s about knowing the ratio of real time to quantised time.”

Jon’s feel for electronic music goes back to the days when he had just one monosynth and used to make up endless basslines with the arpeggiator, a process which he still loves, and gives high priority. “I think that’s what distinguishes good club music from the rest – it’s not the drums, it’s the bass. The bassline and sound really make or break it, because it shows a little more insight into the minds of the people who are making the record. It’s certainly one thing I would always undo the quantising on, unless it’s a very straight arpeggiated line. Play it in for a few bars, quantise it, but then loosen it back up. There’s not a bass player out there who could play it that tight. It must be fluid, and slightly uneven in terms of bar counts. Those are the touches that I get excited about, anyway, and it’s probably a good thing that nobody notices. Maybe every 7th or 13th bar, there’ll be a tiny note moved a little ahead of the beat, just to push it.

“We try and use different drum sounds. Despite the fact that we’re always on the lookout for a 909, we still haven’t got round to buying one, so...” (“...probably a good thing,” comes Helena’s voice) “...so ultimately we use far less than most other house records. There’s no 909 hi-hats, whereas they’re so predominant on so many records it’s just got silly. It’s ceased to be creative. I think the standard of British house is appalling; I can’t understand why it sells so well. But there’s still a lot of really good stuff coming out of New York. I suppose the reason we like it is because you can trace its soulful origins; it grooves, it swings. It’s not just colour-by-numbers records, like most European house.”

So which is best for achieving the mystical state of ‘groove’ – looping or programming? “It’s an either/or situation. One of the things that might be responsible for the way that house music has gone a bit lame and repetitious is that everyone did start using loops all of a sudden. The better house records had this incredibly creative programming, using just drum machines. There’s a tendency to simply take a loop, and because it’s got a whole dynamic range within it, people think ‘right, that’s fine, that’s the drum track’. It’s got a kick and a snare, a lot of ambience, and that’s good enough. And sometimes they sound really good. But they work best, I think, on slow tracks, because there’s a bit of space, you can hear what’s going on. Once you take a loop from an old funk record that was originally 80bpm,



Recommended listening

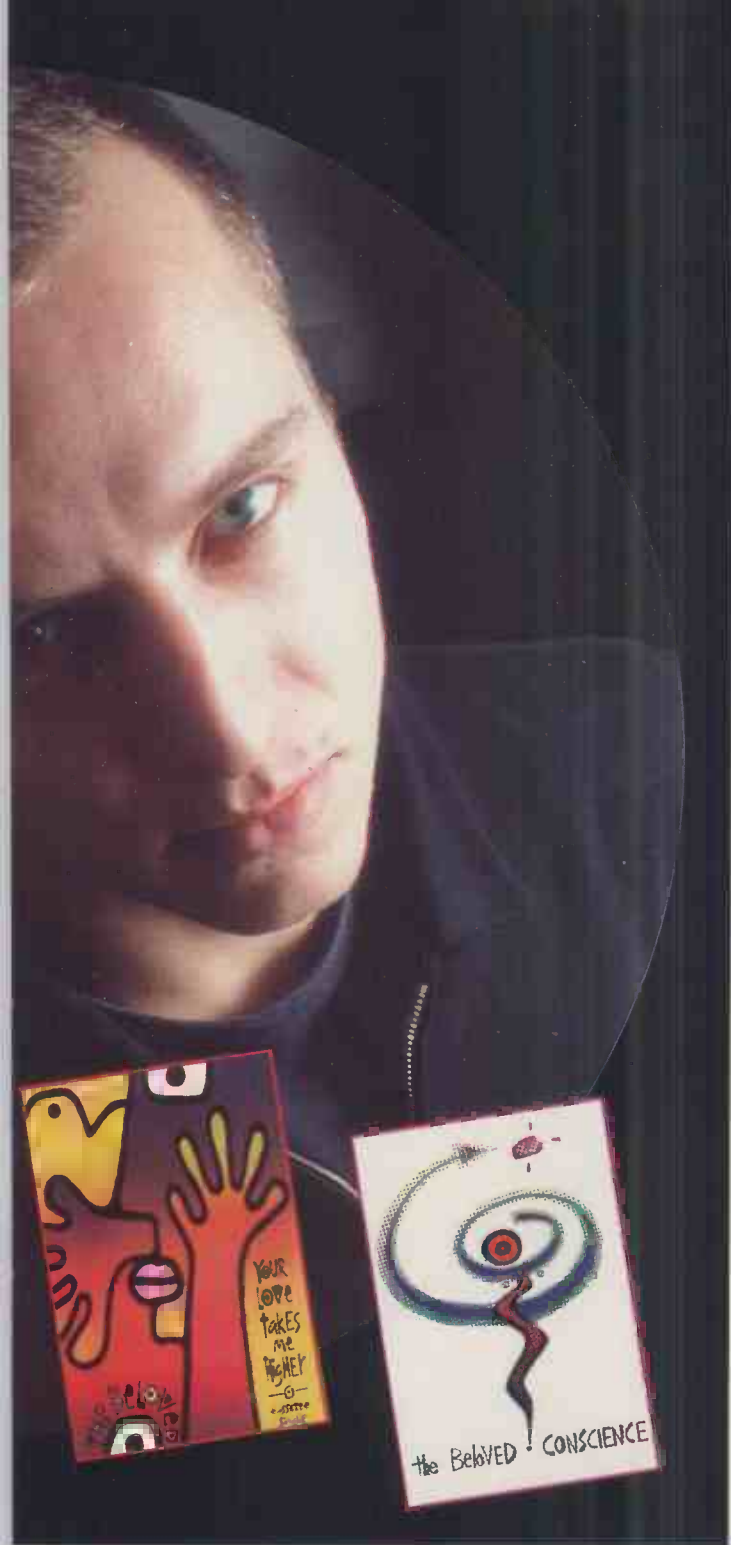
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 Happy Now EP (1987)
 Acid Love (1988)
 Loving Feeling (1988)
 The Sun Rising (WEA, 1989)
 Hello (WEA, 1990)
 Your Love Takes Me Higher (East West, 1990)
 Time After Time (East West, 1990)
 It’s Alright Now (East West, 1990)
 Sweet Harmony (East West, 1993)

and you timestretch it up to 125 or something, it’s all a bit manic. You could quite easily just program it. When you’re doing club mixes, looping things does tend to make it more authentic-sounding, and, again, it works best on slow stuff, like a lot of rap records which consist of that one loop going round and round, with that hypnotic effect which is so good. But apart from anything else, the more loops you have the greater the chances of somebody coming after you with their solicitor. We’ve been a victim of that before.”

It wasn’t a drum track – which tend to be harder to spot in the general mêlée – but the very distinctive soprano loop in ‘The Sun Rising’, which landed The Beloved some way up sampler’s creek without a paddle. Jon shrugs. “We had to credit it on the album sleeve, after the first batches had been released. If you buy it now, it says ‘Samples taken from the Hyperion Records Recording of “O Euchari” by Emily Van Evera’. I mean, it’s a 13th Century piece of music, but it was the singer... we got stung for the copyright in the performance, not the music.

“There’s a couple of samples on the new stuff from very old Beloved albums – not me playing, I’d stopped drumming by that point – just for the ambience. We’d take the loop, split it into beats, and take the ambience from a sound. A half-beat



might be just the ambience from a kick and a snare, which quite often is the best thing about a loop – that dreadful hiss and scratchy top-end, which isn't anything at all other than years and years of copying. Sometimes you decide to get the CD with a favourite loop on it, and it doesn't sound nearly as good as the ropey old cassette that you took it from in the first place, with that appalling noise on it. It is very important to dirty up the clinical side of technology. The only people who have ever made pristine records which sounded absolutely brilliant were Kraftwerk. Everybody else has always tended to sound like, well, just a load of machines."

If ideas are worked out using a sequencer, when, in the Beloved scheme of things, does a backing track become a song? "In the car," Helena answers cryptically. "Jon sings to the backing tracks on the way to the studio. There's a structure by that stage, so there may be an idea of a melodic part or first line, or sometimes a title." "Actually," Jon expands, "I'll just go off in the car anywhere, and try things out, and I'll come back and say to Helena 'right, it goes like this', and she'll say this bit's good, or that bit's good, but change that... so I have to go

off in the car again! It works really well because you can just churn out ideas for the vocals, and then go on and severely produce it. I've really enjoyed being able to concentrate just on ideas, and let someone else take the decisions about what works. You've really got to trust somebody to do that. Sometimes it's just a word that needs changing. I suppose that makes it sound a bit calculated, but there are times when you feel there's something wrong with an idea or a performance, and you don't know why."

Another good reason for singing in the car is the neighbours. Jon and Helena are decent, law-abiding folk who are far too responsible to go sticking Neumanns in the bathroom. Besides which, that would introduce an unsavoury multitracking element into the neighbourhood, and Jon has other ideas. "Really, the next step is to get premises to put it all in, and have it comfortably set up for multitracking and vocals. Having met other bands who do a lot of stuff on 16-track at home, I know that quite often they end up re-doing the whole backing track in the studio but keeping the original vocal take. We just don't have the soundproofing to even consider that option here; we'd get the cars going past the window – which you could say is authentic, but I'm not so sure."

I begin to describe Jon as a songwriter, whose love of dance music has inspired him to forge solid pop songs out of the electronic styles of house, but I'm quickly aware that it may not be a description he recognises all too clearly. "Are you talking to me?" is, in fact, his exact response. Even Helena's intervention fails to elicit any further self-examination. "What does it say on your passport?" she asks. "You don't have to say any more," comes the evasive reply. But it's part of wider misgivings about labelling, as Jon eventually reveals. "Classifications are really risky. Not because I'm afraid to say what it is that we're trying to do, but it's all got to a stage now where music is subdividing into categories like it has in America. If you're perceived of as doing dancefloor music, you're quite often going to be treated with derision by a large section of people. Yet when we make club records, the one thing that people nearly always say is that they like them because they're songs. A track like 'A Thousand Years From Today', which is probably our favourite, is a house track, rhythmically, but as a song it's a real 'natural'. That track was put together so easily, proving that things that come most easily are the best, and if you have to keep working and working at something then there's something missing.

"On the other hand, 'Sweet Harmony' came out of a different song altogether, called 'All Of My Life', which was the same tempo. I began changing the bassline completely – which is something I drive people mad doing, by the way, even at the point of mix – but the funniest thing was that we had a complete backing track, and I'd done a guide vocal and there were two other keyboard players who'd done a lot to it. And a tiny, tiny part of what they did is now on 'Sweet Harmony', but they didn't recognise it at all. There's just this swirly sound from the JD800; everything else changed, including the key. They're there, in spirit, but they wouldn't know. So, really, songwriting has to be the most important thing, with production. And it's something Helena and I can do together. Without wishing to exclude the rest of the universe, it's a very satisfying way of working. Being self-sufficient is everything, even though some of the best parts of the album are due to the input from other people."

Which brings us back to control. Which, in the end, somebody has to wrest in this messy business called music. And it really should be people like The Beloved, because although 'Sweet Harmony' was, by Jon's own admission, somewhat cobbled together – in contrast to the 'natural' songs that come easy – the damn thing did climb to Number 8 in the charts. Their instincts were right. Maybe it's the bunk bed. "There was just something a bit naff about the original," says Helena, "but Jon wouldn't let go of it because so much work had been done on it, and he couldn't just throw it away. It got to the stage where it was actually irritating. But the drum track was really strong. So I gave him half an hour to come up with something better, or the song was gone forever. And he did. And the record company immediately wanted it as the first single!" ■

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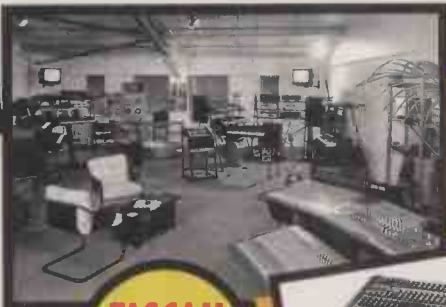
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Text by
Vic Lennard

Despite their enormous popularity, a question mark still hangs over the use of CDs for sample collections. Think about it. You have to connect a CD player to your sampler (making provision for monitoring of the audio signal), cue up the sound you require, sample it, and then set about editing the start, end and loop points. The process is tedious and, when a sample is merely being 'auditioned' to see if it works within the context of a track, very time consuming. It is also dependent on the setting of optimum signal levels to prevent distortion whilst maintaining the highest possible signal-to-noise ratio.

A much better alternative is the CD-ROM - a large capacity computer disk which can be read from, but not written to. Reading such a disk requires a CD-ROM player, but once in place, samples can be transferred digitally in their true glory, replete with programming data for your sampler (if this is included).

Realising the potential of this system, the Real Drum Company have just released the Masterkit CD-ROM containing over 300Mb of real drum samples, sub-divided into three areas; Power Kit, Studio Kit and Funk Kit. Now, you may ask how you can utilise that kind of capacity with just drum samples. The answer lies in the no-compromise approach adopted by programmers Paul Brook and David Skipper. Recorded and produced at Wytherston Studio, only the highest quality drums were used, and all recordings were expertly mic'd up by Mike Trim, an engineer of some renown.

Reflecting the importance of the snare, for example, such classic drums as the Sonor Signature, the Ludwig Black Beauty (in three sizes), the Remo Piccolo, etc., are included - and the result is the percussive equivalent of heaven.

Particular attention has been paid to the slight tonal changes that occur between successive hits with either hand.

All snares and hi-hats have right and left-hand samples to increase realism and prevent the likelihood of machine-gun effects during multiple triggering. Interestingly, during development, a similar approach was adopted for the toms but the audible improvement was found to be marginal.

And speaking of variations of each sample, how many level variations would you imagine are required to achieve a convincing effect? More to the point, how do you go about deciding? Well, RDC did it by building a dummy robot arm, setting it to fall from different heights and measuring the mic level according to the height. From this, the programmers concluded that about four or five velocity levels would suffice for a snare drum or hi-hat and rather fewer for a tom.

All recordings were initially made to DAT at 44.1kHz and transferred for editing to a Macintosh running SoundTools. From there, the samples were piped into an Akai S1000 where the keyboard mapping and other programming was carried out. Thus, the final results on CD-ROM have remained in the digital domain since the original microphone recordings.

Considerable thought has gone into the mapping of the drums across a MIDI keyboard. The end result is the 'RDC System' in which all drums are accessible over a standard five-octave range; the mapping will be supported by future RDC releases. For those with more everyday requirements, General MIDI mapping has also been included so that you can program your drums using, say, a Roland Sound Canvas and then substitute the Masterkit sounds later. Such mappings will easily fit into an S1000 with only 8Mb of memory.

How good are the results? In a word, superb. At a demonstration at Zildjian it was virtually impossible to tell these kits - being triggered from a KAT MIDI Controller - from the original drums. Notwithstanding the sheer quality of the actual recordings, the nuances introduced by the two-hand samples were highly realistic.

Who is this system intended for? Certainly not those of you happy using a £200 drum machine. A CD-ROM player and S1000-compatible sampler with 16Mb of RAM is likely to set you back the best part of £3500; add a KAT controller with the necessary expansion pads and pedals and the figure increases by another £1500. Clearly, this is a product aimed at studios and professionals who are committed to having and using the best percussion samples around.

But you don't need me to tell you about the speed at which high-end technology drops in price, and when that happens I'm sure many more of us will turn to CD-ROMs as a sampling source. The benefits are just too great to ignore. Certainly, the launch of the Akai CD3000 with an in-built CD-ROM drive is likely to create a new market for products such as this. But the RDC Masterdisk is going to be a tough act to follow. ■

Instruments and performers

Apart from the obvious bass drum, snare, tom and hi-hat samples, you'll also find various crashes, splashes and gongs, along with an excellent tambourine, cowbell and other effects. For non-drummers and percussionists, RDC has also included a variety of 'performances' (largely on the snare drums and hi-hats), comprising rolls, flams, riffs etc. A tasty collection, it makes life much easier for those lacking a player's feel for these things.

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Akai

S2800 & S3000

Samplers



Photography: James Cumpsty

**Text by
Ian
Masterson**

It's tough at the top, but in the sampling stakes, Akai have every intention of staying ahead of the pack...

Loyalty is the most elusive of human emotions – and certainly one of the most difficult to instill in people. Down the ages, power-crazed despots have lopped off prominent parts of people's bodies in their efforts to encourage loyalty amongst their subjects. Politicians will happily sell their souls to the Devil to win the loyalty of the voting population, while cat owners, anxious to maintain the affection of their brooding pets, must bear the cost of a lifetime's Whiskers and milk.

For Akai it has taken the production of a series of 3U rack-mounting samplers and a commitment to continued R&D to win the loyalty of their customers. But win it they have – and now most wouldn't contemplate buying a sampler from any other manufacturer. Of course, when you already produce machines of the calibre of the S950, the S1000 and the S1100, you have something of a problem when it comes to designing new machines which will maintain the loyal customer base you've built up. Things aren't helped either, when you gain a reputation for reliability; what is the incentive for owners of fully functioning S1000s and S1100s to part-ex their machines for a new model? The words 'rod' and 'back' spring to mind here.

But as anyone who read last month's preview will probably know, the incentives most definitely are there and with the release of their two new machines, the S2800 and the S3000, Akai appear poised ready to net a whole new generation of devoted users. In fact, the two machines currently nestling in my rack blow Akai's previous flagship models out of the water. And most of the competition with them...

There are strong family resemblances between the S1000/S1100 and the new units, although the S2800, being physically 'challenged', lacks the pert, angled front panel to hold the buttons and opts instead for a flush S950-type look. The buttons themselves have been radically altered; gone is the familiar sea of white rectangles; in its place a variety of new designs. For example, the major function buttons (Select Prog, Edit Sample, Edit Prog and so on) actually now light up when pressed, rather than relying on an associated LED.

I'm not too sure about the re-designed numeric keypad; I like something substantial in this department to withstand my jabbing fingers, and the new, thinner buttons are perhaps a little too small. But at least they don't rattle. The Cursor Knob from the old-style panels has disappeared too, to be replaced by a 'diamond' of four direction buttons – à la DD1000. They take some getting used to, but overall they represent a significant improvement.

In general terms, it appears that Akai have been paying a great deal of attention to sorting out all the little niggles that

came to light on the last generation of machines and have made the S2800/S3000 ergonomically and aesthetically even more appealing. Until you discover their first glaring (and unforgivable) error, that is.

Question: where should the sample input jacks be on a rack-mounting sampler? Answer: on the front panel, where they are easily accessible for the wide variety of input sources from which samples may be drawn. I wouldn't mind but this was obviously realised on the S1000 and S1100; why on earth take such a retrogressive step on two new machines? Very puzzling.

One other area of concern (though I'll admit this is a personal grievance of mine) is the fitting of SCSI ports only as optional extras. On samplers with the potential of the 2800 and 3000, the demand for floppy disks for day to day use becomes unrealistically high. In these circumstances, the provision for a hard disk is virtually essential and should, in my opinion, be included as standard. OK, it would put up the overall price of machines, but the volume costs would surely be lower. You'll almost certainly have to buy a hard disk at some stage and to have your machine adapted to make this possible seems crazy to me.

A range of other, minor features have been added to the exterior of the unit which undeniably make it more user friendly. For example, the headphone output is now on the front panel – thank god! – and an on/off switch for the LCD has been built into the contrast knob, helping to save the little blue lives of displays everywhere. But enough of these trivialities – let's get some noise going...

For the uninitiated, creating a new sample involves the selecting of an existing sample, renaming it and copying it – so that you can then record over the renamed sample to create a new one, leaving the original intact. Having told the unit how long you want to record for and at what bandwidth (20 or 10kHz), it's simply a matter of setting a suitable recording level using the appropriate front panel knob and pressing 'Arm'. When the unit hears the start of the sound, it begins recording, and stops when the allotted time elapses (that's the most common method anyway).

Having obtained your initial sample, you can then go on to edit it – and it's at this stage the new units start revealing some of the tricks Akai have installed up their sleeves. Samples are displayed as waveforms on screen – which may seem a little disconcerting for the unfamiliar, but is actually a deceptively clever way of working. On the S2800/S3000, these waveforms are now plotted as complete bargraphs; the S1000's miserable scribble of a line marking just the top of the plotted points is now a thing of the past.

Naturally, you can vary the Start and End points of samples, truncate them, loop them, crossfade sections, join samples together, timestretch them and resample them at a different bandwidth – all things S1000 users are pretty well accustomed to. These functions are performed through the 'Edit 1' and 'Edit 2' pages – it's 'Edit 3' that holds the real innovations. In this mode various functions have been added

which are reminiscent of Akai's DD1000 direct-to-disk recorder/editing system. Indeed, the new S-Series samplers offer you features previously only associated with ludicrously expensive digital editing systems.

The first batch of functions let you edit individual sections of a sample; for example, you could remove a cough from the middle of a vocal sample. The screen presents you with three options for doing this: Chop, which removes the area of sample you highlight between the 'start' and 'end' markers and closes the gap this creates; Cut, which removes the selected area but retains the resultant gap; and Extract, which lets you 'lift' the highlighted area out of the sample altogether and remove the remainder of the waveform. One obvious application lies in the editing of drum loops; now you can isolate a single snare sound from a sample, or remove the kick drum to create a second version of the loop. Think how easy that makes customising, and *individualising* loops taken from sample CDs.

Another new feature is a facility which makes it possible to normalise or rescale the gain of a sample. This is something many S1000 users would have killed for. Basically, if you have under-recorded the original signal, pressing 'normalise' expands the entire waveform to fill the available headroom, bringing the volume of the sample up to the optimum operating level.

As you might imagine, this can make a world of difference to flaccid bass and drum sounds, and is particularly useful when it comes to multisampling an instrument across a whole keyboard, serving to keep the volume of the sound uniform. Rescale is a more drastic affair, in which the user chooses a level in dB for the entire sample to be cut or boosted by. Executing this causes the loudest point in the waveform to increase/decrease by the set amount, with the rest of the sample increasing/decreasing proportionately. It's a rough way of tweaking the volume of the sample, but again, very effective – providing you don't drive the signal into clipping, which it's all too easy to do.

Finally, Akai have added a 'fade' facility by which you can set up a digital fade-in or fade-out on a sample. Again, blindingly simple, this function will see a great deal of use when it comes to smoothing off the sharp start and end points of a string or pad sound.

Background

The S2800 and S3000 are the first members of the new generation of Akai samplers (the CD3000 and S3200 will follow later this year) – the 3000 being the direct replacement for the S1000. So popular has been the S1000, that much of the operating structure is retained on the 2800 and 3000; most of the business of getting samples into the machine, editing them via waveform displays and sorting them into programs for playback will be instantly recognisable to S1000 users.



Vive le difference

In terms of basic system architecture, the S2800 and S3000 are virtually identical, offering much the same in the way of sample editing and controlling – their differences lie more in the physical domain. Obviously, the 2800 only occupies a 2U rack space where the 3000 occupies the more traditional 3U.

But there are greater variants; the 2800 only has two individually assignable outputs compared to the 3000's three; it offers less in the way of memory expansion potential (a maximum 16Mb compared to the 3000's 32Mb) and no SMPTE interface option. Although this might not seem like much, it cuts heavily into the cost of manufacturing, making the 2800 a not insignificant £800 cheaper than its big brother, and thus within easier reach of the amateur/semi-pro.

Other than that, you get the same 16-bit quality with 20-bit internal processing, the same 64x oversampling, the same advanced editing, the same 32-voice polyphony (pew!) and the same real pleasure using both units.

► Admittedly, these inclusions might not seem particularly earth-shattering to the casual passer-by, but for those who spend many hours of their lives gazing into electric-blue LCD screens trying to manipulate samples in ways their machines will not allow, Akai have suddenly become A Very Special Company once more.

But the carnival doesn't stop there, as the Edit Program mode goes on to reveal. It's on these pages that you take your samples, assign them to areas of the keyboard, set up MIDI and performance data and basically turn the unit into a multitimbral sound module. As you might imagine, you are presented with all the data necessary to do this – again, the system is S1000-derived – but rather than simply restricting these to key ranges, MIDI channel numbers, pan settings and so on, Akai play their trump card with the addition of a new filter section. Not only this, but filters which can be controlled in real time. Hold me back...

A major new element in the design of the S2800 and S3000 takes the form of Assignable Program Modulation (APM), a feature which lets you route virtually any MIDI controller to almost any 'module' in the sampler – a module being the filter section, amp section, pitch, LFOs, envelope generators and so on. Those of you familiar with old synths will instantly realise what this means: you could, for example, route the modwheel of your keyboard to open a filter while you're playing a sound (to recreate the character of a bubbling analogue synth). You could use the second envelope to control the pitch, for more off-the-wall, effects and you could try controlling the LFO from your keyboard to add

vibrato or 'rotary speaker' effects to organ sounds. You could also... no, sorry, I'm getting carried away...

I've already mentioned the basics of program construction and getting your samples into 'performance' mode is extremely simple – so I'll not detail every single parameter which can be controlled using APM. Naturally, the filters are the feature most people will get worked up about, so let's go straight to these.

The S2800 and S3000 are equipped with 12dB/octave low-pass resonant filters which make it possible to alter the

tonal character of your sample (using variable cutoff, velocity and resonance) from within the machines themselves. Other options allow you to use the modwheel, pitchbend, LFO1, Envelope1 or an external controller to open or close the filter.

Bearing in mind that you can shape the waveform of your sample using the twin envelope generators (the second of which is a multistage envelope), and then use LFO at various stages, what we're really talking about here is the 'front panel' of an analogue synth included within each of the new machines. And lo! – Akai have actually included a diagram of this 'panel' in the manual.

To sum up, the new S-series samplers actually redefine the concept of getting creative with samples in a way not previously imagined on machines of this kind. I found I was able to bring incredible life to string parts (in real time), add an extra rasp to brass instruments, and much greater depth to bass.

Which brings me to another area of improvement – dynamic range. It's generally recognised that, good as it was, the S1000 lacked something in terms of bottom-end, particularly when it came to dance or pop music sounds. This, to make a massive understatement, is no longer a problem. I don't know what Akai have done to extend the range of the S2800 and S3000, but both units are capable of producing unbelievable bass and clear, sparkling highs. The problem is, trying to describe how this (and the filters) have transformed the sound is all but impossible on the page – you just have to hear it. Once you do, it's going to tear apart your ideas of how any piece of digital sound generation equipment should perform. Add to that 32 voice polyphony, APM and the countless improvements that have been made to the operating system and editing facilities, and you have machines that will once again set the standard all over the world.

It's hard not to admire Akai; the enormity of the task of improving machines like the S1000 and S1100 could well have been their undoing. That they have succeeded can only be due to the fact that they have been prepared to listen to what musicians had to say about samplers and what they would like to see included on the new machines. Myself, I'm preparing for severe withdrawal symptoms when the S2800 and S3000 leave my studio. My loyalty to Akai has started to take root and I'm not even an owner. ■

The Spec

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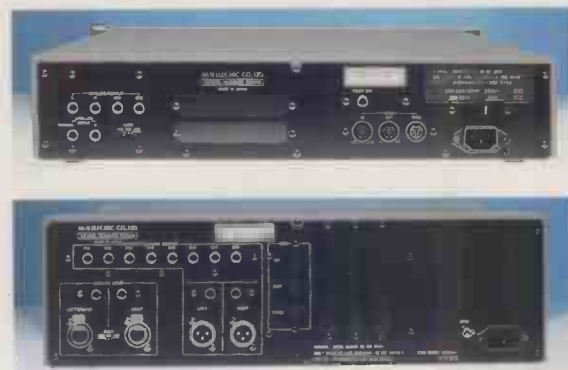
Sampling resolution: stereo 16-bit linear with 64x oversampling
Sampling rates: 44.1kHz, 22.05kHz
Internal processing: 28-bit
D/A conversion: 20-bit with 8x oversampling (L/R); 18-bit with 8x oversampling (individual outs; each one has its own DAC)
Polyphony: 32 voice
Default sample RAM: 2Mb
Maximum number of samples: 255
Maximum number of programs: 254
Filtering: Low-pass, -12db/oct with resonance
Envelope generators: 2
LFOs: 2
Effects: echo, chorus, pitchshift and delay
Assignable independent audio outputs: 1/4" phono jack (unbalanced) x 2
Connections: stereo headphones jack, footswitch jack, MIDI In, Out & Thru.
Display: 40 characters x 8 lines (text), 240 x 640 dots (graphics); backlit

S2800

Maximum sample RAM: 16Mb
Standard audio inputs: 1/4" phono (balanced) x 2
Standard audio outputs: 1/4" phono (unbalanced) x 2
Interface boards: SCSI and AES/EBU digital I/O, both optional
Onboard storage: 3.5" DSHD/DSDD floppy drive
Casing: 2U 19"
Weight: 7.7kg

S3000

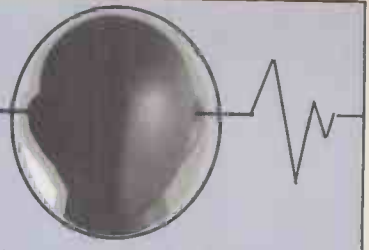
Sampling resolution: stereo 16-bit linear (internal digital signal path from CD-ROM unit)
Maximum sample RAM: 32Mb
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Standard audio outputs: XLR (balanced) x 2, 1/4" phono (unbalanced) x 2
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MIDI by example

Part 7

If you've just discovered the limitations of FSK as a means of syncing tape to sequencer, it could be time to seek a little professional help...

Text by Vic Lennard

In Part 6, last month, we looked at ways of using an FSK-to-MIDI converter to get a drum machine or sequencer to play in time with a multitrack tape recorder. There were, we discovered, two main problems with using such a system. Firstly, the song sequence has to be completed before recording the sync tone to tape - you cannot change the structure of the song afterwards. This is because the transmission of MIDI Clocks from the sequencer is translated into a sync tone and any tempo or time signature alterations made after the recording of that tone will alter the playback timing of the sequence. The second problem, though not perhaps so difficult to live with, is the fact that the sync tone for each song has to be recorded to tape individually - you can't record tape sync to the entire reel in one go. This is again tied in with the nature of FSK.

The solution to both problems lies in the use of SMPTE code rather than FSK. Widely regarded as an all-round professional synchronisation system, SMPTE is an acronym for the *Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers* - the organisation responsible for its development. It differs from FSK primarily because it is a measure of absolute time; when using a SMPTE-to-MIDI converter, the SMPTE clock commences at a Start time determined by you - the actual time

then being recorded to tape using a tone similar to that of FSK. This comprises two frequencies an octave apart, one denoting a '0' and the other a '1'. On playback, the SMPTE-to-MIDI converter recreates the timing information and passes it onto the sequencer. As the translation is a one-way process, the sequencer doesn't have to be in playback mode when the code is recorded (or 'written') to tape and this means that you can subsequently alter your song as much as you wish - as long as the Start time is kept the same, the multitrack recorder and sequencer will stay in sync.

There are two different types of SMPTE-to-MIDI converter (see **Figure 1**). The first is very similar to the Smart FSK type in that it creates MIDI Start, Clock and Song Position Pointer messages when the time code is played back from tape. As the sequencer is not playing back at the time when the code is recorded to tape, it is invariably necessary to enter any tempo or time signature changes via the buttons of the SMPTE-to-MIDI unit itself - a rather awkward and time-consuming process. The second type of converter generates a different kind of MIDI message called MIDI Time Code - or MTC for short - which is effectively a translation of time into a series of MIDI events. This allows us to use the tempo

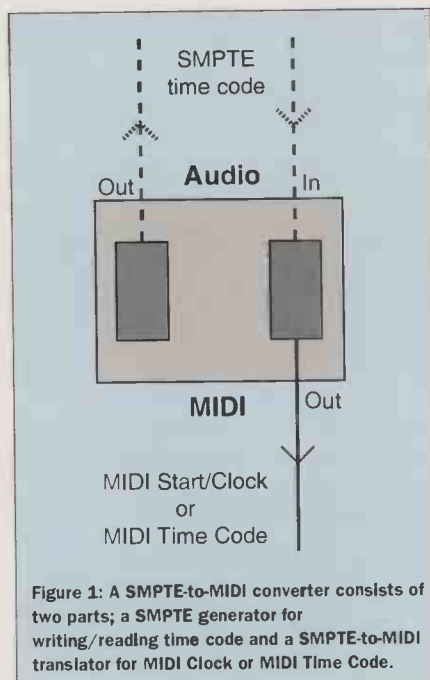


Figure 1: A SMPTE-to-MIDI converter consists of two parts; a SMPTE generator for writing/reading time code and a SMPTE-to-MIDI translator for MIDI Clock or MIDI Time Code.

'map' of the song sequence as a means of control and so alleviates the need to enter tempo and time signature changes as additional data. If your sequencer gives you the option, always use MTC.

In operation, the SMPTE-to-MIDI converter is fairly straightforward; **Figure 2** shows the basic connections.

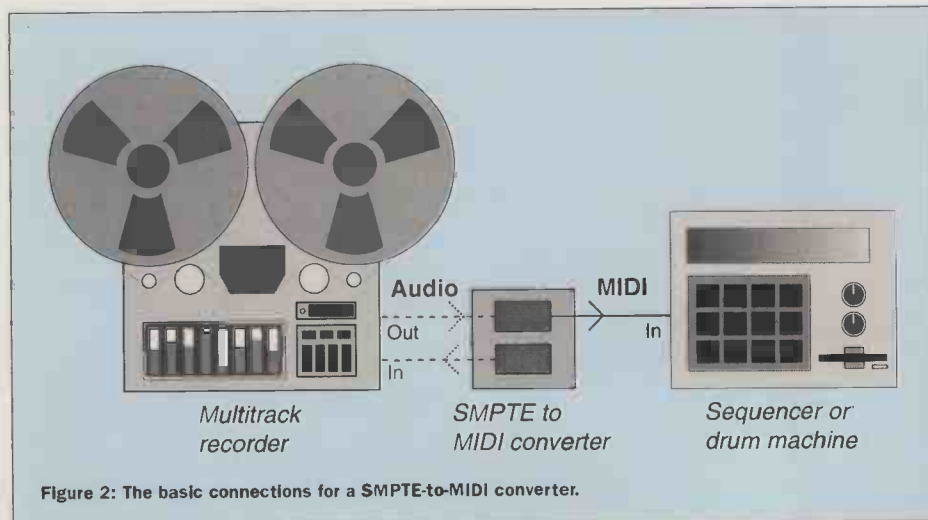


Figure 2: The basic connections for a SMPTE-to-MIDI converter.

When using SMPTE, it is often more convenient to set a Start time of 59 minutes 45 seconds and to record time code on the entire length of the tape, using an outer track to reduce the possibility of signal bleedthrough from adjacent tracks. The Start time for the first song is then set to one hour, allowing 15 seconds from the commencement of the time code. Subsequent songs then have their Start times set according to where the previous song ended. When adopting this method, it's a good idea to leave about thirty seconds between songs so that any change of mind about the length of fade outs (for example) can be accommodated after the

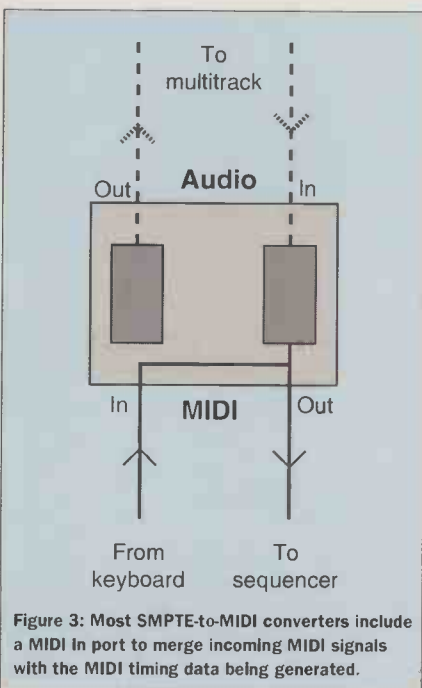


Figure 3: Most SMPTE-to-MIDI converters include a MIDI In port to merge incoming MIDI signals with the MIDI timing data being generated.

event. The level of tone on the tape should still be around -3dB.

One of the problems of using a SMPTE-to-MIDI converter (...there's always a problem) arises if you want to continue recording to the sequencer while running in sync with the multitrack. The MIDI In of the sequencer has to accommodate both the MIDI Out from the SMPTE-to-MIDI converter and the MIDI Out from your synth or whatever instrument you're playing. Fortunately, most converters of this type have a built-in merge facility whereby the MIDI data arriving at the MIDI In is combined with the MIDI sync information being created internally (Figure 3).

A typical set-up is shown in Figure 4. The SMPTE-to-MIDI converter is connected to the multitrack as before; when the time code is being played back, the MIDI information from the keyboard (notes, pitch bend, aftertouch

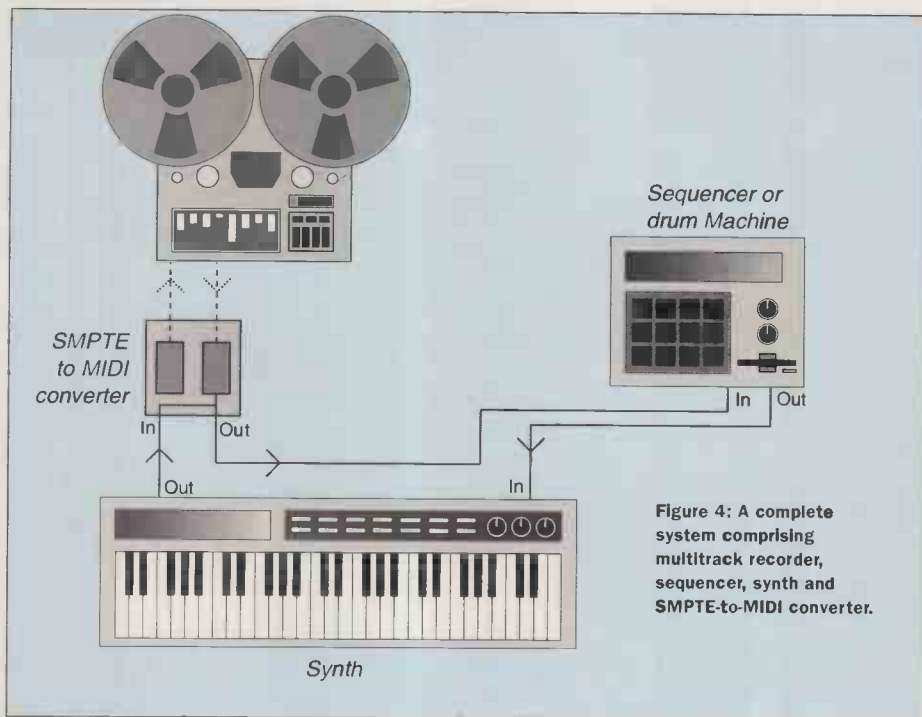


Figure 4: A complete system comprising multitrack recorder, sequencer, synth and SMPTE-to-MIDI converter.

and so on) is merged with either MTC or MIDI Clock data and transmitted from the converter's MIDI Out. Care has to be taken to ensure that not too much keyboard infor-

mation is generated, otherwise the accuracy of sync-to-tape will be compromised through the late arrival of MIDI sync data at the MIDI In port of the sequencer. ■

MIDI GLOSSARY

This month, a look at the nuts 'n' bolts of MIDI...

Status byte

Every MIDI message starts with a piece of information indicating what kind of message it is: this is referred to as the Status byte. There are eight types: Note Off, Note On, Polyphonic Aftertouch, Control Changes, Program Changes, Channel Aftertouch, Pitch Bend and System. In the case of the first seven types, the MIDI channel number is also incorporated into the Status byte.

Data byte

Following the Status byte come a number of Data bytes, each of which has a value of less than 128 - hence the upper limit of 128 for MIDI Program Changes, Control Changes and Velocity Values. With the exception of a System message, either one or two Data bytes are used. These are as follows:

| MIDI Event transferred | No. of Data bytes | Informations |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Note Off | 2 | note number, velocity |
| Note On | 2 | note number, velocity |
| Polyphonic Aftertouch | 2 | note number, amount of pressure |
| Control Changes | 1 | program number |
| Channel Aftertouch | 1 | amount of pressure |
| Pitch Bend | 2 | amount of pitch bend (both bytes) |

As regards System messages, many have no Data bytes (as in the case of Tune Request, MIDI Clock, Start, Continue, Stop, Active Sensing and System Reset).

MIDI Time Code and Song Select use one Data byte while Song Position Pointer uses two. As for a System Exclusive message, the sky's the limit! The Start and End of SysEx Status bytes and the manufacturer's personal ID code are mandatory, but any number of Data bytes can go in between.



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set a few new standards. We're sold, we're jazzed, and we're getting one (or two or three) for ourselves." *Keyboard Magazine*

"My review unit has passed every test I could throw at it."

"Tell you what. If you buy one and don't like it, give it to me, and I'll add it to the stack. I'll even give you album credit and pay the freight." *EQ*

"It is usually bad practice to bounce tracks and record the mix to an adjacent track – yet such problems do not concern ADAT at all."

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"In fact ADAT is probably easier to use than the average VCR."

"ADAT is good enough to be used in pro studios whilst being affordable enough to be found in the better-off home studio too."

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"The very success of ADAT as an engineering exercise must sound the death knell for analogue tape machines in this sector of the market."

"It is impressive that a relatively small American company should bring such a project to fruition before any of the Japanese multi-nationals."

"Alesis deserve their success - they've certainly earned it. Finally, do I want one? No way, I want a six pack." *Sound on Sound*

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Future History

FS1 and FST Turbo MIDI switches

Text by
Vic Lennard

Having trouble configuring your MIDI set-up? It could be time you made the switch...

It's amazing how expensive the little bits that run a MIDI studio are. Take the common set-up of sequencer, synth, sound module and drum machine: if the latter is short of a MIDI Thru (Figure 1), any slight change to the set-up – the addition of another sound module, for example – will require you to re-configure the system, placing the new module between your existing module and the drum machine. A more elegant solution would be the use of a MIDI Thru and a

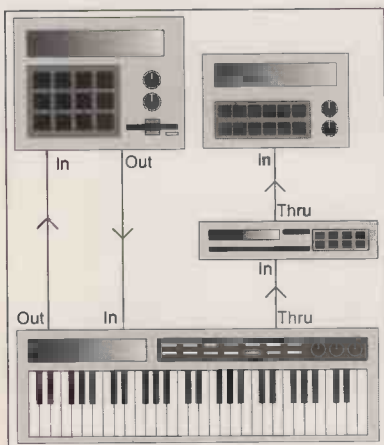


Figure 1. A standard MIDI set-up with a sequencer, synth, sound module and drum machine. How do you add another sound module when the drum machine has no MIDI Thru socket?

MIDI Switch Box which would allow you to configure the system in a variety of ways for long-term flexibility. But of course, this is where cost begins to enter the equation; MIDI utilities are often expensive for what they are, and usually come a long way down most people's 'must have' lists.

Are there cheaper alternatives? Well, a company called Future History seem to think they've come up with a couple – both retailing for less than £20. The idea behind them is rather ingenious: each box has a number of MIDI sockets capable of functioning as MIDI In, Out or Thrus and one or two switches to configure the connections between them. Future-Switch

FS1 has five MIDI sockets and a single rotary switch. The three small diagrams on the top panel show how connections are made according to the switch position; two positions have one of the bottom sockets routed to the opposite side, while the other is connected to the top socket. The third connects together the two bottom sockets and the top one.

As an example of a possible use this can be put to, take the problem of a synth that doesn't support Local Control Off and so has the keys permanently connected to the internal sounds. This causes each note to trigger a sound twice, once via the keys, and the second time via the incoming MIDI data from the sequencer's soft-Thru facility. Using the FS1, in one position you can route the MIDI Out from the sequencer to a second sound module, then, at the flick of a switch, have the MIDI data routed back to the keyboard for playback. Of course, this may not be seen as a major problem, but remember we are dealing with a product whose price tag makes it a justifiable way of overcoming such minor irritations.

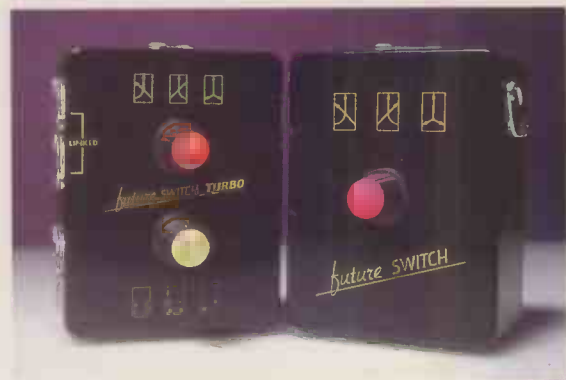
With the third position of the switch connecting three sockets together, it may be imagined that it could be used to merge MIDI data from a couple of keyboards. But in fact, the Future-Switch is a purely passive device and as such cannot

be used for merging. The use of this third position would actually be limited to some kind of part-time MIDI Thru: while you could have a single keyboard connected to two sound modules in this way, the MIDI signal is reduced in strength, and consequently you're more likely to get MIDI data errors such as stuck notes. In practice, short MIDI cables (three feet long) were found to work satisfactorily, and while this is not an arrangement that I would normally be happy to recommend, it could be used to get you out of a 'I need another MIDI Thru' situation.

The Future Switch Turbo FST has a total of eight sockets and a couple of switches and so can be used to configure a rather more complex system. The bottom of the unit has four of the sockets, of which two may be used at any one time, via one of the switches. The other switch operates in the same way as the FS1 except that there are a pair of linked sockets to provide a MIDI Thru, similar to the one detailed above and with the same proviso of the MIDI signal being weakened.

There are a variety of interesting uses to which the FST can be put. For instance, you can use it as a two-way selector for two keyboards and two sound modules. You could even use it to route tape sync to the MIDI In of your sequencer while simultaneously incorporating a synth and sound module, by connecting the MIDI Out from the tape sync box to one of the linked MIDI sockets and the MIDI In of the sequencer to the other. One possible problem is the fact that pin 2 of all of the MIDI sockets is connected to ground which isn't necessary for MIDI In: consequently, there's a chance that ground loops could be created. Should this happen, Future History can provide specially wired cables at a nominal charge.

The preliminary manual included with the FS1 and FST has been revised to include detailed descriptions of the switch positions and a host of connection diagrams, many of which should fit your system. However, accepting that it's rather difficult knowing whether you have a use for a Future Switch until you actually buy one, Future History are offering a 60-day money-back guarantee. They clearly believe the versatility of units will speak for itself once you've had time to get to know them. I have a feeling they're right. ■



Info

Price: FS1- £15; FST – £20. A three foot MIDI cable is included free of charge. Add £1.50 to each for P&P.

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Tascam DA-88

Digital Multitracker



Photography: James Cumpsty

**Text by
Vic Lennard**

Tascam enter the budget digital multitracker market – let battle commence...

Despite securing Fostex's allegiance to their new S-VHS format, it's been known for some time now that Alesis weren't going to have things all their own way in the battle to establish a standard for affordable digital multitracker recording. Tascam, arch-enemies of Fostex, have been waiting in the wings with their own 8-track digital format, and since its debut – in the form of the DA-88 – at last year's AES show, the world has been awaiting a verdict on which system, if any, is superior.

While the S-VHS format has the advantage of greater tape width and, consequently, the ability to place more data onto tape, it has the disadvantage of slow fast forward/rewind times (a maximum of 20 times play speed on ADAT) and relative high cost: forty minutes recording time on a suitable S-VHS tape will cost you about £18.

By contrast, the Tascam DA-88 uses Hi-8 tape – an 8mm format which, by virtue of its restricted width, could theoretically impose restrictions on sound quality. Maximum winding speeds of 100 times standard playback speed are possible, however, and the unit cost – about £10 for a 90-minute tape (which should run to around 113 minutes on

the DA88), makes it significantly cheaper than its ADAT rival. But clearly, the major question is that of sound quality, so let's take a closer look at Tascam's new machine.

As you'll see, the front panel has a number of buttons, but most of these are self-explanatory – especially if you've used a Tascam multitracker before. Functions like Auto Play and Repeat should be familiar, and the transport controls (Rewind, Fast Forward, Stop, Play, Record) are quite standard. The other obvious thing that strikes you about the DA-88 is its exceptional build. From the ruggedness of the casing to the sureness of the transport controls (positive but neither clunky nor spongy), this is one very substantial machine.

Output connections are via unbalanced phono sockets on the rear, though there is also a pair of 25-pin connectors for balanced lines. With inputs and outputs connected to a mixing desk, you need to route the audio for the first track you want to record to, and press the Record Function button at the bottom of the 15-segment vertical level meter. A red LED then tells you that the track is in a 'Record-ready' state and recording is as easy as holding down the Play button and pressing Record at the relevant moment.

As you may be aware, punching-in and punching-out is something which is harder for a digital recorder to achieve than an analogue one. And indeed, this has been a focal point at ADAT demonstrations, where punch-ins have been made at lightning speed to show that the crossfade used is inaudible. During a recording of stereo piano, I tried the same trick on the DA-88. The system Tascam have used to enter and leave Record mode is just about as easy as it can be: hit Play to start up, press Record to punch-in and Play to punch-out. Using this method on the recorded piano piece, the results were exemplary, with not a trace of a glitch.

While on the subject of punch-in recording, the DA-88 has various useful features including an excellent Rehearsal mode which again will be familiar to users of Tascam analogue decks. After you've selected the track you wish to record to (via the usual Record Function buttons), pressing the Insert and Rehearsal buttons consecutively sets the DA-88 into punch-in/out Rehearsal mode, in which the audio and meter monitoring switches from tape to input and back again at the punch-in and punch-out points you select.

Hitting Play sets the DA-88 into motion. When you reach the punch-in point, press the Record button; the red LED on the meter changes from flashing to on and the Record LED starts to flash. At the punch-out point, hitting Play makes the DA-88 stop some three seconds later and rewind to a little before the punch-in point (you can set this 'pre-roll'

time from one second upwards). To start the 'rehearsal', simply press Play and the DA-88 follows through the points you've set, changes the monitoring from tape to line and back, and automatically rewinds at the end.

Once you're happy with your punch-in and punch-out points, pressing the Auto In/Out button makes the DA-88 carry out the procedure for real and again rewind at the end, ready for you to hear the result.

The DA-88 automatically blends the information already on tape with the incoming audio as it starts to record and the overlap, or crossfade time, is preset to 10 milliseconds. This can be reset, in steps of 10, up to a maximum of 90 milliseconds. If the material being recorded is speech-based, the chances are you'll leave this at the default value, but if you're recording a mellow string part, then you're likely to increase the crossfade value to 80 or 90 milliseconds.

Few users will expect to be able to hit punch-in/out points perfectly from a front-panel button every time, so a facility exists to fine tune them. While you're in Rehearsal mode, a couple of presses on the Display button show the current values in Memories 1 and 2 which are used to hold the punch-in and punch-out times respectively. Incidentally, if you don't fancy the idea of having to hit buttons to enter and exit Record mode, the DA-88 also has a standard punch-in/out footswitch socket on the rear panel.

Individual track delays can be set; at 44.1kHz, the maximum delay is about 160 milliseconds. While this is mainly provided to allow you to set an offset between tracks on separate machines, it could be used creatively as a single-repeat delay line by recording the same audio onto two tracks and setting the delay time to taste.

As you might expect, the DA-88 includes a varispeed function which will handle a variation of 16% in steps of 0.1%. The current pitch setting can always be viewed by pressing the display button, and you can happily leave a preset value; settings for this, the memories, punch-in/out points, pre-roll time and track delay times are battery backed-up when you turn the machine off.

The two memories can be 'written to' via the Loc 1 and 2 buttons and the DA-88 has a standard Repeat function where, upon reaching the second locator, it rewinds to the first. If the Auto Play function is active, playback starts automatically.

A standard DA-88 has Sync In and Out ports which allow you to link together up to 16 machines – one as master, the others as slaves. To this end, there's a small rotary switch with which you select the unit ID number. With the Slave switch on each of the slaves

turned on, you can have up to 128 tracks of synchronised digital audio without any additional hardware!

So how is the DA-88 equipped to tackle the competition, taking into consideration the pros and cons of both systems? Well, the dilemma would be easier to resolve if there was a significant difference in sound quality between the two, but there isn't. During the review period, the immediate reaction of people coming into my studio and hearing the Tascam was that it was much the same as listening to a top-flight CD player or DAT recorder: the top end jumps out at you without being harsh in any sense, while the bottom end packs an extraordinary amount of punch.

Both of these observations are down to the dynamic range



The Shuttle Control

One of the major features of the DA-88 is the shuttle wheel. The Hi-8 tape format makes it possible to continue obtaining precise control information at slow speeds – timing info being written into the standard helical digital data. The result of this is that the shuttle wheel lets you set the playback to between a quarter of and eight times the standard speed.

Remote Control Options

The RC-808 Remote Control duplicates many of the DA-88's front-panel functions while the RC-848 System Remote Control can handle up to six DA-88s chained together. The latter also includes a 99-point autolocator and three output ports: RS-422 (supporting the Sony P2 format); parallel; and Tascam Accessory-II for direct control of a video or audio tape recorder including jog and shuttle operations.

that a digital recorder affords you – no matter what the format. So, if you're going to be hard-pressed to tell Hi-8 from S-VHS in terms of sound, where do the differences make themselves felt? Well, there are two aspects of the Hi-8 system which are going to make the DA-88 a firm favourite with many people: shuttling and sync. Being able to reverse tape direction and home in on a particular part of the program material,

especially with vocals and speech, is of great advantage – particularly to those who work in audio visual situations – and ADAT simply can't do that.

In terms of pure music recording, the differences are less clear-cut. Having used both ADAT and the DA-88 on a number of important sessions, I would have no hesitation in recommending either: the recording quality was fine and tape drop-out problems were nil. What will happen after each machine has been subject to six months of continuous use, however, could be quite a different story. We shall see... ■

The Spec

Recording format: rotary 4-head using Hi-8 tape
Number of tracks: 8, plus timecode in subcode with SY88
Recording time: 113mins (at 48kHz) with PAL90 tape
Tape speed: 15.8mm/sec
Fast wind rate: 80secs for PAL90 tape (100 times play speed)
Audio scan: 1/4 to 8 times play speed
Sampling rates: 44.1kHz, 48kHz
A/D conversion: 16-bit linear audio, Delta-Sigma 64 x oversampling
D/A conversion: 18-bit linear, 8 x oversampling
Error correction: Double RSC
Coding: 8-10 Modulation
Pitch control: 16% (in 0.1% steps)
Frequency response: 20Hz to 20kHz (10.5dB)
Dynamic range: Greater than 92dB
THD: Less than 0.007%
Channel separation: Better than 90dB at 1kHz
Wow & flutter: Unmeasurable

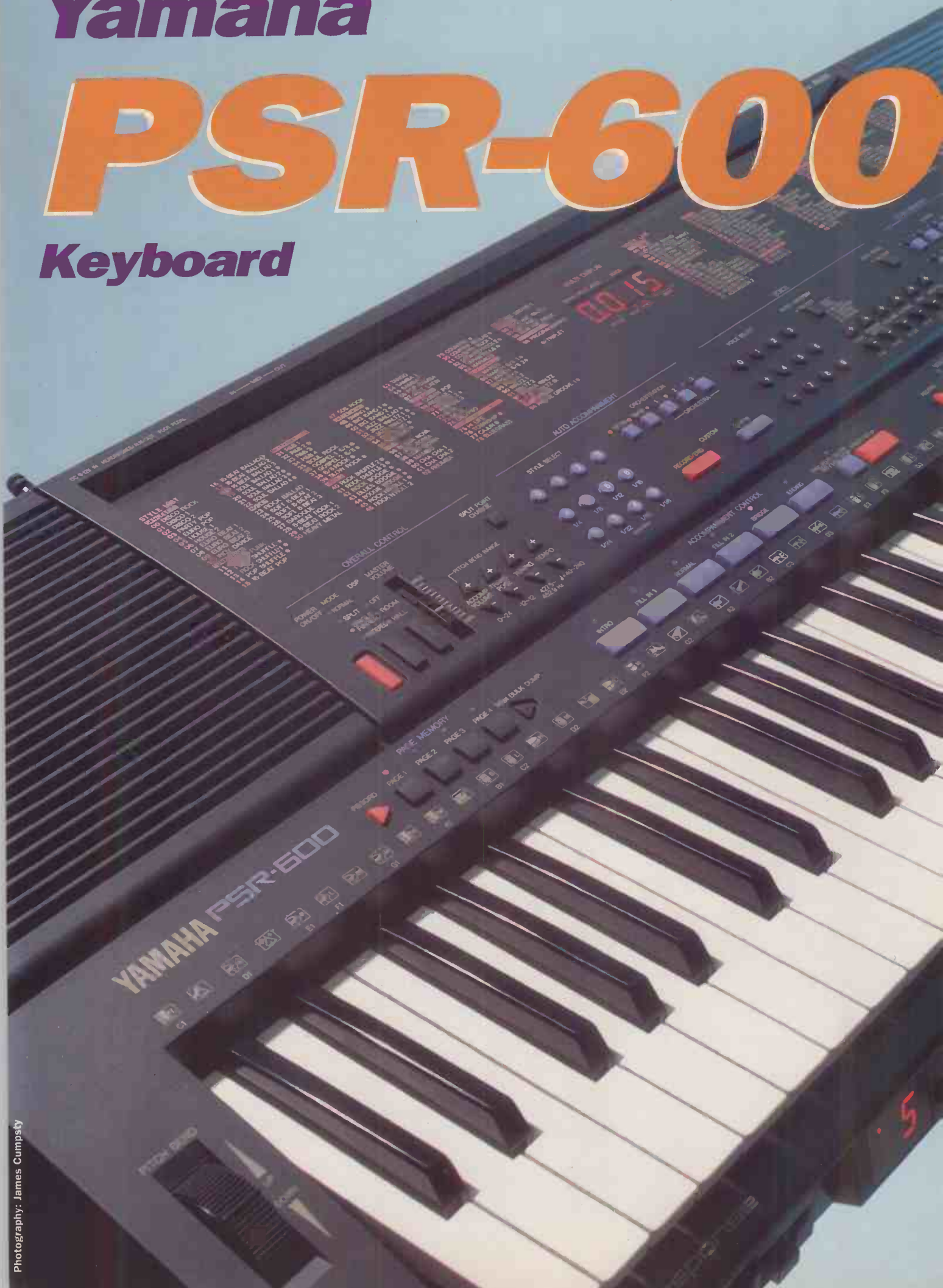
Info

Prices: DA-88: £3999;
 RC-808: £129;
 RC-848: £999 (All inc. VAT)
More from: TEAC UK
 5 Marlin House
 The Croxley Centre
 Watford
 Herts WD1 8YA
 Tel: 0923 819630
 Fax: 0923 236290

Yamaha

PSR-600

Keyboard



Home keyboards have traditionally been the butt of jokes for the synth-playing fraternity, but these days the more expensive examples are no laughing matter – even if they are great fun to use.

Home keyboard design has taken on a new lease of life in recent years as manufacturers have redefined their concepts of what features and what level of technology a keyboard instrument should offer. Consequently, the variety and quality of sounds have improved, while today's better-off home keyboards have acquired such work-a-holic accoutrements as onboard sequencers, effects processing, and built-in disk drives.

Perhaps most significantly, keyboards have come out of the stylistic ghetto to which marches, polkas, waltzes and the like were assigned them. These days you're just as likely to be assailed by r'n'b, soul, house, hip hop and 'world' music styles thumping out of the onboard speakers. What's more, keyboards have started to provide Style memories which you can program yourself, so you can be as up-to-date as you want to be.

Perhaps inevitably, MIDI is assuming an ever more important role in the lives of keyboard owners, as it gradually breaks down the barriers between keyboards and the wider world of MIDI equipment. Of course, during the past ten years the thrust of MIDI-based technology has been towards giving musicians creative responsibility for all the parts in their music – quite the opposite of the keyboard's auto-accompaniment ethos.

Yet the reinvigorated keyboard market and the popularity of auto-accompaniment software like Band-in-a-Box (which is now available for just about every computer in the known universe) suggest that there are plenty of people who don't want to program their own rhythms or their own basslines. Certainly, for songwriters more interested in the chord sequence and the melody than the drums and bass, keyboards conveniently provide a backing band for trying out ideas quickly in a variety of musical styles.

The auto-accompaniment concept can only become more attractive as accompaniment textures start responding in an "intelligent" way to playing dynamics – as is happening with Interactive Accompaniment on Yamaha's PSR-6700 flagship keyboard, Dynamic Articulation on Technics' SX-KN1000 flagship, and Human Touch Accompaniment on Farfisa's imminent F1 flagship. Perhaps, then, it's time for the once-derided auto-accompaniment section to take centre stage.

Among the companies pushing the boundaries of keyboard design, Yamaha are one of the most active – most recently with the PSR-SQ16 (reviewed in *MT* December '92). Their latest keyboard, the PSR-600, may not have all the trailblazing features of the SQ16, but the inclusion of an onboard disk drive on a keyboard costing £699.99 must count as a first. In fact,

its disk drive appears to be the only feature distinguishing the PSR-600 from the £489.99 PSR-500, so the bulk of this review can be read as a review of the 500 as well.

In one respect the PSR-600 actually betters the much more expensive PSR-SQ16: where the latter has a hopelessly cluttered front panel, the 600's layout is a model of order and clarity. Unlike modern synths, which tend to adopt a minimalist approach to the user interface, keyboards typically maximise the number of front-panel controls, adopting a control-per-parameter approach. Sometimes, as on the SQ16, this can get a little out of hand! The 600, however, strikes just the right balance of features and front-panel space.

The sound world of the PSR-600, like that of Yamaha's SY85 synth, is an AWM-only affair – the company, it seems, have knocked FM on the head. However, the 600 doesn't match the SY85's sound quality, using instead an earlier generation of AWM and, by the sound of it, less well-specified D/A conversion. This distinction, which holds for Yamaha's more expensive keyboards as well, contrasts with Roland's approach, which is to use the same sound-generating technology across a variety of instrument types.

The PSR-600's 100 Voices cover what has become fairly standard ground on keyboards and synths alike, ie. acoustic and electric pianos, organs and guitars, tuned percussion, strings, brass, woodwinds, pads, acoustic and electric basses, and, of course, drum and percussion sounds organised into keyboard 'drum kits'. It may sound like a recipe for General MIDI, but the 600, unlike the PSR-SQ16 with its General MIDI Voice configuration mode, doesn't have any pretences towards being a GM instrument.

The PSR-600's sounds begin well with a very playable acoustic piano, after which comes the unconventional but pleasingly warm and full Flange Piano. The keyboard section also includes a reasonably funky Clavi, a soft, 'pretty' electric piano and a harder-edged, much grittier electric piano which has a sharp bass end. There are four electronic organ Voices of a percussive and bright disposition, but sadly no grungy, groovy organ for those r'n'b rave-ups!

The bass end is well catered for by 12 bass sounds, including a couple of taut, punchy, clean electric basses, a full-bodied fretless, a funky 'mute' bass (with and without echo), a couple of nicely woody (if a touch muffled) acoustic basses, and three punchy, if not particularly phat and phunky, synbasses. All in all the PSR-600 gets high marks for versatility, warmth and general effectiveness in the bass department. Similarly, its drum and percussion sounds score highly for their variety, punchiness, vitality and grittiness. Drums and bass alike positively leap out of the onboard speakers when you crank up the volume.

With the exception of the warm, rounded jazz guitar and the funky, percussive mute guitar, the PSR-600's guitar Voices are a disappointment. The various solo strings aren't very appealing, either, though the ensemble strings, together with the few other pad sounds provided, are more successful.

Other Voices which come across well include several muted trumpets, horn and flugelhorn, piccolo, bass clarinet, oboe, pan flute and harmonica. The various saxophone Voices are

Text by
Simon Trask

Voice categories

Keyboard (18)
Guitar (14)
Other Strings (8)
Mallet (3)
Brass (10)
Woodwind (19)
Chorus (1)
Synthesizer (9)
Bass (12)
Percussion (6)

» somewhat less successful, and the 600 lacks a really strong synth lead sound. So, all in all a mixed bag, but deserving of a general thumbs up.

The PSR-600 provides a choice of four keyboard modes: Normal, Split, Single Finger and Fingered. The first two modes assign respectively one and two Voices to the keyboard, while the latter two divide the keyboard into auto-accompaniment chord (left hand) and melody (right hand) playing areas.

Single Fingered mode lets you choose from four chord types without having to know anything about chord structure; Fingered mode, on the other hand, provides you with 15 chord types and requires you to play the actual chords. Now, 15 chord types do not add up to a comprehensive harmonic vocabulary; in fact, none of the chord types go beyond sevenths, which is a touch restricting for anyone who's into using minor ninths, dominant thirteenths and the like.

Other keyboard features are Dual (for layering two Voices) and Auto-Harmony (for adding harmony notes to right-hand

typifies the present generation of keyboards. Dance and pop styles rub shoulders with boogie woogie and rhythm 'n' blues, funk and soul styles with rock and Carribean, jazz and swing with 'world' music and new age. At the same time, traditional keyboard fare such as bossa novas, mambos, cha cha chas, marches, polkas and Viennese waltzes aren't altogether excluded.

The 600's Styles are for the most part well conceived, though not always appropriately labelled. Among my favourites are some of the soul ballad, r'n'b, rock 'n' roll and reggae Styles, not to mention a riotous boogie woogie. Styles such as soca, calypso, hi-life, township and cajun are similarly full of vitality, and are guaranteed to get you smiling and tapping your feet. Personally, I would have gladly sacrificed the polkas, waltzes and such-like for some more African music styles – soukous, makossa and Afrobeat would do for starters...

The PSR-600's onboard sequencer provides five Chord tracks and five Melody tracks. The former each allow you to select a Style and then record the desired accompaniment



playing). In Split mode, each side can have its own Dual on/off and Dual Voice settings.

Four Voice Memories let you store keyboard configurations and recall them onto the keyboard at any time. In all you can have 16 such Memories – four for each of the 600's four Page Memories. The latter store all keyboard settings, Song data and Multi Pad data. When you save a file to disk, you're actually saving the currently-selected Page Memory; up to 12 such files can be saved to a single 3.5" DSDD floppy disk. These files are the only file types that the PSR-600 will recognise – you can't, for instance, save or load song data in Standard MIDI Files format.

Along with the notes that you play on the keyboard, you can trigger single drum hits, rhythm patterns and melodic note sequences by tapping the Multi Pads located towards the right-hand end of the keyboard. Each Pad memory is effectively a short sequencer track into which you can program whatever you want; these 'tracks' play at the currently-selected tempo, so they automatically sync to any active auto-accompaniment or Song. Usefully, you can cut short a rhythm or melodic sequence triggered in this way by pressing the Record/End button.

In its selection of auto-accompaniment styles the PSR-600

chord changes with your left hand; these tracks are mutually exclusive – if you select a second Chord track it will replace the currently-playing track at the start of the next bar.

Chord tracks can be made to loop, so you can run each track for as long as you want; individual Chord tracks can record up to approximately 150 chords. The Melody tracks, on the other hand, can be used together but can't be looped. Each Melody track is polyphonic, can be assigned its own Voice, and can record in the region of 700 notes.

The most conventional way to use this sequencer (in keyboard terms, that is) is to record different song section accompaniments (intro, verse, chorus etc.) into the Chord tracks, then use the Melody tracks to add a melody over each section. But the PSR-600 will also let you limit the Chord tracks to providing just the rhythm part (by deselecting the other parts of the Style) and record your own instrumental parts into the five Melody tracks. Used this way, the sequencer gives you six parallel tracks to play with.

Although one of the Chord tracks must always be active, you can drop out the rhythm part by deselecting it in the Orchestration section. Another way to drop out the rhythm track is to record a one-bar Chord loop which has *all* the

Style categories

- Dance & Pop (11)
- Funk & Soul (12)
- Rock 1 (8)
- Rhythm & Blues (9)
- Rock 2 (8)
- Jazz & Swing (8)
- Latin (12)
- Carribean (7)
- Country & World Music (10)
- March & Waltz (9)
- Drums & Bass (2)
- New Age (3)
- Custom Style (4)

accompaniment parts disabled; this way you can drop out the drums for any period of time (to the nearest bar) by selecting the relevant Chord track.

The PSR-600 includes a Conductor mode which lets you record not only your Chord track selections but also any Melody track on/off settings you make while the Song is playing. Effectively, then, Conductor mode allows you to 'piece together' your songs live.

What you can't do with the sequencer is route any of its tracks to external instruments via MIDI; as with the auto-accompaniments, the sequencer tracks play internally only. This seems rather unfortunate, as incorporating MIDI'd sounds into a sequence is a logical first step for any keyboard user wishing to expand their equipment horizon. In contrast, the PSR-SQ16 and Technics' KN range of keyboards integrate their auto-accompaniments and onboard sequences with MIDI very effectively.

Selecting Multi Voice mode turns the PSR-600 into a 16-part multitimbral instrument via MIDI, with dynamic allocation of its 28-voice polyphony across the parts and the keyboard.

Voice parts, or control reverb depth live via MIDI using controller data.

So how does the PSR-600 rate? For a start, it's a very accessible instrument, thanks to its uncluttered, clearly organised front panel and the fact that it's not overburdened with features – being a mid-priced instrument has its advantages. At the same time the range of Voices and Styles provided by the 600 make it a satisfyingly versatile instrument. And while the sound quality of its Voices may not reflect the current state of the art, their characteristic mix of grittiness, warmth and brightness is very appealing, in a rough-edged sort of way!

Although you can, in a limited way, use the PSR-600's onboard sequencer in a conventional multitrack fashion, it's really geared towards recording your keyboard auto-accompaniment/melody performances. If you want to take advantage of the 600's 16-part MIDI multitimbral mode, you'll have to

use an external MIDI

sequencer instead – and forgo the onboard auto-accompaniment and sequencing capabilities of the instrument. The fact that its auto-accompaniment and sequencer parts can't play via MIDI makes the PSR-600 even less suitable for anyone wanting to combine a keyboard with other MIDI instruments. What are Yamaha playing at here?

Whether you're learning to play keyboards, learning about music, or looking for a ready-made 'backing band' for songwriting or performing purposes, a keyboard has a lot to recommend it – and the PSR-600, providing you're happy to use it as a stand-alone instrument, is one of the best in the 'middle-bracket' price range.

Then again, if you're happy using a MIDI data filer – Yamaha's MDF2, for instance – or computer-based generic SysEx librarian software, opting for the PSR-500 makes more sense, as it's significantly cheaper than the 600. Also, a data filer or generic librarian software can, by their very nature, be used to store data from any MIDI instrument.

For those who like the all-in-one solution, though, the PSR-600 is the better bet. However, if you're only going to use the 600 as a multitimbral MIDI instrument, Roland's similarly-priced JV30 synth would, to my mind, be a better buy. ■

The Spec

Keyboard: 61-note (C1-C6) with velocity response

Polyphony: 28 voices

Voices: 100

Accompaniment Styles: 103

Onboard Demo Songs: 3

Front-panel Sections: Overall Control, Page Memory, Auto Accompaniment, Accompaniment Control, Voice, Voice Memory, Song Memory, MIDI, Demo, Multi Pad

Performance Controllers: Pitchbend Wheel
Keyboard Modes: Normal (single), Split, Single Fingered, Fingered

Auto Harmony options: Duet, Trio, Block, Country, Octave, Strum

Page Memories: 4 (complete front-panel settings plus song memory and multi-pad recordings)

Voice Memories: 4 (keyboard Voice assignments, per Page Memory)

MIDI: user-programmable keyboard transmit channel(s), Remote Control receive mode (external keyboard has same effect as PSR-600 keyboard), Multi Voice receive mode (16-part multitimbral response), MIDI System Exclusive send/receive (bulk dump), MIDI start/stop/clock send and (Remote Control mode only) receive
Song Memory: five Chord (accompaniment) tracks and five Melody tracks; approx. 150 chords per Chord track, approx 700 notes per Melody track; Conductor function for chaining Chord and Melody tracks

Rear Panel: headphones/aux out, DC (9-12V) in, footswitch (sustain), MIDI In and Out

Onboard Disk Drive: 3.5" DSDD; functions: file ±, load, save, delete, format, go, cancel

Amplification: 8w x 2 (when using AC power adaptor), 4w x 2 (when using batteries)

Speakers: 12cm x 2

Rated voltage: DC 9-12V

Batteries: SUM1 x 6

Dimensions: 968mm (W) x 404mm (D) x 136mm (H) (38 1/8" x 15 7/8" x 5 3/8")

Weight: 6.8kg (15lbs) excluding batteries

Supplied Accessories: music stand, PA-5 AC power adaptor, footswitch, owners manual, demo disk



However, selecting this mode automatically disables the 600's Styles and Songs. This means that you can't use, say, the onboard rhythms in conjunction with externally-sequenced PSR-600 instrumental parts. However, if you're prepared to forsake the 600's 16-part MIDI multitimbrality, you can sync the onboard auto-accompaniments or Song sequencer to an external MIDI sequencer or drum machine.

The 600's keyboard can be set to transmit on any one MIDI channel (or any two channels when the keyboard is split). Unfortunately there's no keyboard local on/off mode – an omission which can cause difficulties if you're using the PSR-600 in Multi Voice mode in conjunction with a MIDI sequencer. Really, an experienced manufacturer like Yamaha shouldn't be slipping up in this way. With keyboard users increasingly venturing into the world of MIDI sequencers, synths, samplers and drum machines, Yamaha aren't doing themselves any favours with the PSR-600's either/or MIDI implementation.

Effects processing on the PSR-600 is limited to a choice of room or hall reverbs, and there are no programmable parameters. This is fairly typical for keyboards, which in this respect do lag far behind many synths. However, you can at least program reverb depth for individual keyboard and Multi

Info

Price: Yamaha PSR-600 keyboard £699.99 inc. VAT

More from: Yamaha-Kemble Music Ltd
Sherbourne Drive
Tilbrook
Milton Keynes MK7 8BL
Tel: 0908 366700
Fax: 0908 368872

STOP PRESS: For a limited period only the PSR-600 is available at a special offer price of £549.99 inc. VAT

Twelve Tone Cakewalk Professional For Windows

Text by
Bob Walder

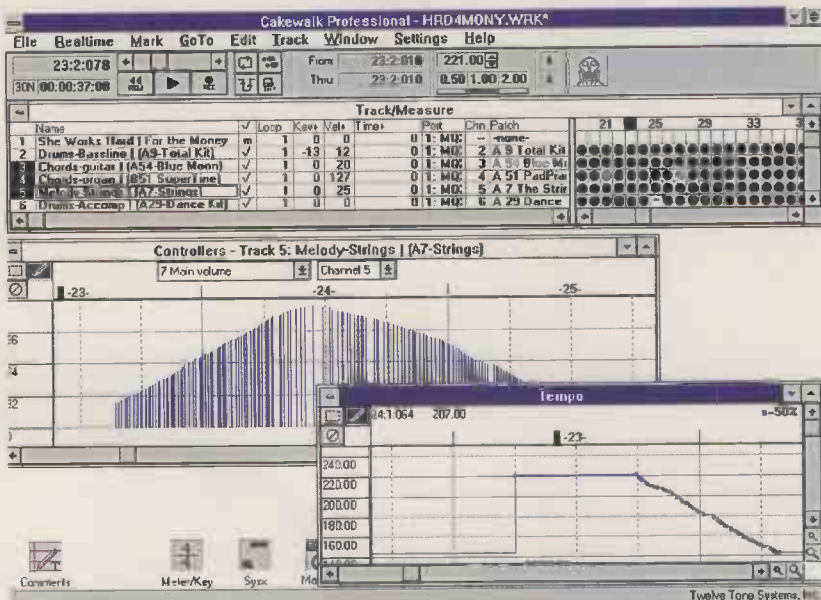
Professional sequencing under Windows has just got a lot easier – in fact, you could call it a Cakewalk...

Many of you will be familiar with the name Twelve Tone, or at least with the name of their most famous product – Cakewalk. Cakewalk has been available for the IBM PC for some time now, and their DOS based packages have recently been joined by a Windows 3.1 version called, not surprisingly, Cakewalk Professional for Windows. Cakewalk Pro is a linear sequencer (as opposed to a pattern based one) with 256

Installation is about as simple as you can get, with a separate, clearly laid out installation manual to guide you through it, and the Windows setup routine taking care of all the necessary file copying, as well as the creation of directories, program groups and icons. Twelve Tone supply their own versions of the MPU-401 and Music Quest drivers, and you are recommended to use these, especially since the MPU driver allows more than one Windows application to use the MIDI card simultaneously. You must install them yourself using the Drivers option in the Windows Control Panel, and if you want to check out the latest versions of the Music Quest drivers, these are available in the MIDI AVEN forum on CompuServe.

On running the program for the first time, you are presented with a screen bearing the control bar and the Track/Measure window. The control bar contains the usual transport controls, current time (measure:beat:tick and SMPTE), from & to times, and meter & tempo indicators. Underneath the tempo window are three buttons marked 0.5, 1 and 2, and when 'pressed' these multiply the current tempo by the selected amount (ie. half, normal and double speed). The multiplication factors can also be altered if you fancy whizzing through your composition at up to four times the normal speed! And there are also buttons to set loop points, initiate punch-in or step recording, and change the sync method (internal, MIDI or SMPTE/MTC). The button at the end bearing a depiction of Edvard Munch's *The Scream* is the panic button – pressing this stops playback, sends note-off commands for each note on every channel and resets all continuous controllers.

The Track/Measure window is split into two halves, with the left-most section containing all the pertinent track data, such as the track name, mute/solo status, pan, volume, port, channel, relative velocity, pitch and time, and the current patch number. Rather than use plain old 0 to 127 for the patch numbers, Cakewalk Pro allows you to create your own patch lists for your synth, allowing you to select from a list of meaningful names. The 'relative' windows are extremely useful, since these allow you to take a base track and shift all the events up or down in velocity, pitch and time. All transpositions are performed in real time, and the changes are non-destructive to the



Main control screen showing Track/Measure window, Tempo view and Controller view

tracks – more than enough for most people. Anyone who is familiar with Windows applications in general will feel immediately at home with Cakewalk, but even those who have never used Windows before should still find it relatively easy to get to grips with the intuitive user interface.

original data, thus allowing your experimentation, and imagination, a free rein.

The loop parameter allows you to override the linear nature of Cakewalk Pro by specifying the number of times a short pattern should be repeated during a song – a value of 9999 causes the track to continue looping as long as other non-looping tracks are still playing.

On the right half of the Track/Measure screen is the measure display – a familiar grid of squares containing nothing if they are empty and a blob if the corresponding measure holds some data. All the usual Windows conventions are supported here, allowing quick and simple cutting and pasting operations, copying and drag 'n' drop editing. If you are more familiar with the menu-driven DOS approach to things, all the same operations can be carried out via the drop-down Edit menu. Recording is simply a matter of selecting the required track and clicking on Record. Once finished, you are prompted to keep the take and the data is merged with any other data already contained in the track.

If you want to replace a section of data you can use the punch-in feature, which will record over the selected range of measures. There is also a step time recording facility which will allow you to record at your leisure, and a multi-take mode which records as many takes as you like, placing each successive one on the next free track, from where they can be auditioned and discarded.

Once you have recorded your track, there are many editing tools available to help you get it just right. At the bottom of the opening screen are seven iconised windows, ready to spring into action at the click of a mouse button (see the 'Editing Windows' box for further explanation), whilst at the top is the standard Windows drop-down menu bar, providing access to the other four main editing windows.

The Piano Roll view is becoming a standard on graphical sequencing packages now. For those of you not familiar with the format: it displays notes from a single track in a grid format that bears a resemblance to a player-piano roll. Notes are displayed as horizontal bars against a vertical 'keyboard' display which represents their pitch. Clicking on the first third of the note bar allows you to move it horizontally (alter its time), whilst clicking in the middle of the bar allows you to move it vertically (alter its pitch). Clicking in the last third of the bar allows you to stretch the note, whilst a click with the right mouse button brings up all the note parameters for text editing. The Piano Roll view is actually in two sections, with the lower section containing a bar-graph display representing note velocities.

The Event List view needs little explanation, containing as it does text parameters of all the events on a track. Particularly worthy of explanation are one or two events which are peculiar to Cakewalk Pro. The first of these is the text event, which allows you to create a single event which contains a single line of text. This can be used to enter notes or lyrics which will scroll in time with the track.

Two other events make use of the multimedia features of

Windows 3.1. The Wave event triggers playback of a standard Windows .WAV file through a built-in sound card, if available, whilst the MCIcmd event contains Media Control Interface (MCI) commands which allow you to control other multimedia devices during the playback of your sequence. You could, for instance, play a section of a commercial CD in time with your own composition – who needs a sampler? The Controllers view is a graphical display of MIDI controller events such as volume, modulation and panning. By using the mouse, smooth graphical curves can be drawn to represent the level of the events over time. Pitch wheel and

Editing Windows

Several windows are iconised at the bottom of the main Cakewalk Pro screen, which perform the following functions:

Comments View – This pops up an editor for you to make notes on your composition, which can then be forced to appear each time your song is loaded (ie. for copyright notices, patch assignment details, etc.).

Tempo View – This provides a graphic display of any tempo changes in your work file. Measures are shown along the top, and tempo up the side, and the mouse can be used to plot instant or gradual tempo changes onto a map.

Meter/Key View – This allows you to enter meter and key changes on measure boundaries. You can have as many meter and key changes as you need, and they are global (affecting all tracks). The meter affects the metronome's accents, how the beat time is displayed and how the staff view is drawn. The key signature affects how notes are displayed and how the staff view is drawn.

System Exclusive View – This is a neat librarian which provides you with 256 banks in which to hold SysEx messages. Each bank can hold any number of messages, with up to 1Mb of data in Windows standard mode, and up to available memory in 386 enhanced mode. The banks can be saved in the work file and automatically sent to your equipment as the file is loaded, thus configuring all your synths in readiness for your epic composition!

Markers View – Markers are a way of associating text with a time. They can be used to name sections of your work (ie. chorus, bridge, etc.), to mark 'hit points' for film scoring and for short cuts whenever you need to enter a time and/or move around in your Cakewalk work file.

Faders View – This provides you with 16 on-screen graphical faders that generate MIDI controller events (ie. volume and pan) as you move them. Fader movements can be recorded as part of a track, and will be reproduced during playback, thus providing a degree of automated mixing if required.

CAL – This is the window which allows the loading, editing and running of CAL programs (see separate box).



Main control screen showing Track/Measure window and Staff window with multiple staves

aftertouch events can also be created and edited here, even though they are not MIDI controller events *per se*.

Finally, the Staff view – a feature well worth having in my opinion, but which is included in few sequencers at the moment. It allows you to select one or more tracks and display the notes on staves – bass and treble clef staves can be created automatically where appropriate. Notes can be created and edited on the staff, and the notation can be tidied up using the resolution, fill and trim features without actually affecting the recorded data. Unfortunately, the resulting score cannot be printed out, but since Cakewalk is capable of creating Standard MIDI files (types 0 and 1), >>>

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Cakewalk Application Language

The Cakewalk Application Language (CAL for short) is an 'event processing language' which allows users to extend Cakewalk Pro with custom editing commands. A CAL program will perform a specified operation (ie. add 10% to a value) on every event in a preselected area. In other words, select a group of notes with the mouse, run a CAL program and all the notes selected will be affected by the routine.

Unfortunately, writing CAL programs does require more than a little aptitude for computer programming in general. Based loosely on the C and Lisp programming languages, it is quite difficult to get to grips with, especially with the limited documentation and technical support. On the up side, once you have conquered the basics, there is almost nothing you cannot do using CAL, which makes Cakewalk Pro one of the most flexible sequencing tools available. Various CAL programs are included with the package, including 'standard' routines to thin continuous controller data, aftertouch events and pitch wheel events. Also included are programs to build chords using existing events in the track(s) as root notes, and several useful routines are available in the Twelve Tone Systems section of the MIDI'AVEN forum on CompuServe.

➤ which can then be imported into a separate notation package, this should not be too much of a problem for most people.

At first glance there may appear to be a bewildering choice of windows with which to work in Cakewalk Pro, but obviously not all will be applicable to all situations – some operations might require the Track Window, whilst others would benefit from the Piano Roll or Staff windows. As an overall package I found Cakewalk very easy to use, despite the apparent complexity and the sophistication of some of its features. All the necessary functions fall easily to hand (or mouse) and very little recourse to the manual is required. There are also plenty of nice touches which make you feel comfortable with the package, rather than at odds with it – the ability, for example, to define your own patch maps (instead of assigning patch number 53 to MIDI channel 1, I created a 'Korg 01/W Bank A' patch list and assigned a 'Tenor Sax' to channel 1 instead).

Dump Request Macros (DRMs) can also be created for your own synths within the SysEx Librarian. I managed to obtain a set of DRMs for the Korg 01/W from CompuServe and was thus able to save and load individual patches, or the entire contents of the synth's memory, to and from my PC's hard disk. Incorporating custom patch lists and DRMs within Cakewalk is the only aspect of the system which could be described as complicated, since it involves the amendment of some of the Cakewalk/Windows system files. Even then there is an entire chapter of the manual devoted to the subject, and all the system variables are listed along with a description of what they do – a hackers delight!

Whilst some applications are re-hashed to run under Windows, others are what can only be described as 'true' Windows applications. Happily, Cakewalk falls quite definitely into the latter category: it has the look and feel of a real Windows program right down to the comprehensive help system and the 'hidden screen' (after selecting the 'Help/About Cakewalk' option, try holding CTRL and SHIFT and clicking on the Cakewalk icon...).

It is, of course, impossible to provide more than a taste of the features available on a program like Cakewalk in a review of this length – but hopefully I will have whetted your appetite enough for you to put Cakewalk Professional on your shortlist when looking for your next PC sequencer. On a purely subjective note, it is probably the best Windows-based package on the market at the moment.

Info

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Touching Bass



Last month we kicked off this series by looking at the simplest way to create a bassline – namely to play the root note of each chord in a song. This has the effect of underpinning each harmony by reinforcing its foundation note. For instance, in the four-bar chord progression IC///IF///IG///IF///I you would play C in the first bar, F in the second bar, G in the third and F in the fourth. This is what you could call a purely functional bassline in that it fulfils a function without having any particular musical interest of its own.

There again, a perceivable melodic line may 'emerge' out of the sequence of root notes. However, this depends largely on factors which have to do with the song as a whole: the chord sequence, the frequency of chord changes, and the tempo of the music. You can, however, exert some control over the melodic shape of your bassline through your choice of which octave each root note is played in. Taking the chord/root progression C-Am-Dm-G you could, for instance, use the A and G above the C and D, or the A and G below. A rising interval can create a different effect to that of a falling one, especially when it's accompanied by a chord change. For instance, you may judge that a rising major sixth from C to A introduces a plangent quality which reinforces the move from a major chord (C major) to a minor chord (A minor).

But what about adding interest to a bassline 'within' each chord when you're using only the chord's root note? All you can do as far as pitch is concerned is use octaves (see Examples 2 and 3 last month). However, where the rhythm of your bassline is concerned you have more freedom. Any rhythmic constraints have to do with broader stylistic concerns, and with how the bassline relates to the other musical parts. These are subjects we'll be exploring in more detail as the series unfolds. But let's not run before we can jump!

On the subject of which, I'm trying in the early part of this series to ease the non-reading musicians among you into reading music notation – which is where this month's **Example 1** comes in. Reading from left to

Text and examples by Simon Trask

In Part 2 of our new series on the bassline, Simon Trask skanks his reggae and boogies his woogie – inna *MT* stylee...

Ex1

Semibreve/
whole note:

Minim/
half note:

Crotchet/
quarter note:

Quaver/
eighth note:

Semi-quaver/
sixteenth note:

Ex3

Ex4

$\text{♩} = 70$

Ex5

$\text{♩} = 70$

Ex6

right, it gives you the name of each note duration (in fact, the traditional European name followed by the more modern American version), the graphic symbol used to represent it, and the equivalent rest symbol as it appears on the staff. A rest symbol tells you not to play anything for the indicated duration – in other words, to take a rest!

I've laid out the duration symbols in a way which indicates their relationship to one another – a crotchet is half the duration of a minim, a quaver is half the duration of a crotchet, and so on. Obviously, *actual* durations depend on the tempo of the music. For example, at 120bpm, a minim indicates a duration of one second, a crotchet a duration of half a second.

Incidentally, no subtext along the lines of "you're not a musician if you can't read music" is intended by the use of notation in

this series. Simply, in order to talk meaningfully about basslines in this tutorial context it's necessary to give musical examples, and the only way to do this via the printed page is to use music notation. Hopefully, those of you who do 'learn the dots' will end up feeling that the effort has been worth it. Incidentally, this month I've added the 'octave lower' symbol to the bass clef (the figure of eight hanging from the clef) to make it clear that the basslines should be played an octave lower than notated. Example 6, which is to be played as notated, doesn't have the symbol.

Example 2 gives the seven notes which make up the C major scale, and by extension the key of C major. You can build a chord on each of these notes by 'stacking up' alternate notes of the scale. As you can see in **Example 3**, you get a C chord by stacking up C, E and

G, a D chord by stacking up D, F and A, and so on. What you end up with are the following three-note chords (known as 'triads'): C major, D minor, E minor, F major, G major, A minor and B diminished. The major/minor designation refers to the interval between the first and second notes of the chord ie. three semitones (a minor third) or four semitones (a major third). In the B diminished chord, the defining interval is B-F, which is known as a diminished fifth. Counting B as note one, F is note five; the interval is called 'diminished' because it has one less semitone than the 'perfect' fifth C-G (six semitones instead of seven). If you find this a little confusing, I can only reiterate last month's advice that you get hold of a book on music theory, where you'll find a more thorough explanation of tones, semitones, scales, keys, intervals and the like than I can give here.

Last month's Example 4 illustrated how you could begin to move beyond the root note in the bassline while keeping to the three notes which define each chord. **Example 4** this month develops this theme, so to speak, by again sticking with these notes but this time adding rhythmic interest.

Example 4 and **Example 5** are both in a reggae bass style, underpin the same chords, and stick to the same chordal notes (Example 5 actually uses only two of the notes from each chord), yet they each have their own character. Both rhythms were conceived in relation to the characteristic guitar or keyboard rhythm in reggae, which emphasises the offbeat quavers (2nd, 4th, 6th and 8th) in each 4/4 bar.

The seventh chords, which provide the 'prettiness' quotient characteristic of the lover's rock style of reggae intended here, are created by adding a further note to the triad, eg. B on top of C major (C-E-G-B), C on top of D minor (D-F-A-C), and so on.

Finally this month, in complete contrast – but sticking to the same principle of 'outlining' the chordal harmony – we have **Example 6**. This is a boogie woogie bassline, presented in the 12-bar blues format characteristic of the music. Boogie woogie was primarily, though by no means exclusively, a piano-based music, with the left hand playing the bass line while the right hand adds the chords and melodies on top. Note that the bass line consists of a repeating one-bar phrase, or 'bass riff', which is transposed to fit the chord it underpins. Watch out for more boogie woogie basslines to come – how can you resist? ■

Volume 8 - JJ Jeczalik's Art of Sampling

The Art of Noise virtually invented sampling, this CD gives you access to the sounds that inspired a generation of samplers and placed JJ at the cutting edge of innovative sampling. JJ was also part of the Trevor Horn production team that delivered such masterpieces as ABC's Lexicon of Love and Frankie Goes To Hollywood's Relax and Two Tribes. All the best sounds from JJ's Fairlight libraries are on this CD - over a decade's worth of **PROVEN HIT MATERIAL** and sonic inspiration. Loads of drums, percussion, ethnic instruments, orchestral, brass, synths, basses, and all those amazing quirky sounds that defy description are included. The Art of Noise are one of the most sampled bands ever!



Volume 7 - Neil Conti's Funky Drums from Hell

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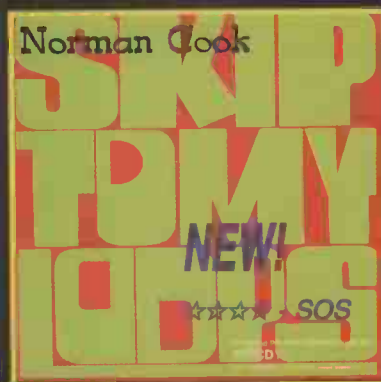
Volume 4 - Coldcut's Kleptomaniac!

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Volume 6 - Norman Cook: Skip to my Looops

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PROFILE *Ultravox*



re- VOX

The back catalogue may be in the charts again, but Billy Currie's Ultravox actually has a new line-up, a new single and a new album. Could this finally be Goodnight, Vienna?

Interview by Phil Ward

If you try and load a piece of equipment – say, a Fostex E16 – into London's Berwick Street Studios, chances are you'll step in something nasty. Probably ancient banana skin, or much-trampled grape. Chances also are that you'll be propositioned; not the most appealing of prospects with an arm full of multitrack and a shoe full of mulch. But this is because, apart from the happeningest little recording studio in town, Berwick Street also hosts a teeming fruit and vegetable market and a generous helping of Soho's sleaze-joints, making access something of an, erm, assault course.

Once inside, though, all is calm. Except in reception, that is, where an endless succession of impossibly fresh-faced employees rush hither and thither, giving the impression that they must be

putting the finishing touches to a sizeable chunk of next week's chart material. Which, actually, they are. In recent months, The Shamen, East 17, PM Dawn, The Orb and The Grid have all recorded here, making the most of the central location, the mountains of hi-tech gear on tap, and the Berwick Street 'school' of young programmer/engineers who have shaped recent dance music – including Peter Lorimer, Tyrrell, and Andy Falconer.

MD Rod Gammons is happy, but not just with the roster of dance hits seemingly pouring out of his studio. He's just finished producing a different, and rather unlikely, project: a new album from Ultravox, called *Revelation*. And indeed it is – a big, bold, hard-kicking thing which you would not expect to emerge from



►► a pop-factory beat basement like this. It's given Rod a chance to push his technology and his ambitions a bit further: "The songs," he says, dodging phone calls in reception, "are more important than the token inclusion of hip effects just to please a few specialist DJs. You can make a record sound 'now' for about six months, and then it soon becomes 'last year's' record. I want people to be able to put this album on in three years time, or ten years time, and say, 'yeah, this still sounds pretty classic'."

Rod Gammons had been working with Birmingham-born singer and guitarist Tony Fenelle for about 17 months, writing songs for a solo deal for Tony, when Billy Currie turned up. That's Billy Currie, keyboards, violin, viola – the essential and only constant ingredient in Ultravox's long history, and a man intent on writing a new chapter of it. Rod spent a month with Billy on embryonic ideas for a new Ultravox, recognised the suitability for the project of Tony's voice, looks, and musical interests, and made the connection. Now, album finished, Billy Currie and Tony Fenelle can afford to relax – for a while – and catch up on just how it all happened. The rapport between them is almost tangible.

"When I started thinking about putting a new Ultravox together," begins Billy, "I began looking for a good production deal, and this was one of the studios I came to. I was interested

"That Kraftwerk sound is all a bit 'small'. I like it, but that solid down-beat that we used was one of the frustrations I had with Ultravox"

in the dance people who've been working here, not just the rock people. The technology that's been used in that area is very interesting. What I like about this place is that there's a bit of 'street' to it. I'm a fussy bastard. I don't like bureaucracy, nor do I like too much of a 'family' atmosphere either. This place is just come in, do it and go. With nice people around you."

Tony chips in. "I liked the fact that, with there being so many dance people here, there was none of that rock competitiveness with our stuff; we didn't have to keep anything secret. They might put their heads round the door, but they'd be more interested in checking out the thirteen year-old kids upstairs knocking out a Number One tune. Most people in Berwick Street are geared towards dance music, and you can hear the connection between early Ultravox – the original four-on-the-floor-and synth basslines – and the rave stuff. The New Romantic-period Ultravox was powerful dance stuff – and I know, I used to get down to it as a teenager!"

Presumably, then, it helps to have a producer that owns the studio... "Not entirely; if you're producing the album, and you own the studio, you've got to run upstairs and answer the phone all the time." "But," adds Billy, "we're not a couple of babies, we could just get on with it anyway. If he did get sidetracked with business, much of it was for our benefit. Rod and his wife Helen took the whole project on board, and if something isn't working in your own studio, it bugs you. You're less likely to pass it by; you just want the thing to work."

The motivation to make it all work seemed to infect all the members of the team equally. For Tony, the first priority was to find out just who this bloke with all the keyboards was. "Me and Billy only met last year, we didn't know each other, so we got to know each other as we worked on the album. That was harder than actually recording, because we had no way of knowing exactly which way the other would go. When you've rehearsed with a band for years and years, you'll know where you're all going; the singer will go to G, and everybody goes to G without even saying anything. So we literally spent months learning about each other – going out drinking, asking 'well, where would you go if I went to B?', and Billy would say 'down the Wag Club, see you later.'"

Yep, they got to know each other all right. The first completed track was put out as a one-off single, to avoid the feeling of taking on the whole album straight away. "You can step back after one track, listen to it and think about the next step," explains Billy. All the same, as Tony reveals, good vibrations were immediate: "The first songs we wrote together are the ones that people like most; 'I Am Alive' was the first one we wrote, and that's the first single. I came in from New York, and three days later there was the song. We really fell into it



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“I think our rhythm section in the '80s bored themselves to death. Warren Cann did admit to me later that he'd just got sick and tired of drums. And to a certain extent, if that happens it's your own fault”

this album. Billy explains: “It certainly made things less confusing when we discovered Tony's ability, because we were just at the point of wondering who we were going to get in as the guitarist. As soon as Tony began playing it just seemed to work. I don't think we needed another personality around from that point, it was me, Tony, and then Rod.”

Rod, in fact, is following in some pretty distinguished footsteps as Ultravox's producer. After working with Brian Eno and Steve Lillywhite, the band found their biggest commercial success with German techno-fiend Conny Plank, who brought the influence of the Kraftwerk tradition very much to bear. They were pioneering times, as Billy recalls, but not without their own limitations: “That Kraftwerk sound is all a bit 'small'. I like it, but that solid down-beat that we used to do was one of the frustrations I had with Ultravox. I wanted to move the beat from side to side a bit, to give it a bit more of an American thing, really. I don't mean funky – that's a bit of a funny word – but looser.

“I think our rhythm section in the '80s bored themselves to death. That's an awful thing to say, but they didn't look forward for new things. Warren Cann did admit to me later that he'd just got sick and tired of drums. And to a certain extent, if that happens it's your own fault. We'd always start with fours-on-the-floor, which just left me to dick around on top. And it would soon get top-heavy, because given half the chance I would fill in the spaces. Whereas now, I don't. I don't feel the need to.

naturally. But whether I'd got involved in this project or not, it was just great to meet Billy. I've always been a fan. I went to see them, in the John Foxx days, at these shitty little clubs in Birmingham. I was there!”

Later, Tony was almost there with an English band called Big Noise, who'd started life as Mr President, but who'd then got a break in America resulting in the whole crew being shipped out there. It was a sojourn which, Tony now says, “didn't really count for anything”. But it did make for a solid grounding in the music business, and a good deal of teeth-cutting in the guitar department – which sure came in handy on

Something has definitely clicked. I was already moving towards a 'stadium' way of writing; getting hold of the bare bones of the thing and coming up with a simple but sturdy structure, on keyboards. I did that with the chorus of 'Hymn'. But with such four-square rhythms, most of the time I had no room to do that, and just ended up being fiddly. I'd always wanted to work with someone who could hold a groove.”

The new album certainly *does* sound more fluid than the Ultravox you may remember, but it's pretty damn solid and rocky at the same time. This, it turns out, was exactly the intention. Tony begins: “Rather than relying solely on the loop, we'd put the loop in, slightly lower it, and add an extra kick and snare. If you've a stereo loop, left and right, it can sound quite massive, but if you add real kick and snare, and maybe hi-hat, in the middle, you're talking about a whole different ball-game. That gives it a hardness, especially live, and we want it to sound as tough as possible live. It's got to be very, very tough. It's not a new concept, but for Ultravox our sound is 'stadium with loop'. Nobody's done it successfully, yet, and here we are.

“The drums were programmed like a drummer, not a machine. We used the Atari, and it was a great way to get things sounding massive while we were writing. Using the computer meant that we didn't have to have a drummer crashing away in the background, of course. We got some nice, big sounds, over which Billy could start whacking chords out, and we both really got into tracking, immediately.” “I can be really honest with myself, here,” admits Billy, “because I've been pissing around doing solo albums: I don't really tune in to just basic rhythm. I'm into rhythm, and it interests me, but Tony really has that going for him and it did help us get started. I found that it stimulated me, whereas in the past the rhythm was just done, it wasn't your area, you couldn't get involved, and as I said, I think the band suffered from that a bit in the '80s.”

Rod, merely the producer after all, sums up: “It was a very conscious decision to get the best of both worlds rhythmically – live drumming and loops. If we'd just used traditional, big-sounding live rock drums, it would have sounded good, but not very different from anything from that genre in the last ten years. We wanted to show that Ultravox could encompass, intelligently, what people are excited about now – those kind of programmed, 'groove' rhythms. And some of the tracks could be remixed in a very interesting, dancefloor way.”

Sequencing certainly played its part in the rhythm department on *Revelation*, but elsewhere Billy's instinct to rely on his training held sway. Tony explains: “All the keyboard overdubs were recorded live. Billy just plays them in, because he's old school, and he knows how to do that stuff. For me, and people my age, recording keyboards live is just so nervewracking, you automatically want to put it into the computer. I've worked with some great keyboard players, who are also fantastic programmers. Billy's not so great at programming; his assumption is always to play it. I did more of the actual programming, on the album. We'd sit together and do it, but Billy had a broader picture of the whole structure, while I concentrated on the details.”

“I find it hard to keep on top of running a computer,” Billy confirms, “and think about music as well. I'd like to try and do more programming on the next album. It might just do me

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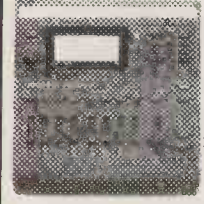
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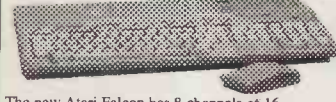
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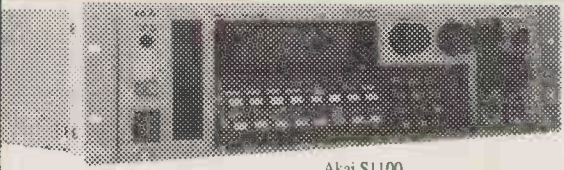


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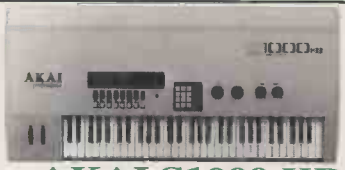
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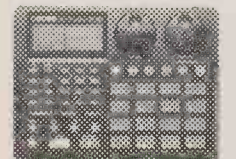
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►► good to try and be able to think in both ways. I'm interested in technology, but not necessarily for its own sake. I really got into the ins and outs of the first Pro 24, so I am interested – you've got to be. I guess it's less obtrusive, now, because it works! Originally, it was always exciting and coloured the way you did

"All the keyboard overdubs were recorded live. Billy just plays them in, because he knows how to do that stuff. For people my age, recording keyboards live is just so nervewracking, you automatically want to put it into the computer"

things, because you wondered if something was going to work or not. That was part of the excitement."

Billy used a lot of his old keyboards on the album – such as a CS80, or a PPG Waveterm – and believes that now is the best time to get the most out of them: "We know now that those instruments are much deeper than one album's worth." Rod goes even further: "Added to my stuff, Billy's old keyboards made an impressive collection. I'm not a fan of modern keyboards, actually. I don't need workstations; I don't like keyboards with built-in chorus and reverbs, because I've got those already, and if you take those effects off the sounds are pretty naff. I tend to design sounds for a specific track, so I like the user-friendliness of Moogs and Prophets – if it doesn't work, grab the offending knob and turn it till it does. I also like additive synthesis, where you're blending the best of different sources: strange elements of samples, some FM synthesis from a DX or TX rack, and then maybe a bit of Prophet. The aim is to make a 'stack', or a sculpted piece of sound.

"There are a couple of big issues with modern synthesiser design. Firstly, synths have been basically very unfriendly for nearly ten years – ever since the DX7 came out. Now, I can actually program a DX7 quite happily, but some of the more modern keyboards are really a bit of a nightmare. A lot of the things you immediately want to get at, such as switching off a built-in reverb, are not on the front panel – they're several menus down, deep in the programming of the thing. That's unacceptable. Secondly, I just cannot stand using keyboard presets, it does my head in. If I'm going to make a record with Ultravox, I want to fill it full of original keyboard sounds that we make together in the studio. And I want those sounds to be ahead of what everybody else is doing, by combining elements so that they sound different, separate from the current crop of, say, Korg 01/W, JD800 stuff. Working sounds is a lot more creative – and a lot more fun – than just pressing that button to get that sound. I've just bought one of the new, redesigned Microwaves, and it's wonderful. We did use Billy's old PPG a lot

on the album, just because it sounds so radically different from everything else. And the Microwave is like that, in that it doesn't have drums; it doesn't try to be a reverb or a chorus unit; and it has a most unusual sound."

Ironically, moving away from what he calls "state-of-the-art, technical keyboard stuff" has reinvigorated Billy's interest in sounds, particularly at the lower end of the spectrum. Here, the Berwick Street spirit really seems to have infiltrated his thinking. "I don't feel you have to 'impress' with technology these days; it's come full circle, and I really like the way younger kids, who can't afford an S1000, get a cheaper sampler, and do loops on those. Fine; there's no ego trip about it – if it works, great. On the album, we weren't thinking, 'listen to this technology', in an obvious way, but it's there. There's one loop under a slide guitar solo on 'Perfecting The Art Of Common Ground' which is taken from an early '70s heavy rock vibe – I won't tell you what it is – but it just comes through perfectly. And I'm playing games with Ultravox's history, a bit... I'd zoom in on this middle section with the slide guitar, set the picture, and it's real *Rage In Eden* period, about 1981, offset by this particular loop; so it's using technology to make quite subtle statements.

"Using the technology used to be more of a task. Nowadays, you sit back and wait for it to come from specific gadgets you get. You pass it through without any real thinking. There's nothing worse than trying to save a bad sound by using gadgets in the mix. You can only work with what is a good sound in the first place: it's pointless trying to doctor something up."

Billy Currie is one of those musicians who have been at the frontline of changing musical technology during many of its most exciting periods. But new priorities beckon, as they do, and now the band are on the road again in Europe promoting the new material. It was recorded in a small studio, and a lot of small devices were used, but the plan is to make a big noise in some pretty big places. Frankly, it's time to kick arse. Tony Fenelle: "One of the first things Billy and I discussed within ten minutes of talking to each other was playing stadiums. We'd both got to the point in our careers where we wanted to do major stadiums. And we wanted to make an album that sounded like that's where it would be played. Rather than living in '808 State', with a dance beat and ambient sounds, we were interested in a big sound. My thinking was to have hard, rock drums, rather than machine-like ticks. Different from the early Ultravox stuff, even. So it was a departure for Billy. Plus, it's not the old Ultravox, it's a brand new Ultravox; when I arrived I wasn't going to wear tapered sideburns and a pencil moustache. I'm always asked 'what about Midge?' – I loved Ultravox with Midge Ure, I was a fan, and I'm not going to sit here and compete with him. But Billy's the main man, and always has been. He's the keyboard player that put that stamp on the band from day one. It wasn't going to lose that."

Billy, at first, tries to deflect this accolade: "But I didn't want to make it like I was tying Tony to my style, that would have been wrong. You've got to create something new." And then, with a modest grin, finally acknowledges that, in the end, it still has to be a band called Ultravox. "Yes, because it's so much a part of my life. I've put everything into it, and it's still not finished." ■

Recommended Listening

Albums:

Ultravox! (*Island*, 1976)
 Ha!Ha!Ha! (*Island*, 1977)
 Systems Of Romance (*Island*, 1978)
 Vienna (*Chrysalis*, 1980)
 Rage In Eden (*Chrysalis*, 1981)
 Quartet (*Chrysalis*, 1982)
 Monument (*Chrysalis*, 1983)
 Lament (*Chrysalis*, 1984)
 The Collection (*Chrysalis*, 1985)
 U-VOX (*Chrysalis*, 1986)
 Revelation (*DSB/Pinnacle*, 1993)

Singles:

On *Island*:

Dangerous Rhythm (1976)
 Rock Wrok (1977)
 Quirks (1977)
 Young Savage (1977)
 Retro (live EP, 1977)
 Slow Motion (1978)
 Quiet Man (1978)

On *Chrysalis*:

Sleep Walk (1980)
 Passing Strangers (1980)
 Vienna (1981)
 All Stood Still (1981)
 The Thin Wall (1981)
 The Voice (1981)
 Reap The Wild Wind (1982)
 Hymn (1982)
 Visions In Blue (1982)
 We Came To Dance (1982)
 One Small Day (1983)
 Dancing With Tears In My Eyes (1984)
 Lament (1984)
 Loves Great Adventures (1984)
 Same Old Story (1986)
 All Fall Down (1986)
 All In One Day (1986)

On *DSB/Pinnacle*:

I Am Alive (1993)

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Wonderstuff

It's stayed on the scene and for many it's the ultimate funk machine – but will the Clavinet take its place alongside the Hammond and the classic analogue synths as a keyboard to be seen with in the nineties..?

Text by Peter Forrest

One of these days, someone with a spare year or two will take it upon themselves to begin a comprehensive survey of synthesiser 'factory' sounds and find out which ones manufacturers have considered essential enough to use in their machines. Right up there near the top of the list would be the Clavinet. There are two reasons for this: first, the classic Clavinet sound is, admittedly, quite easy to imitate (passably, anyway). Second, it's extremely useful, not just for funk workouts, but any time you want a clean, rhythmical sound that can inject a bit of pace and choppy counterpoint into a track.

Of course, the nearest most synth imitations get to the Clavinet is the sharp 'plunk' (for want of a better expression) of its most commonly used sound. The quintessential example of this is probably Stevie Wonder's excellent 'Superstition', a single which also appeared on the 1973

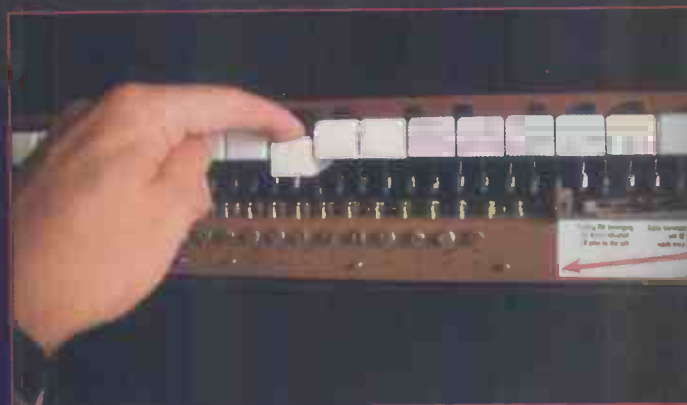
Talking Book album, and more recently as the opening track on the CD compilation *Original Musiquarium I – Volume I*. Interestingly, *Volume II* of this compilation kicks off with the other classic Stevie Wonder Clavinet track, 'Higher Ground' ("People... keep on learning..."). Together, these two songs have done more for the Clavinet's reputation than any amount of advertising and have made it an essential instrument for any keyboard player in funk or soul bands.

If the Clavinet is not an instrument you're familiar with, let me fill you in. It's basically an electrically amplified version of a clavichord. Clavichords were very popular as home instruments in the Baroque period (they were too quiet to be used in performance) until they were eventually replaced by the piano as the essential home

keyboard. Their action is very simple and consists of a metal blade – a 'tangent' – attached to each key which strikes a pair of strings and makes them vibrate.

One section of the strings is damped to stop it vibrating while the other vibrates freely and produces the note. Unlike most instruments of this kind, the tangent stays in contact with the strings and makes it possible to produce vibrato by applying a bit of finger-wobble to the key. In contrast to the harpsichord it's also touch-sensitive and a fiercely-struck note will tend to sound slightly sharp as well as being louder and brighter.

The Clavinet shares most of these attributes. It is simply a set of single strings, mounted transversely, which are damped at one end (by strands of ordinary wool, would you believe?) and set in motion by little beaters attached to the keys. The makers referred to it as a hammer and anvil



Photography: Peter Forrest

arrangement, because there's another surface for the string to be pressed against. The gauge of the strings, incidentally, is roughly equivalent to the guitar. Like its ancestor, the Clavinet is also free of any dependency on the mains supply: though a 9V adaptor is available, the machine can just as easily be run from a PP3 battery – the

other two switches are a little less straightforward. Labelled A/B and C/D, they control the two pickups in the Clavinet and can be set in any one of four combinations.

Both pickups are actually mounted at the right-hand end of the strings, but one is angled across some distance along, while the other is positioned at a right angle close to

strings, you can have the two ends of the keyboard functioning with very different decay times. Admittedly, it would be nice if it could work the other way round, with a staccato bass and sustained treble, but the technology just won't allow it.

While we're on the subject of what would make the Clavinet an even better instrument, it would have been great to have had a device to lift the strings off the dampers altogether, so that you could have the natural sustain and decay of the strings if you want – as on a zither or even a piano – but as far as I know, Hohner never put this into practice (possibly because it wouldn't have done any good for the instrument's pitch stability).

Which reminds me: it comes as a shock to many Clavinet owners to discover their instrument occasionally needs tuning. In fact, this is probably one of the few times you might decide that a synth with a decent Clavinet voice is preferable to the real thing –



only thing that draws current is the small pre-amp used to amplify signals from the strings.

After its invention by Ernst Zacharias of German manufacturers Hohner (some time around 1960), the Clavinet went through various design changes, but the best known model is almost certainly the D6. (The later E7 was almost identical except for case construction and finish.) The classic D6 was quite a handsome instrument with a top made of good quality veneered blockboard and sides of ply covered in black vinyl. There was also a tough vinyl-covered ply cover which acted as a flightcase and could be taken off its hinges and stashed away when the keyboard was in use.

Inside this cover was storage space for the transparent music holder, and the lid of the instrument was hinged so that you had access to a storage compartment for the legs and to the battery, when necessary. Imagine, if you would, a modern keyboard that runs off a PP3 and has space in the cabinet to stow the detachable legs!

The controls were pretty straightforward: on the left of the keyboard was the volume knob which also doubled as an on/off switch, and there were six rocker switches to control tone. Four of these (brilliant, treble, medium and soft) are self-explanatory, and, I would guess, switched in (or out) some pretty basic tonal circuitry – either individually or in combination. The

“Imagine, if you would, a modern keyboard that runs off a PP3 and has space in the cabinet to stow the detachable legs!”

where they are secured to the frame. The different tonal effects achieved through the use of two pickups are obviously similar to those produced on a guitar or bass. At its simplest, the pick-up closer to the bridge produces the harder, drier, less bassy sound.

The pick-ups are both split half-way across the strings – that's how the four pick-up selections are possible – and you can have combinations of, say, the bass middle pick-up with the treble end pick-up, or the two bass pick-ups together – and so on. As so often happens, it is probably the technical imperfections of this design which are responsible for the Clavinet's highly distinctive sound. You often seem to get phase cancellations between the two pick-ups, which would be disastrous in a straight clavichord impersonation, but sound great in an electric instrument with a character of its own.

The only other control is a slider on the right of the keyboard which is used as a variable damper. The more you move it away from you, the more the strings are damped. More instant character. Pizzicato is a doddle; you can alter the damping in real time, and as the effect is, not surprisingly, much more far-reaching on the treble than the bass

particularly if you need to record or play live. In theory it should be fairly simple to tune. All you have to do is undo two thumb-screws on the front, lift off the long metal cover and take a screwdriver to the tuning screws. ▶▶



Buying a Clavinet

If you decide to look out for a second-hand Clavinet, you should find there are still a fair number out there – at very cheap prices. And thanks to the built-in flightcase top, they should be in reasonable nick, too. The case on the machine I bought was pretty beaten-up, but the inner surfaces were immaculate. Expect to pay around £150 for a decent specimen – and you could well be lucky and find one for even less – but it may not be too long before hire companies and collectors start taking an interest and pushing the price up.



» The trouble is, not all keyboard players are that adept at tuning a guitar, let alone an instrument with ten times as many strings. Okay, you can start with A=440, and work around it in octaves and fifths and so on. But I've tried it and it isn't easy – particularly if people are starting to look at their watches and you've got to play in several keys. A chromatic tuner (and a good deal of time) helps of course, but a friendly piano technician might be a better bet. This, unfortunately, is the price you have to pay for using a real instrument.

Also to be considered is the weight of the Clavinet and the fact that it takes up a significant amount of room. It's not surprising that you don't see them in use much nowadays; who's going to bother carrying round a heavy, comparatively unreliable instrument when its best-known sound can be imitated by any of a number of cheap synthesisers or modules? Even in the studio, it's hard to justify the space taken up by a Clavinet when set alongside (say) a 1U multitimbral rackmount.

But then, people used to say that about the Hammond and look how many bands go to the trouble of using the real thing these days – or at the very least using a dedicated module to re-create its sounds. I wouldn't be at all surprised if the same happens with the Clavinet. For one thing, the feel of the

keyboard is subtly different from any MIDI controller; for another (and this is perhaps more important), the actual instrument produces a variety of tones which I've never heard any synthesiser imitation come near.

It's not just the raunchy two-handed funk riffs that seem to flow effortlessly from its strings – nor the left-hand riffs that double so brilliantly with electric bass. There are other much more subtle sounds which you can coax out of it. As an example: if I wanted to play Irish folk music, I could think of no better keyboard instrument to use than a Clavinet. Played lightly, it has a sound somewhere between an acoustic guitar and a zither, but it's far easier to play fast, cleanly-articulated lines on than on either of those two instruments.

Since getting my Clavinet six months ago (*I had a feeling you were more than an impartial onlooker, Peter – Ed*), I've been listening out for examples of its use on recordings. Some of them are what I expected – funk/dance tracks like Sylvester's 'You Make Me Feel', and 'Dance (Disco Heat)'; Tim Buckley's 'Freeway Blues', and Funkadelic's 'Loose Booty' – not to mention a load of Mass Production material, more Stevie Wonder 'I Wish', and Billy Preston on the Stones' *Goat's Head Soup* album.

One surprise I did get, however, was when it suddenly clicked that a lot of Bob Marley material features a Clavinet amid the masses of other early keyboard instruments the

Wailers used. Tracks like 'No Woman No Cry', 'I Shot The Sheriff', 'Get Up, Stand Up' and 'Concrete Jungle' all use it, though perhaps the clearest example is 'Burnin' and 'Lootin', where the Clavinet plays that distinctive descending riff, doubling the bass, and mixes it with backbeat syncopations throughout the song.

On a lot of Marley songs, the Clavinet is heavily wah-wahed – the wah-wah seems to have suited it as well as it did electric guitar. Other frequently-used effects were chorus and phase, and these still sound good if you use them today. Of course, the real advantage of using a Clavinet at the present time is opportunity to use it with modern, digital effects. The results can be very impressive: a long reverb does wonders for the Clavinet's more gentle and reflective sounds, while a harsh, early-reflections program makes the funkier voices sound really wicked.

As for recording the Clavinet, the ideal situation is probably to mike it up to a good old valve amp like a Fender Twin Reverb or even an AC30; but failing that, the Clavinet can make any amp sound pretty good. And if you want to avoid having to use headphones (it's a semi-acoustic instrument, remember), you can DI it. The output is surprisingly clean, and of course you're not going to have any problems with earth loops without a mains cable. There doesn't even seem to be a great difference between using a DI box and going straight into the desk, which makes life even easier.

If you're looking for a particularly meaty sound, you can either double it with a bass guitar or synth, or boost the low mid on the mixer input channel. Despite having strings no thicker than a guitar's low E, this is usually all that's required to make the Clavinet sound pretty solid at the low end.

Using a Clavinet live should certainly make a change from the ubiquitous Korgs, Yamahas and Rolands. You'd need to be slightly crazy, of course, and it would only be worth it if you made full use of the Clavinet's innate versatility – or if the instrument was such a centre-piece of your sound that you could justify it. Better, perhaps, simply to make sure your rack has something in it that can produce a half-decent imitation of the basic funk sound. There's no way that anyone would want to return to the massed banks of keyboards that hemmed in the pomp merchants of the late seventies. Is there? ■

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Peavey

DPM Spectrum Bass Module

Text by
Simon Trask

Eschewing the usual jack-of-all-trades approach to sound synthesis, Peavey's latest synth module puts the boom in your bottom and the bass in your face...

The history of synthesiser design is the history of manufacturers vying with one another to produce the instrument which offers the largest and most varied range of sounds. It's a design imperative that hasn't diminished in importance with the rise of the sample-based synth – quite the opposite, in fact. In contrast, sonic specialisation has traditionally counted for little where synths are concerned.

But let's face it, once you've got a couple of

option with manufacturers. Leaving aside those old analogue monosynths which have assumed the role of bass synth through popular usage rather than design there have been surprisingly few dedicated bass instruments. Roland's TB303 Bass Line is undoubtedly the most famous; 360 Systems' MIDibass and Pro MIDibass are somewhat less well-known and appreciated.

So, is there a place for such an instrument today? Peavey evidently think so, for they've taken the synthesis technology underlying their DPM Series synths (DCO, DCF with resonance, DCA, Filter and Amplitude envelopes, LFO, and Pan), used it to create 200 preset bass sounds, and packaged those sounds in an inexpensive 1U 19" rackmount MIDI module. The resulting instrument – the DPM Spectrum Bass – isn't only aimed at keyboard-based MIDI musicians, however. It's also intended as a companion-module for the company's Midibase MIDI bass guitar controller, as is evident from a number of its design features. Not least among these features is the module's straightforward, LCD-free front panel, which should appeal to musicians who like the quick access and ready

Photography: James Cumpsty



instruments which give you a bit of everything, what you really want next is an instrument which gives you a lot of something – and what better 'something' than bass sounds? The sonic vocabulary of the bassline has increased greatly over the past decade, in line with the ever-expanding vocabulary of drum and percussion sounds used in popular music. But while the latter have long been supported by dedicated instruments, in the form of the drum machine and the drum module, the bass machine/module has traditionally not been a popular

comprehension provided by dedicated knobs. But does the module offer enough substance underneath its surface simplicity to make it worth buying?

On superficial acquaintance, the Spectrum Bass may seem not to offer much at all. Its front-panel Preset knob gives you access to just 14 Presets – not many sounds for any contemporary hi-tech instrument, dedicated or otherwise. However, turn the knob to the

Multi mode

You can get the Spectrum Bass to respond multitimbrally across four consecutive MIDI channels by selecting either Multi or Multi Legato mode from its front panel; the lowest channel is set using the MIDI Channel knob. If you only want to use two or three bass sounds at once, you can disable the Spectrum Bass's response on the remaining channel(s) by transmitting patch number 128 to it on those channels. This lets you use the remaining channels for parts played on other MIDI instruments. However, as soon as you send the bass module a patch number

in the range 1-100 on one of its multitimbral channels, its response on that channel is re-enabled. In practice, this makes it difficult if not impossible to use these channels for other MIDI instruments when the Spectrum Bass is in Multi mode. So what can you do if you want to use two bass sounds at once but spare MIDI channels are in short supply? Well, you can select MIDI channel 15 as the lowest channel; this way, only channels 15 and 16 will be used up by the Spectrum Bass. However, if you're used to putting your bass parts on the lowest channel(s), you might find this an annoyance.

MIDI 1 or MIDI 2 setting and you have remote access to 200 Presets. MIDI 1 gives remote MIDI access to the first 100 of those Presets, MIDI 2 to the other 100, using patch changes only; if you can transmit MIDI Bank Select commands from your MIDI instrument or sequencer, then you can access all 200 Presets from either of these settings.

Let's run across the other front-panel features. The Power/MIDI LED indicates when power to the unit is on and, by flickering, when MIDI data is being received. The Volume knob, of course, is self-explanatory! The MIDI Channel knob lets you set the module's receive channel for Poly mode, and its base (ie. lowest) receive channel for Legato, Multi and Multi Legato modes (see the Legato Playing and Multi Mode boxes for more information on these modes).

Transposition of the master tuning is provided by, yes, the Transpose knob; you can transpose incoming notes up or down one or two octaves, or to any semitone within the first higher octave. The Spectrum Bass can also be fine-tuned within a semitone either way, in one-cent steps,

using the Fine Tune up and down buttons, while the module's various MIDI receive modes can be selected using the Mode Select button and associated LEDs. Straightforward stuff, indeed.

The only front-panel function not apparent without recourse to the manual is Global Pitchbend Range; to set this, you define the range using the Transpose knob, then hold down both Fine Tune buttons while powering up the module. Yes, it's kludgy, but that's what happens when there's no LCD screen to take the parameter strain and no space on the front panel to take that extra knob which could have been dedicated to setting pitchbend range. Matters aren't improved by the absence of a power on/off switch: power connections have to be physically broken and then remade – and that means pulling out and replacing either the power lead or the supplied AC adaptor, or switching off the power at the mains. Whichever way, it's a pain. What's more, the review model didn't take kindly to connections being broken and remade in this way, exhibiting a nasty habit of remaining silent when powered up. >>>

The Spec

Presets: 200
Wave ROM: 1 Mb
Polyphony: eight voices
Layering: up to four Presets
Multitimbrality: four parts
MIDI Receive Modes: Omni, Poly, Multi, Legato, Poly Legato, Multi Legato
Front Panel: Power/MIDI LED, Volume knob, Preset knob, MIDI Channel knob, Transpose knob, Fine Tune up and down buttons, Mode select button and LEDs
Rear Panel: power input socket, MIDI In, Out and Thru sockets, Stereo/left audio output jack, Mono/right audio output jack
Casing: 1U 19"



Legato playing

Normally when you play notes consecutively on the keyboard, each one is triggered anew, beginning from its attack stage. However, in legato mode there's a smooth transition between consecutive notes, so long as each new note is played before the previous one is released; in effect, one amplitude-envelope sustain stage extends across any series of legato notes. Legato mode is the nearest that a keyboard instrument can get to mimicking hammer-ons and pull-offs on a stringed instrument – making its inclusion on the Spectrum Bass wholly appropriate. If you select Legato mode on the module, the same Preset is assigned to four consecutive MIDI channels, and is played legato

on each channel. Multi Legato mode, on the other hand, lets you assign a different Preset to each of the four channels. But why four channels? Well, that's one channel for each of the four strings on a Peavey Midibase MIDI bass guitar. Legato playing is also a valid performance style for synth bass, of course, and so the Spectrum Bass also has a Poly Legato mode; ie. it responds on a single MIDI channel in legato mode. The bass module can also respond to the MIDI Legato Footswitch controller (#68) on each channel, allowing you to switch quickly in and out of legato mode. Alternatively, while in legato mode you can simply vary your playing technique, overlapping consecutive notes when you want to play them legato and 'separating' them when you want to trigger them individually.

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▶ Although all the Spectrum Bass Preset parameters are fixed in ROM, you can make 'live' changes to selected parameters on each active MIDI channel using MIDI controllers. In addition to the familiar volume (controller #7) and pan (#10), the module implements the legato footswitch controller (#68 - see 'Legato Playing' box) and controllers for sound variation (#70), release time (#72), attack time (#73) and brightness (#74). The attack time controller is misleadingly named, as it actually turns velocity response on/off on the selected channel. Brightness, more obviously, alters the filter's cutoff point. The most unusual controller function is sound variation, which you use to layer from two to four Presets; this allows you to expand the Spectrum Bass sonic vocabulary beyond its 200 Presets, and create some massive bass sounds in the process.

Of course, layered presets means reduced note polyphony - though if you're playing a single monophonic bassline you shouldn't run into problems. The Spectrum is eight-voice polyphonic, so if you really must have more voices you'll have to chain two modules together using MIDI overflow mode on the first module; this 'overflows' incoming notes to the second module when all the first's voices are in use.

It is possible to get at all of the Spectrum Bass's Preset parameters - but only if you're prepared to enter the world of MIDI SysEx edit commands. For intrepid explorers, a full list of parameters along with the necessary SysEx programming information can be found towards the back of the slender manual. If you're comfortable tapping SysEx data strings into the MIDI Mixer page of a software sequencer, a little work will greatly expand the sonic capabilities of the Spectrum Bass. In fact, it makes a lot of sense to store parameter edits in a sequencer, because any edited values are confined to the edit buffer on the module itself (remember, its Presets are stored in ROM). It does seem a shame, not to mention a touch ironic, though, that most users will effectively be prevented from exploring the full sonic capabilities of what is meant to be an easy-to-use instrument. Then again, with 200 Presets onboard there are plenty enough sounds to keep most people happy - or are there?

Now we come to the crucial questions: does the Spectrum Bass sound any good, and does it provide a varied-enough palette of bass sounds to justify its dedicated status? Anyone who has used one of Peavey's DPM Series synths will know that the Peavey sound has a powerful, warm, full bass end; not surprisingly, this has been carried over to the Spectrum Bass. All in all, the module is well able to hold its end up (or should that be down?) where it matters most. What's more, the variety of bass sounds which it provides represent the best attempt that I've come across to reflect, on a single instrument, the broad spectrum of bass sounds in use today. Having said that, I have come across better examples of certain individual sounds, such as acoustic, fretless and slapped bass sounds, than those provided by the Spectrum Bass.

All in all, though, the sonic strength and quality of the module, the number and variety of bass sounds it provides, and its modest asking price add up to an instrument which is well worth buying if you're into bassline creativity and the 'science' of bass sound. ■

Info

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Yamaha QY20

Portable Workstation

Text by
Ian Waugh

Small, perfectly formed and positively bristling with useful features, this new baby from Yamaha will occupy a lot more of your time than it will your workspace...



Success through innovation is not something anyone can predict these days – particularly when it involves a product like the QY10. A video cassette-size keyboard with rubber keys doesn't exactly sound like an inspiring new piece of kit. But inspiring it was to a great many people and it went on to become one of Yamaha's most popular products for 1991.

But time moves on and so do musical instrument designs, so it will come as no surprise to learn that the QY10 has been overhauled, revamped and re-jigged into the shape of the QY20. It's a teeny bit bigger than the QY10 but still qualifies as being video cassette size. In its Tardis-like interior it houses an eight-track sequencer, 100 preset patterns each with six variations, 100 AWM sounds and eight drum kits. It can store up to 20 Songs with a total capacity of 28,000 notes. It's 32-voice polyphonic (some sounds use more than one voice) and can play a maximum of 28 notes at once.

Externally, it has a nice big 128 x 64 dot LCD with adjustable contrast, MIDI In and Out sockets, a stereo mini jack Out and a headphone Out. The controls are still squidgy rubber things but it sports a 25-note, er... button, polyphonic keyboard compared with the QY10's one-octave monophonic affair. You can run the QY20 off batteries for composition on the move or plug in an optional mains adaptor – if you're paying for a hotel room you may as well use their electricity.

It has three operational modes. In Voice Mode you can access the sounds and drum kits which may be played from the QY20's keyboard or from a connected MIDI keyboard. The sounds are also assigned to the sequencer tracks in this mode. In Pattern Mode you can play and record patterns up to eight bars long using drums, bass and two chord tracks and in Song Mode these may be linked together and added to a further four tracks of your own to produce a complete song. If you want to hear what all this can add up to (with a little programming skill), try accessing the Demo song from the Voice Mode menu – it's excellent!

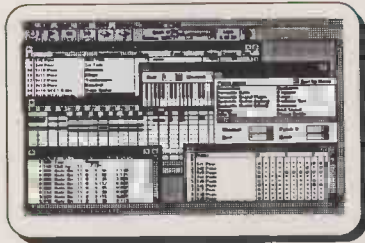
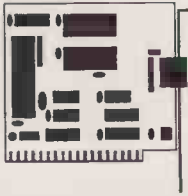
Overall operation is surprisingly easy – especially when compared to the QY10 – although cramming so much into such a small space does involve you in a fair amount of button pushing and you'll have to read the manual carefully. However, if the QY10 was created just to see if it could be done, the QY20 has certainly been through the R&D department and the design boys have implemented a good interface considering the space available.

The Voice Mode screen shows a graphic eight-track mixer. The first four tracks are used for your own music lines and these are followed by two chord tracks, a bass track and a drum track. You can assign sounds to the first seven tracks and choose one of the eight drum kits to play on the eighth. You can mute tracks and adjust the pan settings and the volumes. It's very graphic and quite easy.

The 100 AWM sounds are surprisingly good although the loop points are discernible in some. They are broadly similar in feel to the TG100 and divided into the same 16 categories used by GM. They also follow the GM layout fairly closely – although with only 100 sounds it's a few tones short of a full GM module. Some program change numbers from 101 to 128 ►►



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▶▶ select sounds from the 100 while others switch the track off altogether.

The drum sounds are quite excellent with 54 drums per kit (MIDI note numbers 29 to 82) and mapped to GM so you can play a GM drum track through the QY20. It's a shame Yamaha didn't go the whole hog and include another 28 sounds and full GM compatibility and have done with it. Would the company prefer GM'ers to buy the TG100? At the moment it's considerably cheaper! And a unit with the extra facilities of the QY20 would have been very tempting to many more potential buyers, I'm sure.

The QY20 has 100 built-in patterns each with six variations: Intro, Normal, Variation, Fill 1, Fill 2 and Ending. Yamaha are past masters of the accompaniment pattern and there is some really tasty stuff here including one or two which have been borrowed from popular songs.

Patterns are divided into 10 categories: Dance, Ballad, Rock & Pop, Rhythm & Blues, Hard Rock, Rock 'n' Roll, Jazz, Latin, Reggae and World. There are 100 empty Pattern slots for your own patterns and they can be up to eight bars long. Any variations you want, however, must be recorded as patterns in their own right. You have the two Chords tracks, Bass and Drums to play with.

Recording in real time can be a bit of a faff. You need two pairs of hands the size of a six-year-old and the dexterity of Paul Daniels to create a good pattern using the QY20's keyboard. Step recording is easier and more accurate – but inevitably takes longer. To complement your programming skills there are eight Pattern Jobs: Copy Pattern, Quantise, Transpose, Modify Velocity, Modify Gate Time, Pattern Name, Clear Track, Clear Pattern – fairly self-explanatory as you can see.

Song Mode is actually the best place to try out the patterns as you can step through them in real time. Fill 1 takes you to the Variation and Fill 2 takes you back to the Normal pattern. The QY20 uses Yamaha's ABC (Auto Bass Chord) feature which can be found on the company's portable keyboards. It automatically creates chord and bass tracks to match any chord you select. There are 25 chord types to choose from which should cater for most users – even the jazzers. To select a new one highlight the chord area of the display, press the key corresponding to the root note, then the key holding the chord type and finally the Enter key.

You can record an accompaniment in real time or step time. Real time is quicker, of course, but you really need to know what you're going to do before you start recording and unless you've got nimble fingers it's a good idea to slow the tempo down. The chord changes, for example, occur on quarter-note divisions and it can take up to four button presses to enter a chord. Step-time recording includes Repeat and Tempo change functions and you can even enter *accels* and *rits*. It's a bit more involved than real-time recording and involves the selection of sub-screens – but that's the price you pay for accuracy.

You can alter the time signature of any measure and specify the bass note for a chord. The Syncopate function makes a chord begin on the upbeat, an eighth note before the beat on which it is entered. On playback, the chord display shows which chord is coming up next before it actually plays.

The whole Song creation process is surprisingly easy. Typically, you would lay down the drum pattern track, then the chord track and then record your own four tracks on top. Again, you can do this in real or step time. If you are not going to change patterns (other than to use the variations) then it's quite easy to record the drum track in real time. There are 14 Song Jobs: Mix Track, Copy Measure, Create Measure, Quantise, Delete Measure, Erase Measure, Transpose, Move Clock, Remove Event, Modify Velocity, Modify Gate Time, Song Name, Clear Track and Clear Song – most of the functions, in fact, you are likely to want in a sequencer.

Mix Track is useful for building up complex parts, Move Clock may be of help if you've recorded something a little out of sync or you need to make a track more laid back or give it a bit of a push. Remove Event lets you remove pitch bend and control change data (which can often take up huge amounts of the machine's memory). There are extensive edit options in the Edit menu although inevitably on a display such as this, an event list is the order of the day. It's all rather numeric and there are several screens to flip through; the display keeps you informed about what event you're editing and it does handle the task quite well but it's not my idea of programming heaven.

The QY10 succeeded because it was a unique product at a price low enough for it to be a mass market item. Obviously, the intention was for the QY20 to follow in the footsteps of its predecessor, but thanks to the efforts of that nice Mr Lamont chappie and his action to 'steady' the pound last year, there was a time when it looked as though the price would approach the £450 mark.

In this light, the actual retail price of £399 (inc.VAT) seems much more reasonable – especially when you look at the features of the QY20 which are an improvement on the QY10 in almost every department. In fact I'd go so far as to say it's easily twice as good. It's a darn sight more straightforward to use and I'm sure it won't be long before we start hearing it in commercial recordings – the sounds really are that good. You might also be tempted to use the patterns for your own songs – they're pretty excellent, too.

But however good value for money it represents, its price does put it in the same ball park as full expanders and sophisticated portable keyboards. It even starts to encroach upon low-end synth territory – and this does cast it in a rather more unfavourable light. Clearly, what you're paying for is versatility and adaptability and also a measure of the novelty value associated with the QY10 from which it developed. Add to this the ability to use it anywhere to write a song, then take it home and use the sounds in your studio (gigging musicians could even use the patterns live to sing to or as a quick way of putting down backing tracks) and you're forced to the conclusion that no other instrument can match it for compactness or power. ■

Utilities

Utility Mode has three sub menus: System, Bulk and ABC

The System menu:

MIDI Sync – internal or external

MIDI Control – MIDI data receive on or off

Device Number – sets the MIDI channel for bulk data dumps

Master Tune – from -64 to +63 in 1/50th semitone increments

Metronome – off, record, record/play, always

Program Change Table – selects QY20 or GM voice modes

The Bulk menu:

Bulk Dump can dump individual Songs and Patterns, all Songs or Patterns or the entire contents of the unit.

The ABC menu:

ABC sets the range of notes between which chords played will be recognised by the ABC system. The settings apply to the QY20's keyboard and to any connected MIDI keyboard.

Info

Price: QY20 £399.00 inc VAT

More from: Yamaha
Kemble Music (UK) Ltd
Sherbourne Drive
Tilbrook
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Swift Halves

Neil Conti's Funky Drums From Hell

Text by Nigel Lord

That Neil Conti knows funk there can be no doubt; demand for him as a session player who can get behind a groove is high and getting higher. Bowie, Prefab Sprout, Mick Jagger, Annie Lennox, Primal Scream, Tom Dolby – the list is long. But does the funk stand up stripped of its accompanying parts – the bass lines, the guitar, the *attitude*? Is hell its source or is it just the whimsy of the marketing boys at AMG? Select *Reveal...*



The 95 tracks on this collection are each devoted to a single idea developed according to whether they are listed as 'grooves' or 'loops'. In Conti's words, the grooves are "little musical snacks with a few fills that might be useful". Loops, on the other hand, comprise "a few choice bars selected and edited together".

Further subdivisions split the collection into 'Hard Funk', 'Mellow Antique', 'Natural Room' and 'Dry Studio' according to the overall drum sound, and two additional sections provide some rather more off-the-wall percussion excursions – 'The Basement Tapes' – and a varied selection of hi-hat patterns – 'Funky Hi-Hats'. Rounding things off there's a piece of – gasp – music taken from an album entitled *Backstage* and copyrighted to Backstage Records. Are we to assume this too may be used as a sample source? No matter; the samples which are intended for public consumption provide us with very palatable fare indeed. In fact, this compilation represents the coming together of everything that has been learnt about drumming in the last thirty years – taut performances, impeccable recordings, skilful tuning and above all, the value of the *groove*.

Notwithstanding the categories into which the kits are divided, the overall sound of the drums on this collection is heavy and uncompromising. Really, we're well into John Bonham territory here – undamped and very ambient. Stylistically, the collection sticks to dance, but reflecting the funk emphasis, the tempos hover around the 85-105 bpm mark. The repetition of the rhythms over a number of bars makes it possible to get a real feel for them before sampling, and assigning each to a separate track is also of great help when cueing up (though it does place a ceiling on the number of tracks included). I certainly approve of the variations on each rhythm; no longer is it necessary to base an entire rhythm track on a two-bar loop. If you have the memory you can string a number of samples together (intros, fills, etc.) to produce a more varied and – dare I say it – human effect.

Unlike other sample CDs (particularly those using existing tracks as their source) there are no quick fixes here – no instant songs. But if you're looking for a source of fresh, new rhythmic ideas I can recommend this CD wholeheartedly; the only reason I can't recommend it *unreservedly* is that the sheer weight of some of the grooves really could be the undoing of a track that isn't in A1 physical shape. If these funky drums are from hell, the Devil still seems to have all the best music. ■

Info

Price: £49 Inc. VAT and free copy of 'Now That's What I Call Sampling' CD.
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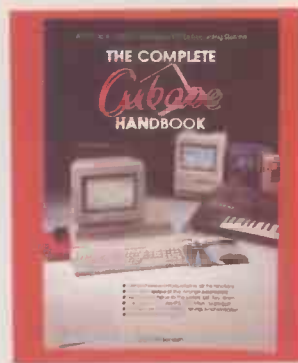
The Complete Cubase Handbook

Text by Vic Lennard

Writing a manual for one of today's high-powered, professional sequencers can be something of a nightmare. Most companies use an expandable, A5 system to keep it to manageable proportions, but then find that some 400-odd pages are required to describe all of the functions satisfactorily. This invariably means that the basics are not covered adequately, and that there are insufficient illustrations.

Rectifying the situation usually falls to third parties, and involves the production of practical handbooks or video manuals. The latter, though fashionable, tend to be of variable quality and have to be fast-forwarded and rewound to locate specific points. By contrast, the handbook – if based on hands-on use of the software – can often fill in those areas left uncovered by the manual, and may be kept handy for instant reference. This is the thinking behind *The Complete Cubase Handbook*.

Although written by German journalist, Udo Weyers, there has obviously been a degree of input from Steinberg themselves. Of course, there is a danger that this could have led to a re-write of the existing manual, but happily this is not the case. With its 384, A4-sized pages divided into 20 chapters, the book covers a lot of new ground. Apart from anything else, the author has had the sense to use nine pages for the contents list – believing, presumably, that if you're buying a book of this sort, the last thing you'll want to do is spend half an hour searching for a particular topic.



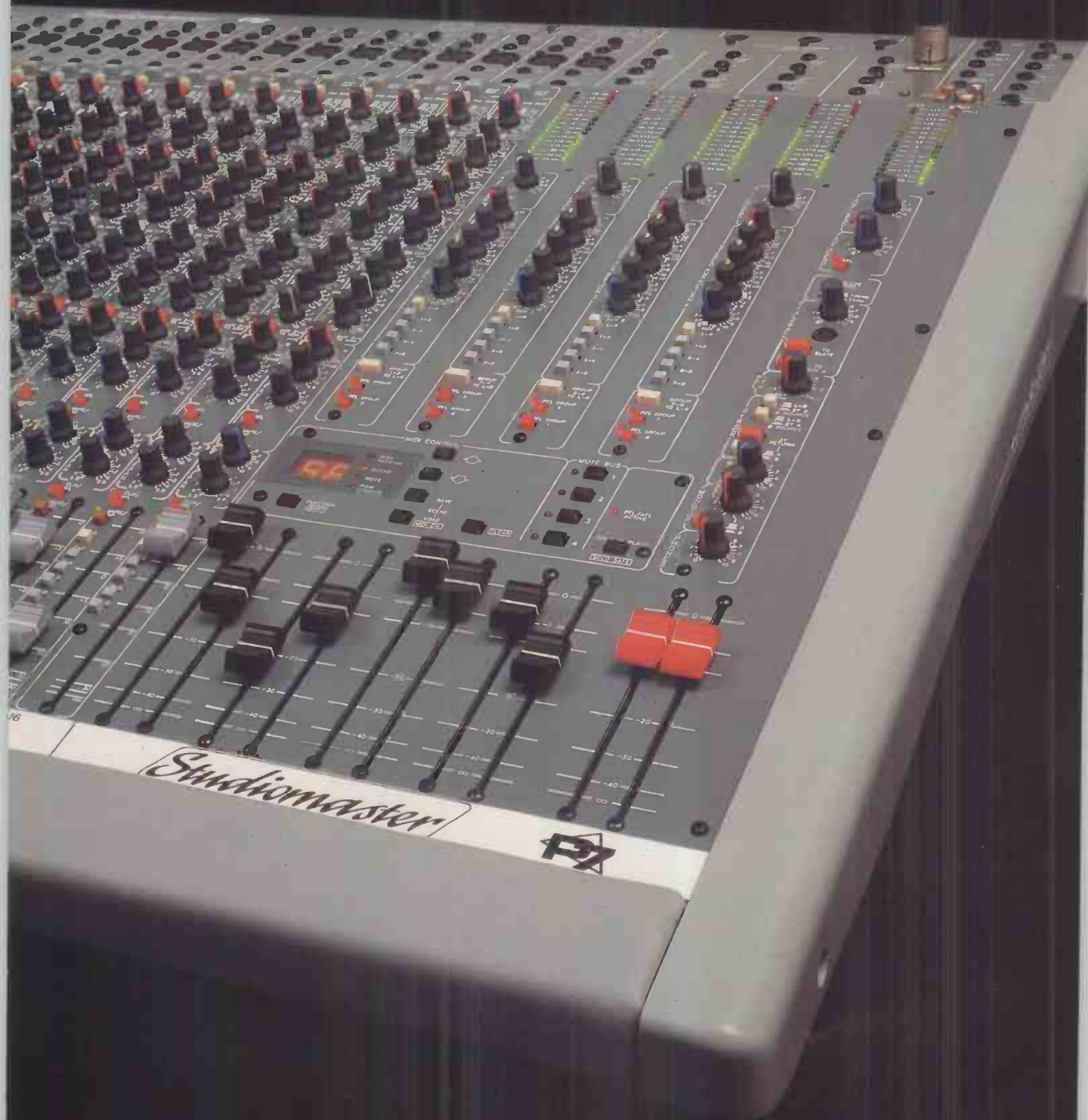
While this is not a book that you are likely to read from cover to cover in one go, it's certainly worth casting an eye over the first chapter, 'Installing The System', and checking that your MIDI setup is correctly configured. The few chapters after that concentrate on your first recording, basic functions, parts, and each of the edit screens. Even

advanced users can pick up a trick or two. The quality of screen grabs is exemplary throughout, and while certain areas were out of date before the book was even released (such as the part on MIDI Control Changes), the book concentrates on the latest ST version – the current Apple Mac version being practically identical (a short chapter at the end outlines the differences). Cubase for Windows is left out, as it is currently a fair way behind.

Even with this book, certain areas of operation will remain a mystery to many users – including, no doubt, the Intelligent Phrase Synthesiser, Logical Editor and MIDI Mixer. That said, they are looked at in some detail here – and certainly, anyone currently doing battle with the existing manual should find this book an enormous help. At just under thirty quid, *The Complete Cubase Handbook* is by no means cheap, but then neither is your time, and with hints and tips, conversion tables and keyboard commands filling out the appendices it should more than pay for itself. Anyone who is serious about their work with Cubase should carefully consider it. ■

Info

Price: £29.95
More from: Club Cubase UK, 26 Brunswick Park Gardens, New Southgate, London N11 1EJ. Tel: 081 368 2245, Fax: 081 368 7918.



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Microdeal

PC Master Sound

Sampler

Text by
Ian Waugh



ST users have them. Amiga users have them. And now PC owners can have one too – a budget-priced sampler for their computer...

The novelty of PC Master Sound (apart from the fact that it costs less than fifty quid) is that the sample cartridge plugs into your computer's parallel port. That means not having to open your machine and fiddle about with cards. There are no IRQ and DMA settings to alter either, and users with portable PCs will be pleased to learn they can use it, too. In fact, Master Sound will run on any AT machine – 286 upwards – with EGA or VGA display and DOS 3.0 or above. It will even run without a hard disk – although if you don't have one of these I'd suggest you put it at the top of your shopping list. The program also requires a mouse.

The cartridge has phono In and Out sockets and a volume control for setting the recording level. Included with the package are a pair of 1.2m phono cables to plug into your hi-

fi, but like most cables that are supplied with equipment, they are a little too short to be of any real use. Both 3.5" and 5.25" discs are provided and each contains three programs: the Editor, Drum Beat and Player.

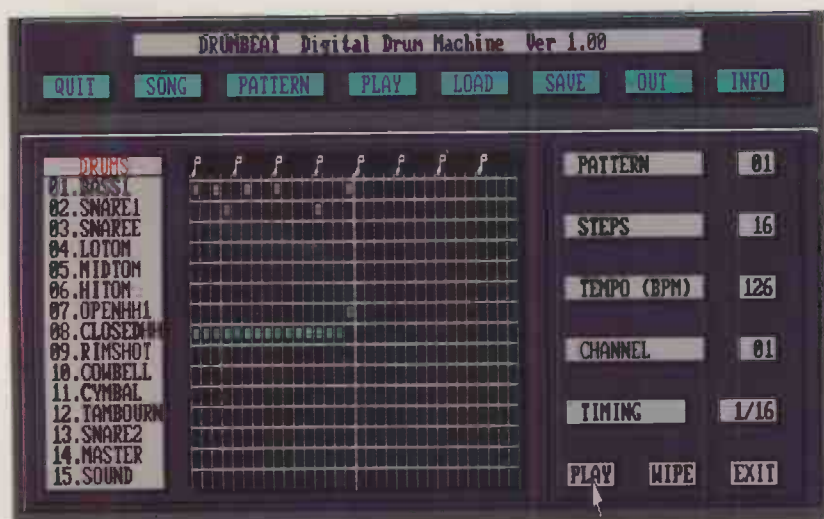
The Editor is where the sampling is done – the screen including button icons for all the program's functions. The sample is displayed as a conventional 'oscilloscope' waveform in the central window and it's possible to isolate a section with left and right markers. You can also vary the record and playback speeds from 4-20kHz, although there are only five fixed rates. Shame it's not fully variable.

As well as the usual record, play, cut, copy and paste functions you can overlay one sample with another, alter the volume, create fade ins and outs, reverse the sample, add echo and apply filtering. It's also possible to zoom in and out in order to home in on an area of a sample for more detailed editing. You can pre-determine the size of the edit buffer which is used during paste functions; set to 0, the program will create a temporary file on disk which is useful for users with limited RAM. Monitor and scope functions let you check the incoming signal level prior to recording and you can adjust this with the control on the cartridge.

Also included is a Shrink function which will compress a sample to half its original size in order to conserve memory. I found it a good idea to record at the fastest possible speed – 20kHz – and then shrink the sample to obtain the best results. Other goodies include a loop function, a FFT (Fourier Fast Transform) display (which is impressive to look at but of limited practical use), and a keyboard function which lets you play samples from your PC's keyboard – though only in mono. None of the programs support MIDI.

The program supports custom AVR samples and Windows' Wav format – and indeed, you can load in any sample format – but be prepared for some unpredictable results. (A fully adjustable sample rate would have been useful here.)

Loading in the Drum Beat program effectively turns your PC into a programmable drum machine. In fact, the program's *modus operandi* follows closely that of most drum machines. You can construct up to 50 patterns and link



PCMS1: Creating a rhythm pattern is just a matter of clicking hits onto a grid

them together to create up to 10 songs – each having up to 100 pattern entries. The various song, pattern and loading screens are selected from a menu which stays at the top of the screen.

Patterns are built up by clicking 'hits' onto a grid which can be up to 32 beats long and each pattern can be assigned its own tempo. It's dead easy to program, but unfortunately, you can't play the pattern and edit it in real time. Also, though it is possible to save and load single patterns, you can't copy and paste individual drum lines.

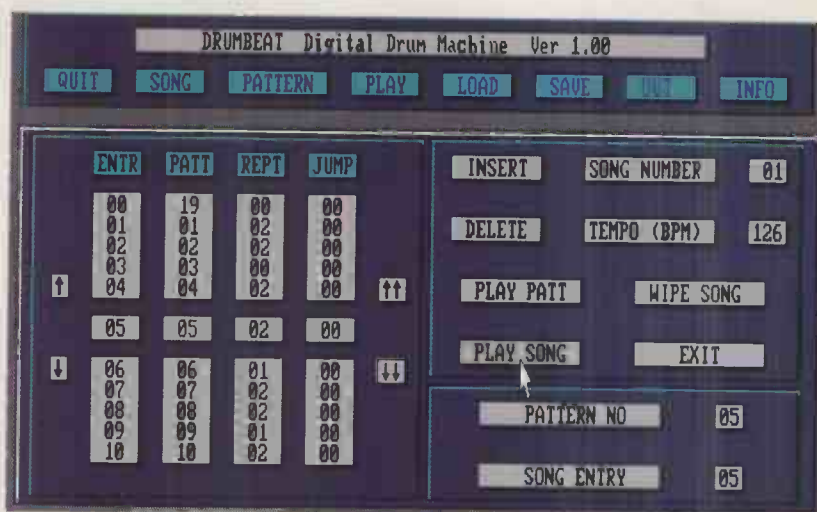
When constructing a song, it's necessary to assign a pattern number to one of the 100 song slots and enter a figure for how many times you want it to repeat. You can also enter a jump command which takes the play routine to another part of the song. Insert and delete functions are included to help with editing and you can play the current pattern so you know how well it will fit into the song list.

The samples themselves are assembled into 'drum kits' of up to 15 samples each – though only two samples may be played at the same time and you have to decide whether you're going to enter a hit on channels 1 or 2. If you enter hit on a channel and there's already a hit at that time slot somewhere else in the pattern, the first hit will disappear. I can't help feeling it would have been better if you weren't allowed to enter the subsequent hit in the first place. If the two-sample limit does pose a problem, there's nothing to stop you creating your own double samples – snare and bass drum, for example – so you could effectively 'sound' more than two drums at the same time.

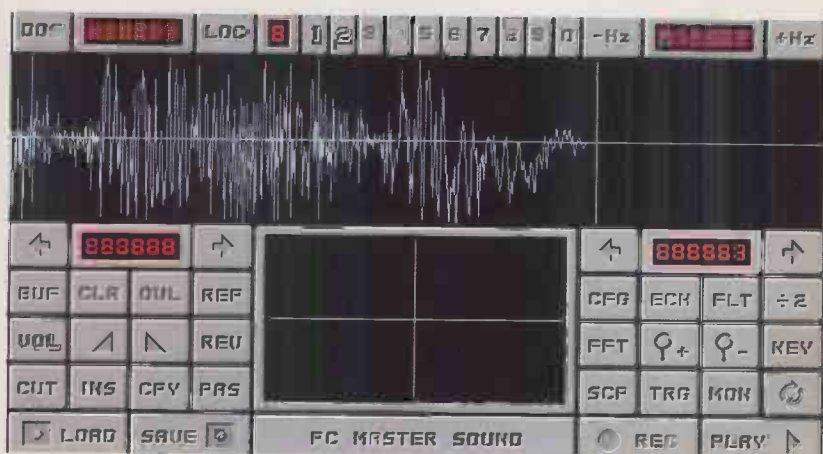
Incidentally, the program comes with its own set of drum samples (which are actually very good), and there's also an excellent demo track. The final program – Player – is simply a sample player which lets you play AVR samples from DOS. You can play sounds through the PC's speaker, through the Master Sound cartridge or through a Sound Blaster or Ad Lib card output – although I found this didn't work with a third-party card set up for Sound Blaster emulation.

It's a shame that the designers, AVR, didn't take the opportunity of producing a conversion to spruce up the interface. The new editor in Replay 16 for the ST (reviewed in *MT* December 1992), for example, is superb. The program may be easy to use but the interface is antique. It's necessary, for example, to exit a screen before you can access any of the functions from the menu at the top of the screen. Drum Beat hasn't been updated much either (even through successive generations on the ST) and it is perhaps time it was.

In fact, in comparison with some of Microdeal's other samplers, PC Master Sound may seem a little basic. But the programs do what they set out to do: they work well, they are easy to use and they're fun! Above all, the package is affordable and Microdeal are to be



PCMS2: In the song screen you can link patterns together to produce a complete drum track



PCMS3: The PC Master Sound screen uses buttons to access all the functions you need for creating and editing samples



PCMS4: There's even an FFT display

congratulated for looking at the PC market at last. If PC Master Sound does well I've no doubt we'll be seeing more sophisticated PC samplers appear – possibly even a high quality 16-bit stereo MIDI-compatible sampler (this is only speculation on my part, dear readers). Meanwhile, there's now a useful little sampler package for PC users which is easy to fit and requires virtually no setting up. That's got to be an attractive proposition. ■

Info

Price: PC Master Sound
£49.95 inc. VAT
Plus £1.00 P&P
More from: Microdeal
PO Box 68
St Austell
Cornwall PL25 4YB.
Tel: 0726 68020
Fax: 0726 69692

A photograph of a man with a grey beard and a yellow beanie, wearing a plaid shirt, playing a piano. He is looking to the right. In the background, there is a bookshelf filled with books and a metronome on the piano. The word "Terr" is overlaid in large white letters.

Terr

**20th
Century
Americans**

y Riley

Like last month's 20th Century composer, Harold Budd, Terry Riley was born in California, but at fifty-eight years of age, he is to be regarded as more a contemporary of Philip Glass and Steve Reich. Indeed, his composition *In C* is widely recognised as the springboard for the Minimalist movement – a movement associated with both these other composers. Written in 1964, and first available on record from 1968, the work consisted of repeated interlocking patterns, of indeterminate tempo, and set against a metronomic piano figure – a combination of fluidity and mesmerism which coincided with similar retreats from Western musical tradition in the hands of Reich, Glass, John Adams – and, of course, the legions of progressive rock groups such as The Soft Machine and Tangerine Dream whose audiences felt the wind of change flapping in their flares.

Riley soon turned his attention to solo works for electronic keyboards and soprano saxophone, and pioneered the use of tape delay in live performance – a technique which surfaced in a series of works whose recorded versions now form the backbone of any serious 'new age' collection: *A Rainbow In Curved Air*,

The Persian Surgery Dervishes and *Shri Camel*.

Various collaborations have proved enduringly fruitful. In 1970 he went to India to study raga with the renowned vocal master Pandit Pran Nath, who has frequently appeared in concert with Riley as vocal and tamboura accompanist. As a teacher of North Indian raga and composition during his years at Mills College in the 1970s, Riley met David Harrington, the founder and leader of the Kronos string quartet. This too led to a long association which to date has produced nine string quartets (including *Cadenza On The Night Pain* and the epic five-quartet cycle *Salome Dances For Peace* – selected as the number one classical album for 1989 by *USA Today*) and a quintet, *The Crow's Rosary*.

A major orchestral work, *The Jade Palace Orchestral Dances*, was commissioned by Carnegie Hall for their centennial celebrations in 1990, and several compositions for small ensembles such as the Rova Saxophone Quartet, *Zeitgeist* and Stephen Scott's bowed piano group, complete the picture of a consistently innovative composer. PW

How do you work as a composer?

"I have a definite routine. I rise very early – I usually get up around 5.30 or 6 and start out with a cup of good Indian chai; this is jet fuel which gets the cobwebs out and gets me thinking about what I want to do. I always practise North Indian raga in the morning, I find it a very good way to tune up for any kind of work. So I always do that first thing for at least an hour. That's one reason why I moved up here into the country – I liked the quiet for practising raga. You can actually hear your own internal sounds which, if you've been in the city, are racing. I work pretty much throughout the day – I usually take an exercise period and ride my bike, take a long walk or work in the yard. The rest of the day I'm usually either writing or practising music or taking care of business."

Can you tell us about the use of just intonation?

"Well, it has a particular colouring in the intervals that you can't get in equal temperament. Once you've worked at it, it's very alluring, it's a very beautiful system. Not all musics work equally well in just intonation."

Is there more to it than the atmospheric sound of it: that the resonances create sympathetic resonances and moods within the body?

"There are a lot of theories like that and I think my experience with it would bear that out. Listening to these resonances slows

everything down because they're very much in focus. If you threw up a bunch of slides on the wall that were out of focus, you'd tend to go through them very quickly. None of them would satisfy you. But, if you can get one that's really sharply focused you'd want to look at it longer just because it's peaceful, it's happening, you don't need to go on right away. That's the way these intervals are – they make you want to hear them more. So just intonation is very good for modal music in that it isn't modulating and moving all over the place, but is making a very static but deep statement."

How does your use of just intonation differ from La Monte Young's?

"Well, La Monte works exclusively in just intonation and I don't. I do use equal temperament occasionally. I consider it another kind of tuning: what it does, it does best. But there are many variations in tuning, it's a very big field that's often overlooked by musicians – they

Just intonation

As discussed in the following interview, 'just intonation' means the exploitation of subtle gradations between notes – the theoretically infinite curve between one semitone and the next – according to the natural bias of key and scale. Only instruments capable of pitching anywhere within a scale – such as the violin or the human voice – have the potential to do this. Keyboards, for example, have to adopt the 'artificial' imposition of temperament – stepped scales – because the relationship between each note is mechanically fixed. When each semitone is equally spaced throughout the scale, this is called 'equal temperament'.

For the composer, just intonation usually means that A# provides a different pitch to Bb, whereas for the equally tempered muso there are only 12 notes in the universe and you get Bach. Riley found liberation in Indian raga, but there are other precedents: blues guitarists have been just-intoning like crazy for decades.



► usually just take whatever tuning is given to them and work it without questioning it. After three or four hundred years of playing in equal temperament, our ears are used to it and we are a bit lazy about it. You didn't even see the synthesiser manufacturers creating possibilities for just intonation until recently. Now they're starting to produce synthesisers that are tunable. But of course, the keyboard has laid down a lot of limitations in tuning with just twelve keys. I think the voice, not the keyboard, is the best way to express just intonation because of its emotional quality and the possibility to sing any frequency within its range.

"The problem, of course, is that you can't take just intonation and play music designed for equal temperament. You suddenly find that these sounds require something else compositionally. So most people, when they get a keyboard that's tunable in just intonation say, 'well, I've got it but I don't know what to do with it!' You have to be tuned into a kind of music that works. I was lucky because in the '60s I worked with La Monte who was, by then, working in just intonation, and then I got involved in Indian classical music which is also in just intonation. So at least half my practice has always been in that tuning because of the kinds of music I play."

David Harrington of the Kronos Quartet recently suggested that working with you had brought them back to understanding the essence of sound and what it is to play music in a group. It seemed to touch on a principle of minimalising and I wondered if you could help us define it?

"The word itself doesn't inspire me to come up with a definition because it sounds too scientific and dry and cold. It isn't romantic enough for my nature; there's not enough intuition in it. It doesn't allow for the real freedom of human spirit. When I say, 'I'm a minimalist', that nails you down to doing something in a certain way. What I feel they're trying to say is that minimalism is about stripping music down to its essential, moving factors – what moves us in music. Minimalism is 'not playing anything you don't have to'. You can still get to the nerves and bones and fibres of what music is without great decoration. To me that's part of what it is."

John Adams regards minimalism as a technique: small, repeated cells, rhythmic propulsion and tonality, yet this seems to rule out La Monte Young...

"Well, again, that's a technical explanation and I don't think it'll satisfy on its own. The repetition is certainly part of it, but repetition is a part of all sacred music, all gospel, rock music, North African music. Repetition is a very basic element. But if you're just talking about minimalism as being a definable field – to me it was more of a climate (at the time La Monte and I were starting to work), that didn't necessarily adhere to those technical principles. People were doing it in different ways. It had more to do with the climate at the time, just like impressionism, a climate that made people aesthetically

feel something that they hadn't felt in previous musics."

How did that climate arise?

"Well, I think it was a new era of hope. The musics of Webern and Schoenberg were created during a time of very great distress on the planet – World War I, the discovery of psychotherapy and the dark sides of the mind. I think the influence of that very gnarling, anguished music continued on through most of the first half of the century in some form or another. Some composers were outside of it but most were touched by it. Even Aaron Copeland and people like that – who were essentially bright-sounding composers – got involved in it. I think after World War II, there was a change in the climate – just before the '60s, which, in my view, were the high point of the Twentieth Century in terms of really wanting to be free, and tear off all the bonds of society which said that you had to live a certain way or do certain things to be a real, valid individual. And that was when minimalism happened.

"I think that climate was actually a climate of hope: a period of deepening spirituality – as was the whole of the '60s. That changed in the '70s. As far as I was concerned, by the time the public caught up with minimalism, the real heart of that movement had passed. Now you have minimalism taught in colleges, and that means it's dead. Something else has to come now to be a real powerful element for young composers."

Much of your own recent music is very large-scale. Is it in any sense minimalist?

"Even though the way it's presented is not like minimalism, the way I think still is. I still usually start from small kernels. The way I compose hasn't changed basically since I started. It's probably all I'm capable of – each person has their own limited way of looking at things. Even though I try to increase my

scope and things do change, essentially I tend to look at music in a certain way."

You, La Monte Young, Reich and Glass are often all lumped together with younger composers like Adams and Torke, and labelled minimalists. Are you comfortable in that setting?

"Well, it's like any category – Catholics, Buddhists – but within that whole category you have all these different people. I would like to keep my individuality. Even though they lump all these people together, there are vast differences between the people working there. I don't reject the term as an easy handle for people to recognise a group of composers that do similar things, but it certainly doesn't acknowledge the individuality of those people. And I wouldn't use it myself. The only time I call myself a minimalist is in a joking way, or if I'm writing program notes!"

Let's talk a little more about your work with the Kronos Quartet, which has been a big part of your music recently. While you were teaching you



"As ethnic musics come out and are assimilated into pop culture, they lose a lot of their initial impulse. When you first hear dijeridu or something it's very powerful, but then you listen to an aboriginal rock'n'roll group and you think, 'where did it go?'"

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► *had a period when you didn't compose very much and then you met the Kronos. Is it true to say that they inspired you to get back to writing?*

"Yes. I think I have them to thank for any music that I have written down. You don't know what makes you start doing things again, but I had gotten to the stage in the '70s where I didn't feel that there was anything worth writing down, that it was just enough to play music. If people wanted to play my music, my attitude was that they could listen to the records and learn it from there. It was firmly embedded in that idea and I actually didn't feel at the time that there was anything that I *could* write. I remember trying to write on the blackboards at Mills College, and finally just giving up. It was a period when notation was not pleasant for me to think about, it was a great deal of effort.

"But I liked the Kronos so much and so respected what their own goals were that I forced myself to do it as a challenge. It was difficult to actually get geared up to write the first few pieces – although I felt that they turned out very well. But I didn't want to commit to any one direction. I thought, 'I could play this a hundred different ways, why should I right it down one way?'"

Was that because you were so steeped in a tradition that didn't set any store by notation?

"Yes, Indian classical music. But even before I studied that I had written *In C*, which is practically not notation – it's just one page.

And I thought that if you can't get it down, if you can't do it in just that, then it's not worth doing. Also, as I said before, I didn't want to write anything that could only be done one way. Eventually I gave in and started doing things and thinking of them as my best shot at that moment. I think that most people who write music come to that conclusion and think, 'OK, maybe this isn't perfect but it's the best way I can do it right now'."

Presumably the attraction was the Kronos themselves rather than the string quartet, which seems a very traditional genre...

"Yes, it was the Kronos, but I think the string quartet also had a lot to do with it – I happen to love string quartets. I remember when I was a college student spending hours listening to the Bartok string quartets, and to me that was like heaven – I couldn't hear them enough. I like the modern string quartets, I don't listen much to the older ones. I think that the Kronos' particular approach influenced me to want to write for them – and the fact that they really had faith that I could do it."

You once said that writing for orchestra didn't appeal to you at all, and yet you've now also written for Kronos and orchestra.

"I have a distrust of the organisation of the orchestra, which is like the army. You've got this General sitting in his chair, and the Lieutenants, down to the Privates on the back rows. There's a lot of that kind of politics in the orchestra, which I find pretty disagreeable as a way to make music together. Not all orchestras are guilty of this kind of hierarchy, but it exists to a great degree in most. So it just didn't seem like a very healthy climate. Yet, here's this form in which you can make music, which doesn't exist anywhere else, and it's probably largely due to that political structure that they succeed. It's very strange. Philosophically I don't agree with it at all, and yet I can see how it works.

"If you have a very good conductor who is firm enough, and yet compassionate enough to get the musicians to play the music with lots of feeling, then you can get great results. The first orchestra piece I

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did was for Carnegie Hall's 100th anniversary, and I was afraid to try to write it because I had never written for anything bigger than a string quartet. About that time I discovered computers and notational software, so that made it possible – I don't think I could have written it without the help of the computer and sequencing software, enabling me to hear it; it would have been too complex. I hadn't been brought up around orchestras; I never went to many orchestral concerts and so I had to do it like I did my studio projects, like *Rainbow in Curved Air* – thinking of it as multitracking. I ended up writing a fifty minute

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Prophet 5
Proteus I and II sound modules
Ensoniq SD1
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Atari Stacy II computer
C-Lab Notator

orchestra piece – it was huge. It took me hours! Months! Years!”

What sequencer do you use?

“C-Lab Notator on an Atari, with a Proteus II for the orchestral sounds.”

The next orchestral piece – The Sands – was the concerto for Kronos and orchestra, wasn't it?

“Yes. I learned a lot from that. I scaled it down a little bit from *Jade Palace* which was written for the St. Louis Symphony. It was written for small orchestra – almost a ‘Haydn’-sized orchestra. I added more woodwind. But I learned from the other piece that if you want to get a good performance then you have to scale down some of your grandiose ideas! So the concerto is simpler. It was written on the eve of the Persian Gulf War as a protest against shameless aggression.”

How did Salome Dances for Peace come about?

“It was a sort of child of *The Harp of New Albion*. That’s how it got started, anyway. I had been working on *The Harp* and playing it quite a bit in Europe. One of the sections wouldn’t fit for some reason, but I really liked the music. Then one day I was practising and it just came into my head – ‘Salome Dances For Peace’ – that is what this music sounds like. I wasn’t really thinking about titles, but it just hit me. About that time, the phone rang and it was David Harrington wanting to commission a new string quartet. So I said that I wanted to write a string quartet that was a ballet. I had written out this big story of Salome dancing for peace, where she’s reincarnated in the Twentieth Century. I kept writing the story and then writing the music – it was leading me on. Salome was a big theatre piece in my own mind: I was imagining all kinds of things happening while I was writing it. Even though it’s for string quartet, it’s this vast thing.”

How do you actually go about writing these large-scale pieces? Do you just start at the beginning and work right through?

“Yes. Usually, I’ll start with one central idea which may be just a scale or something that I’m very interested in, just the sound of that scale, and a few patterns start developing out of that. Then a lot of times some totally unrelated themes will come to mind from that scale. That’s happened so much that now I just trust it and always write it down. I put it in the notebook and think that somewhere along the way this is going to relate. That’s the way it was with *Salome*. ‘The Peace Dance’ – which is the first part of the quartet – came first, but there are many ideas throughout the piece that came very soon. I just put them away until they found their way into it – they just said, ‘here I am. This is where I come in!’”

There’s a real mixture of different sorts of material in that piece.

“Yes, but they’re all very related, even though they sound so different.”

What unites them?

“Different elements. Sometimes the basic scale is often the element, but then it’s a transposition of that scale which I maybe didn’t even recognise at first. Sometimes it’s little kernel ideas – like little tiny motifs. Not like *leitmotif*, but little repeating figurations which get turned around and become another movement if you just change them slightly. I don’t do an awful lot of analysis afterwards, but I do see relationships.”

You said Salome basically came out of The Harp of New Albion. Is that how it usually happens, the next piece being a step on from the last one?

“Not always, but there is often unfinished business in one piece which has to be taken up in the next, especially if you didn’t feel like you’d really completed an idea. Sometimes ideas like that run through several pieces and you just can’t quite get enough of it – you can’t quite complete the idea to satisfy yourself.”

How does The Harp of New Albion relate to La Monte Young’s The Well-Tuned Piano?

“I probably wouldn’t have thought to do it – or wanted to do it –

if *The Well-Tuned Piano* hadn’t been there first. It’s a piece I’d always admired. I was just playing electronic organs. The piano, of course, is so different to electronic instruments, so when I got my first piano I started to re-acquaint myself with it. Then it occurred to me to write a piece, but *The Well-Tuned Piano* was standing there like a giant monument, so I thought, ‘well... shall I do it? Should I write this piece?’. Then as I kept practising and tuning, I just felt that it had to be done, that it was significantly different.

“It definitely draws inspiration from *The Well-Tuned Piano*, and a lot of my music draws inspiration from La Monte Young. We’re like brothers. He’s one of the major influences in my life, along with Pandit Pran Nath, who is also a composer. His music is not as well known by the public, but a lot of what I compose is influenced by his composition, especially the great melodic subtleties and invention that he’s had in raga, which are distinctly his own.”

How important is ethnicity in your music?

“I have a little difficulty with the term ethnicity because of my strange and strong belief in reincarnation. I don’t feel removed from ethnicity, so I *am* ethnicity myself and I’m a part of all the things that I hear. If you mean the musics of primitive peoples – yes, I like those musics a lot, I feel very close to them. I like the music of India and China, Africa and South East Asia. I feel like I’ve already been trained many times before in these musics; I have a good understanding of them and their feelings. Basically, music is not about technique, it’s



Commissions

1967 *Olsen 111* – an orchestral choral work written for the students at the music high school in Nacka, Sweden. Commissioned by the Royal Academy of Music.

1968 *Poppy Nogood and the Phantom Band* – Intermedia ’68 tour of six New York state colleges. Commissioned by NY State Arts Council.

1968 *The Time-Lag Accumulator* – a tiny maze of sound chambers and mirrored rooms which contained microphones to capture fragments of conversation and automatically arrange them into sound collages of repeated patterns. Installed in the Nelson Atkins Gallery of Art in Kansas City for the Magic Theatre Exhibition.

1969 *Music With Balls* – a thirty-minute colour video in collaboration with Sculptor Arlo Acton and Producer John Coney. Commissioned by the Dilexi Foundation.

1970 *Experiments in Art and Technology – American Artists in India*. Riley was sent to New Delhi to work with renowned raga master Pandit Pran Nath in an effort to combine new technology of the West with methods of ancient Eastern tradition.

1970 An experimental stereo colour video film for Danish Television produced by Carl Nielson.

1970 An experimental concert filmed in the dark using infra-red head sensitive cameras, recorded at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm for Swedish Television, produced by Stefan Olson.

1976 *Music With Roots in the Ether* – a one-hour concert and one-hour interview. Video produced by Robert Ashley.

1976 *Shri Camel* – a solo keyboard work commissioned by Radio Bremen. 1981 Three string quartets – *Sunrise of the Planetary Dream Collector*, *G Song* and *Remember This Oh Mind*, commissioned by the Kronos String Quartet.

1982 *The Ethereal Time Shadow* – a work for voice and two Prophet 5 synthesizers. Commissioned by the Sudwest Rundfunk, Baden-Baden, West Germany.

1982 *Songs For the Ten Voices of the Two Prophets* – a work for voice and two Prophet 5 synthesizers. Commissioned by Radio Bremen, West Germany.

1983 *Rites of the Imitators and Crazy Horse Offering*. Commissioned by the Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal.

1984 *The Medicine Wheel* – a work for piano in just intonation, synthesizer, sitar, tabla and voice. Commissioned by Radio Bremen, West Germany.

1984 Two string quartets – *Cadenza on the Night Plain* and *Mythic Birds Waltz*. Written for the Kronos String Quartet and commissioned jointly by Mr Ackart Rahn, Hessischer Rundfunk in Frankfurt, West Germany; and Kronos. 1984 *The Harp of New Albion* – a work for piano in just intonation. Commissioned by the Cologne Radio, West Germany.

1985 *Salome Dances for Peace. Part I* – a string quartet ballet written for the Kronos String Quartet and commissioned by IRCAM in Paris, France.

1986 *Salome Dances for Peace. Part II* – written for the Kronos String Quartet and commissioned by Betty Freeman.

1987 *In Winter They Buried the Cocktail Pianist* – a work for vibraphone, marimba, soprano saxophone, and piano. Commissioned by Zeitgeist of Minneapolis.

1987 *Sketches For the Tain* – commissioned by the Rova Saxophone Quartet. 1988 *The Crows Rosary* – a work for string quartet and piano/synthesizers in just intonation. Commissioned by the Lincoln Centre and The Kronos Quartet. 1989 *The Jade Palace Orchestral Dances* – written for the St Louis Symphony Orchestra. Commissioned by Carnegie Hall.

1990 *Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra* – commissioned by the Salzburg Festival.

1990 A work commissioned by New Music America for the Canadian-based group Array.



Recordings

- Reed Streams (*Mass Art*, 1966)
- In C (*Columbia Masterworks*, 1968)
- A Rainbow In Curved Air (*Columbia Masterworks*, 1969)
- The Church Of Anthrax (With John Cale) (*Columbia*, 1970)
- Happy Ending (*Warner Bros France*, 1972)
- The Persian Surgery Dervishes (*Shandar*, 1972)
- Le Secret De La Vie (*Phillips France*, 1974)
- Shri Camel (*Columbia Masterworks*, 1978)
- The Descending Moonshine Dervishes (*Kuckuck*, 1982)
- The Ten Voices Of The Two Prophets (*Kuckuck*, 1983)
- No Mans Land (Plainsphere, 1985)
- The Ethereal Time Shadow. (*Music From Mills*, 1985)
- Cadenza On The Night Plain & Other String Quartets (*Gramvision*, 1985)
- The Harp Of New Albion (*Celestial Harmonies*, 1986)
- 1989 In C (Performed by the Shanghai Film Orchestra) (*Celestial Harmonies*, 1989)
- Salome Dances For Peace (*Nonesuch*, 1989)

» about spirit.

"So ethnicity is a very pure, preserved spirit because the music hasn't gotten out enough yet to be changed. As ethnic musics come out and are assimilated into pop culture, they lose a lot of their initial impulse. When you first hear dijeridu or something it's very powerful, but then you listen to an aboriginal rock'n'roll group and you think, 'where did it go?'. I'm interested in keeping that feeling. So when people hear my music they feel that spiritual impulse underneath it."

So all the stylistic aspects are just superficial?

"Yes, they're not important. When people first heard those musics, they wanted to play sitar or ethnic sounds on the synthesizer or something, but the real value was these cultures retaining their spiritual approach to music."

Steve Reich has said that many of the composers of his generation who went to study world musics, came back trying to emulate those cultures somehow. He was almost suggesting that people on the West Coast got a bit too excited and started growing top-knots and...

"...Went crazy, yes! I believe that is the way he thinks. But to me his rhythms sound very much like a Westerner doing African music. I think out here in California there was a great feeling for the Orient - it being the gateway for oriental people emigrating here. I think we had much more contact with that feeling than they do on the East Coast, where it's much more European. They call this the Pacific Rim culture out here, and you notice it when you go across the country - it's such a different feeling between the East and the West. I think culturally that makes a big difference in the way people approach their music."

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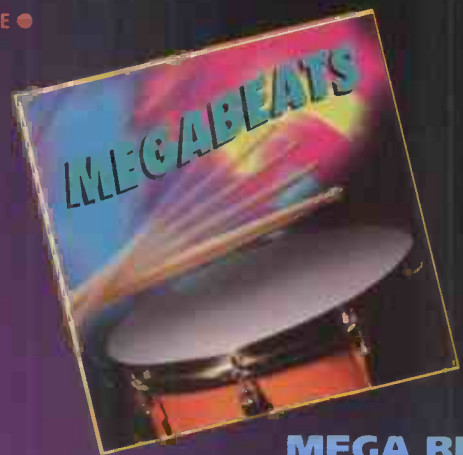
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Demo Takes

This month, *Demo Takes* presents the first in a series of occasional guest reviews from members of The British Record Producers Guild. Established in 1986, the Guild was intended to provide an informal 'creative forum' for both classical and pop record producers alike. Bob Hine was the first Guild Chairman, and following his retirement in December 1992, Robin Millar was elected as his successor. Other founding members were Alan Parsons, Gus Dudgeon, Rupert Hine, Phil Wainman, Mike Vernon, Tony Swain and Steve Jolley, but the Guild now has over 80 members in the UK, USA and Europe including, of course, Mike Howlett, and most other top producers.

From time to time, *Demo Takes* will hand over a wriggling bundle of your musical offspring to a Guild member for a damn good bottle-feed and nappy-change, not to mention lollipops if they're good. So keep them coming, and find out how the best record-makers in the Western World respond to your product.

Artist: Corporate ID

Venue: Home

Equipment: 2Mb Atari ST; 4Mb Atari ST running Replay 16; Cheetah MK5 MkII; Yamaha TG33; Kawai K1r; Casio CZ101, VZ8M; Roland MT32, TR505; Boss DR550; Alesis 1622

Corporate ID live up to their name. They make very clean-sounding, well-constructed instrumental music designed for soundtracks or jingles, leaving lots of spaces and making little events happen to alleviate potential boredom. They could have tried harder with the sounds – too many presets for my taste, but enjoyable listening all the same. In their letter they express a wish to release instrumental albums, which set me wondering: whatever happened to the 'instrumental album'? Since Mike Oldfield and Jean-Michel Jarre, the idea has enjoyed only a very minor resurrection with the New Age mini-boom – but that's all it was. I know people who lost money betting on that one.

But this is definitely a cut above the average. Of the tracks on this tape, 'Phobia' was the most enjoyable – an Oriental-flavoured melody over keyboard pads and danceable percussion grooves. 'Red' also stirred the cockles of my jaded ear – a great pulsing bass that's driving, yet somehow restrained. Less successful are the ballad-like 'Rememberence' (sic) and 'The Escape Artist – Pts I & II', which doesn't seem to stand alone as a piece of music, but which could well work as part of a soundtrack.

Contact: Mark or Michael, 071 253 3756 (London)

Artist: The Invisible Band

Venue: Home

Equipment: Tascam 644; Atari ST running MasterTracks Pro and MidiDrummer; Ensoniq SQ80; Sequential Circuits Pro One; Roland D110; Yamaha TX81Z; Alesis HR16; Art Proverb; Maxim DDL; Boss DE5; Jen Cry-Baby; Kay Flying-V guitar

Great name! Especially when you realise from the accompanying letter that this one-man band actually

goes out and gigs. This way lies the future – I genuinely believe that the next Big Thing in the long and glorious saga that is contemporary pop/rock will come from kids who have grown up with electronics the way I grew up with guitars. Musicians who will be able to go out and play freely and creatively using sequencers, drum machines and samplers – and not be limited by them – will inherit the earth. Crazy? Maybe. But not, it turns out, as crazy as the Invisible Band himself – Rory Cargill – who tells us that he will most likely be dropping out of society at the pleasure of Her Majesty for a little while shortly. Well, we all take our inspiration in different ways...

But what of the music? Strangely, this is not dissimilar to a band I used to play in. And we got busted by the Thames Valley Police, too. Coincidence? I think not, given that Steve Hillage was in the band. Rory... I just hope they get you to set up an electronic music workshop as part of the rehabilitation programme!

Contact: Rory Cargill, 081 675 8696 (London)

Artist: Capital Of The World

Venue: Home

Equipment: Yamaha MT2X 4-track, TX81Z, REX50; Ensoniq EPS; Korg M1rEX; Roland D110; Casio DA7; Realistic PZM microphone

These boys have been listening to Pet Shop Boys, Erasure, OMD, Depeche Mode and Human League. They liked them so much they thought they might have a go too. And yes, they can sound like those other guys! Now the girls will like them. What? OK, the boys will like them, too...

This is actually put together very well. It's cleanly recorded and well-arranged: pulsing analogue bass synth, bubbly sequenced top-lines, very danceable in a Hi-NRG way, which is where I see their market. The lyrics are good too, but the vocals only just scrape by. A lot could be done to make them more convincing, such as a little judicious compression and other secrets of the producer's craft I am not at liberty to reveal here. (Send £50 and a self-addressed envelope for my



personally autographed leaflet.) For a home recording, this qualifies in the threat-to-civilisation stakes as set out on these very pages in previous issues (*yes, but do you like it? – Ed*).

We come, as ever, to the big question: if you were an A&R man, would you risk your reputation, your pension and potentially £250,000-500,000 of the company's money for this collection of passable imitations of a proven genre, with only a couple of slightly more memorable melodies? Scary.

Contact: Bryan Cutter, 0325 381188 (day); Daniel Griffiths, 0325 357104 (Darlington)

TAPE OF THE MONTH

Artist: Michael Loftus

Venue: "My bedroom"

Equipment: Not supplied

I like this. It's fresh and original, with sequenced percussion, loops, lots of sampled dialogue, and – what makes it really interesting – African/ethnic choral work probably raided from the WOMAD catalogue (I hope you got permission for this!). This all takes place over well-programmed drum grooves with an easy, modern feel. Even the sounds are reasonably original. What more could a boy want?

Trouble is, what are we going to do with it? I remember an interview with Robyn Hitchcock where he said: "maybe there's only 120,000 people in the whole world who need my music!" And this is true of many a music-maker. The question is, do you actually want total world domination? Because if so, what you need is songs – catchy songs with easy to remember, hum-along melodies – preferably sung by a unique voice. Even better: coming out of a sexy body. Nevertheless, Michael's chordal and structural arrangements are good, and maybe he should consider working with a vocalist/lyricist. But don't bother advertising, just get out of your bedroom a bit more and see if you can find someone who doesn't run screaming when they hear your tapes!

Of course, 120,000 sales would do nicely if the recording didn't cost a small castle in North Yorkshire – you can actually make money that way. Well done, anyway.

Contact: Michael Loftus, 0203 301193 (Coventry)

Artist: Brian L Underwood

Venue: Home

Equipment: Tascam Porta One; Yamaha QX3 sequencer, RX5, TX81Z, RG2313 guitar; Akai S700; Kawai K1; Boss effect pedals; Digitech MSP4; JVC cassette deck

Brian Underwood is obviously competent – he knows what to do with his bits. The difficulties, however, lie in his chosen field. There's a lot of people out there trying to break into film and audio-visual soundtracks, and I'm one of them. Sadly for Brian, I don't feel threatened by this, although I must confess a soft spot for the unashamed electronic *naïveté* of the Moroder-esque 'Angels Of Justice'. You didn't really think you could get away with such a straight steal as

About the BRPG

The Guild's stated aim is to present a unified body with the strength to set, maintain and improve standards for all those involved in music production. It achieves this by holding meetings and communicating with representatives from record companies, recording studios, professional audio equipment manufacturers and other bodies.

Application for membership is open to any person connected with music production worldwide, and details of membership can be obtained from Jackie Da Costa, The BRPG Secretary, P.O. Box 310, London, SW13 0AF.

the 'I Feel Love' bass riff?

More successful is the menacing 'Flight Of Terror', a driving, tense piece in 6/4 time which I could see being adapted for a *Bladerunner*-type chase scene. A helpful suggestion here (and always) would be to back off a bit; try to create space and dynamics by thinning out the textures and arranging more of what I call 'events', where everything stops, or something happens, but maybe only once in the whole song.

Another word of advice (but one which you won't want to hear): almost everyone I know who has got anywhere in the field of soundtracks, jingles or library music got there because they knew someone in the right place at the right time, pure and simple. And, yes, sleeping around does help! (But don't forget to use a condom.)

Contact: Brian Underwood, Flat 4, Somerset Court, Etchingham Road, Eastbourne BN23 7DY

Artist: Plato's Garden
Venue: Home
Equipment: Not supplied

From a carpet of string-pad, buried under multiple-bounce tape hiss, comes a message in Morse code

pulses... enter Roland 707 or similar rave groove... cue smoke... cue strobe lights... beam me up, Scottie... oh yes!... I've reached Andromeda and still going strong! Sorry. Ignore my sarcastic tone; this is quality gear for a night out - far out, that is. These chaps have definitely got a feel for modern psychedelic rave. It's probably something to do with living in the West Country, but they're not crusties judging by the photo on the sleeve (praise The Orb).

A really highly skilled work, this. Again, a fairly awkward market: if it's heavy and 'cred' enough for hard-core ravers, you can only hope to shift about 2,000; and if it's commercial enough to get played on the radio it will be ignored by the rave DJ's. There's nothing new about this Catch 22 - it's probably been around in some form for creative individuals since people first began gathering together in numbers large enough to form cults. Being an optimist at heart, I always feel there must be a way to square this circle, probably by establishing credibility in the rave scene first, and then selling out with a crass pop song - what a brilliant idea! I wonder if anyone else has thought of it? Now, don't tell a soul - this is just between you and me, OK?

Contact: Tim Hope, 0305 785553 (Dorset)

About Mike Howlett...

During the '70s, Mike played bass and wrote with esoteric jazz-funk group Gong, after which he put together his own band, Strontium 90, with a few guys called Sting, Andy Summers and Stewart Copeland - who have never been heard of since. He became established as a producer in the early '80s, with a string of Top 10 hits including Martha & The Muffins' 'Echo Beach'; 'Messages'; 'Souvenir' and 'Enola Gay' by OMD; A Flock Of Seagulls' 'Wishing' and 'I Ran' (also a US Top 10 single); 'Living On The Ceiling' by Blancmange; and 'Wishful Thinking' by China Crisis. Albums with Joan Armatrading, Berlin, The Alarm, Gang Of Four and Fischer Z have all achieved sales in excess of 500,000.

Recent projects include a five-month stint in Berlin producing a solo album for Marian Gold, lead singer with Alphaville; several tracks for Eills, Beggs and Howard; and an album for popular Spanish flamenco/dance group Tam Tam Go. As well as having produced over 40 albums, Mike has an active career as a writer of soundtrack music, and also has his own production company/record label called Embryonix, specialising in the work of singer/songwriters.

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Technically Speaking

Q I have recently woken my old Moog Prodigy from years of hibernation in a quest to seek out new drum sounds. The problem is, I am very limited without a noise generator. I remember in the distant past hearing that noise could be fitted into the 'old' circuits, and since the men from Moog have long gone I am turning to your magazine for help and information. Is there any chance of fitting a generator, and if there is, where and how can I get one?

Also, talking about Moogs, can anyone tell me about the Moog 55 as featured on Mr JM Jarre's Zoolook album?

David Hunt
London

A First things first; a noise generator can be fitted to practically any analogue synth which doesn't have one. Where a synth like the Prodigy is concerned, what you really have to consider is the value of this synth in relation to the cost of having such a generator installed. The Synth Service Centre (071 586 0357) reckons that the charge would be around £50-£60 – they'll have to take a look before giving a more accurate quote.

As for the Moog 55, a swift call to Tony Wride at Exclusively Analogue provided the answer. The Moog Modular Series originally comprised six models, each using the 901 series of oscillators: 1C, 2C, 3C, 1P, 2P and 3P – where 'C' stands for cabinet and 'P' for portable. The series was later upgraded to include the 15, 35 and 55 models – each of which used the newer 921 series of oscillators which were more stable and made possible the use of frequency modulation. The number of oscillators in these synths is 3, 5 and 9, respectively, and the 55 invariably included a sequencer. Date of manufacture? Early 1970s, and the 55 was quite a hefty cabinet system.

Q I have worked with sequencers on the Atari ST for some years now but have recently changed to a Mac Ilii with a Mark Of The Unicorn MIDI Time Piece MIDI interface. What I now wish to do is to convert all of my songs over to the Mac where I'm running Cubase v1.8.3.

I've been using the Apple File Exchange to format MS-DOS disks – having discovered that the Mac can't read ST-formatted disks – and to save my songs as MIDI Files on the ST. On running these files through Apple File Exchange in its 'default' mode, I find that the file appears

Q I use a Roland Sound Canvas SC-155 live and often need to be able to have more than one part playing percussion because of the way that the songs are originally recorded. Being a GS sound module, Part 10 on MIDI channel 10 is always used for the main drum kit, but it would be useful to be able to set another part to a drum kit via MIDI. Can this be done? I've tried changing part 11 to the second drum kit according to the System Exclusive info at the back of the manual, but keep getting 'Checksum Error' on the Sound Canvas's display. What does this mean?

Colin Ward
Gillingham

A Sound Canvas and its derivatives allow a part on any MIDI channel (except for 10) to be set to 'Norm', 'Drum1' or 'Drum2'. The inclusion of two drum parts is so that you can change the drum kit for several parts at the same time but still have access to the drums from two kits – for instance, acoustic and electronic kits. The parameter that has to be altered is referred to as 'Use for Rhythm Part' in the SysEx table. The basic message is as follows (in hexadecimal):

```
FO 41 UU 42 12 40 1n 15 VV CS F7
```

...where 'UU' is the Unit number (usually \$10), 'VV' is 0 for Norm, 1 for Drum1 and 2 for Drum2, and 'CS' is the checksum (more about this in a moment) and 'n' is the part number. 1 - 9 refers to parts 1 - 9, 0 is part 10 and A - F are parts 11 - 16. Take the example of setting part 11 to Drum2. The message for this would be:

```
FO 41 10 42 12 40 1A 15 02 OF F7
```

Where does the checksum of \$0F come from? Ignoring the first five header bytes and the final \$F7 (end of exclusive), the sum of the remainder must add up to \$80 (or a multiple of it). The sum of \$40, \$1A, \$15 and \$02 is \$71. Consequently the checksum must be \$80 minus \$71 – which is \$0F. This means that any changes to the parameter value must be reflected by a similar change in the checksum. Get this wrong and the Sound Canvas screen comes up with the 'Checksum Error' message you mentioned.

on the desktop but as a grey rectangle which Cubase won't recognise as a MIDI File. What am I doing wrong?

Jim Kirby
Aberdeen

A What you're doing is perfectly correct. The Mac's Apple File Exchange will not recognise a disk formatted on the ST but will allow you to format an MS-DOS disk which the ST will recognise.

The problem is in the different way that the Mac treats files. Both the ST and the PC use a three letter extension to show the file type with '.MID' being used to display the fact that a file is a MIDI File. The Mac uses two different parameters; file type and file creator. The file type for a MIDI File is 'Midi', while the file creator depends on the Mac program on which the file originates; Steinberg Cubase is 'stCU'. Double-clicking on a file launches the originating program by checking the file creator.

It is necessary to set the file type and creator before a Mac sequencer will recognise the MIDI File. 'Resedit' is a standard Mac program that allows you to edit many file characteristics, but I'd recommend getting hold of a shareware program called 'Filetyper' which will let you edit both the file type and file creator very quickly.

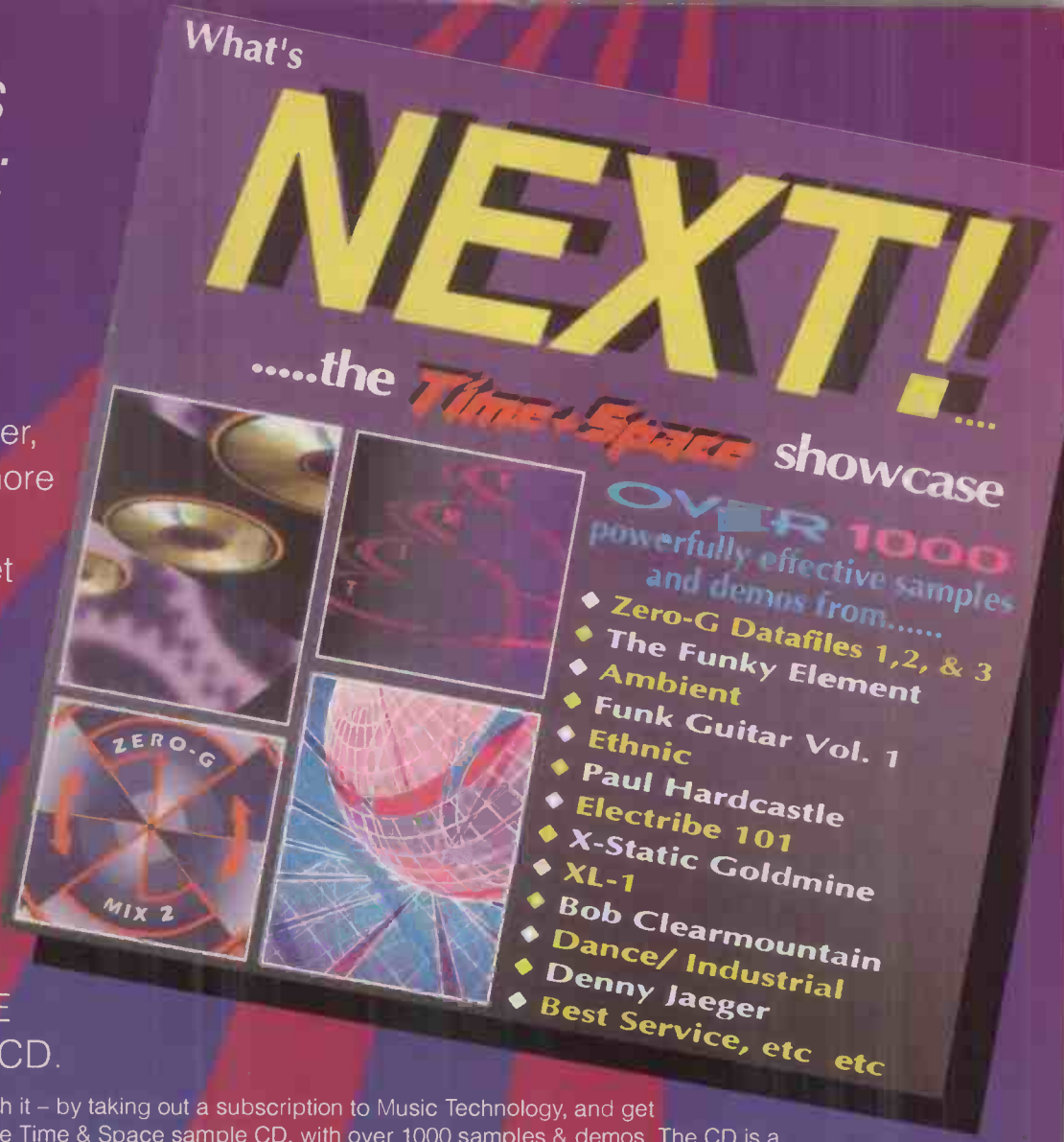
Two other options. First, have you been using Cubase on the ST? If so, simply save your song to the MS-DOS formatted disk as an arrangement, use Apple File Exchange to transfer it to the Mac and load it as you would a Mac arrangement. Steinberg, intelligently, kept the structure of arrangements the same across all of the platforms it supports. Second, do yourself a favour and buy DOS Mounter which allows you to read an ST-formatted disk directly into the Mac. It will also automatically set the file type and creator according to the three letter extension – it may cost about £60 but it's well worth it!

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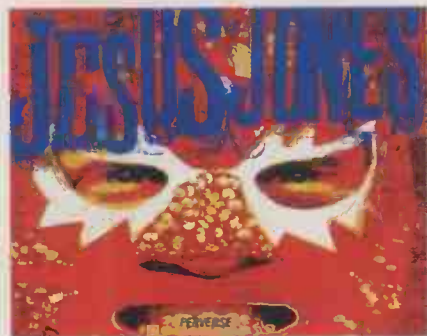
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JESUS JONES

Perverse (Food/EMI)

Mike Edwards, Warne Livesey and The Grid's Richard Norris have between them conjured a pretty convincing blueprint for sample'n'sequence-friendly guitar pop for the '90s. Now, they may not be the first to provide such a blueprint, and JJ's first two albums *Liquidizer* and *Doubt* have already done it anyway, but that's just it with musical blueprints. According to modern recording lore, albums are casts for an artistic mould that can never be repeated; one-off statements of a design concept that no one else can use. Grabbing the territory first is the goal, and once you've worked out a fresh combination of elements for yourself you can stick your flag in the ground and bugger off.

Well, that's the theory. In practice, subtle adjustments to an existing ground plan more often than not pass for innovation. But, according to the same lore, that's OK if you're making subtle adjustments to your own ground plan – which is just what's happening on



Perverse. If anything it's a shift towards mellower ground – 'Yellow Brown' could be a Peter Gabriel track – albeit with the guy-ropes firmly pegged in a somewhat Germanic industrial landscape. The result is a surprisingly melodic soufflé, with a heavier emphasis on keyboard textures than before, and that's unlikely to harm anybody's career. Not even the plagiarists, who're going to love this.

PERE UBU

Story Of My Life (Fontana)

Speaking of guitar riffs (with one eye on those other strange American cousins The B-52s), there are some brilliant basslines on this, the

fourth album from Pere Ubu on Fontana – following an unexpected career renaissance, in 1988, just when you might have thought time was up for latter-'70s garage-wave cynical nutters like this lot. But, mining a shaft first drilled by Captain Beefheart, and now featuring



the great Captain's former guitarist Eric Drew Feldman in the line-up just to prove the point, Ubu are showing that there is some considerable longevity in this cooky seam.

It's this blueprint thing again: singer David Thomas has admitted that "the ideas we stumbled across and formed as a unit were good: we've shifted focus several times, but shifting the focus is all it is". Mostly the focus of *Story Of My Life* shifts towards a weightier, more solid rhythm section, and some light and breezy guitar/Hammond chops which intimate a more rural setting than we normally associate with the band's urban Mid-West roots. Producer Al Clay, having just finished working with The Inspiral Carpets, seems to have brought something of their power out of Ubu's scratchy,

diffident material, and at times they're positively heavy. But no change in Thomas' unique style: like Mike McShane on a roll. Anyone who can come up with a line like "Where do the broken-hearted park their cars?" gets my vote.

THE B-52S

Brixton Academy

Who would ever have thought that a lobster could be so hip? An old lobster, at that – 14 years and counting. As vocalist Fred Schneider admitted, stroking his medallion and gazing out across a packed Brixton Academy in faint disbelief, The B-52s have been "in show business for about 750 years" – but nobody seemed to mind. The B-52s audience is happy to stick with the basic style defined by the band back in 1979, which may appear to celebrate all things throwaway and ephemeral, but which after all contains more than a scalloped of timeless R&B motifs – beat generation drums, call-and-answer vocals and some of the best guitar riffs ever coaxed from a sunburst Telecaster.

It was a triumphant return, and underscored the true scale of the remarkable renaissance of a career that, prior to 1989's *Cosmic Thing* album, had for many been assigned to a mouldering file marked 'US Oddball New Wave, 1979-83' – notwithstanding the bizarre chart assault undertaken by that famous crustacean for no apparent reason in 1986. This time, we had to wait until the last number of the last

Plastic Max...

Expectorantly soothing MT's dry, tickly cough this month...

SUNSCREEN

O₃ (S²)

Particularly tuff raving from Sony Music's new 'Soho Squared' offshoot label, replete with burly synths, driving loops and copious lyrical imperatives ("Break my heart", "Release me" etc.). The spirit of Essex lives on.

SHEEP ON DRUGS

Greatest Hits (Island)

A major deal for techno's very own media terrorists, who represent the point where the extrapolated curves of punk and rave blsect. Once there was guitar/drums/bass; now there's Cubase.

DIGABLE PLANETS

Reachin' (A New Refutation Of Time And Space) (Elektra/WEA)

"Good evening, and sex." Now there's a catch-phrase, if ever I heard one. Litig, jazzy hip-hop, featuring the dulcet rap tones of Ladybug. Actually, all the band have wilfully invertebrate names. Can you dig it? Indubitably.

DC BASEHEAD

Not In Kansas Any More (RCA)

At last: humour from hip-hop. Plus, in fact, a great band playing a tight fusion of funk, jazz and R&B like a US version of The Blockheads.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Talkin' Loud Two (Talkin' Loud)

Another volume of "new and diverse talent" from Norman Jay's stable, gathering recent classics of cool dance from the likes of Omar, Galliano and Young Disciples, as well as showcasing newcomers such as Urban Species and Bryan Powell.

ALEXANDER O'NEAL

Love Makes No Sense (Tabu/A&M)

Not exclusively produced for Flyte Tyme – Jam & Lewis' company who were responsible for *All True Man* – but much in the same spirit throughout, with plenty of beefy samples. Definitely a labour of lurve.

STING

Ten Summoner's Tales (A&M)

A natural successor to *The Soul Cages*, recorded quickly (a few weeks) and capturing the dynamics of an impeccable band. The term 'home recording' seems almost surreal.

encore before we got it, having welked through most of *Good Stuff*, *Cosmic Thing* and a paella of early album tracks, but when it came there wasn't a dry leopard-skin cat-suit in the house. Why, there was even a spirited stage-dive at the song's peak.

While original members Fred, Kate Pierson and Keith Strickland (the man with the Tele) did appear occasionally bemused by the continuing power of their appeal, Julee Cruise was simply having the time of her life. Having replaced Cindy Wilson as the other half of that unique and delicious blend of female voices at the heart of the band's sound, she must have been nervous for this opening night in London. By the end of the evening, however, she must have felt as bright as her shiny purple hot-pants: everybody loved her. She never stopped grinning, never stopped dancing, and - please don't tell anyone - sang even better than Cindy. There is, indeed, no business like show business, even for shellfish.

THE THE *Dusk (Epic)*

Very funny. The opening seconds of Matt Johnson's fifth incarnation as the oldest surviving punk joke consist of the evocative, tiny scratching sounds that a stylus makes as it burrows into the grooves of a vinyl platter. This, presumably, is to emphasise some good old-fashioned values as far as recording is concerned - what is sometimes referred to as a 'paired down' production style, and which in this case means a bluesy blend of acoustic guitar, harmonica, double bass and brushes, with only occasional embellishment from the keyboard and sampler department. But, of course, it's an impeccable exercise in committing these sounds to tape, and the CD-crazed population of the universe can smile knowingly at the irony and proceed to wallow in the highest of fidelity.

The songs cover much the same ground as

before, reflecting the concerns you would expect of a man who really should go to bed earlier and get a good night's sleep, but still don't seem to capture the bleak force of *Infected* - probably Johnson's finest work.



There is, however, a homogeneity to the album, which builds subtly towards the funky wah-wah of 'Sodium Light Baby', passes through the solemnly beautiful instrumental interlude 'Lung Shadows', and tapers off into the final apocalyptic coupling of 'Bluer Than Midnight' and 'Lonely Planet'. Very sad.

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► **ROLAND W30** flightcased, with library, in excellent condition, £900 ono. John. Tel: 0342 321767.

RECORDING

ALESIS MICROVERB III, £130. Brian. Tel: 0865 778362 Oxford area.

AMPEX 456 1/2 and 1" for sale at £15 and £20. Peter. Tel: 0225 859592.

DIGITECH IPS 33B intelligent harmonising machine with multi-effects, £450. Tel: 0865 778362 Oxford area.

DRAWMER MX20 compressor, £175. Tel: 0248 713763.

FOSTEX G16S immaculate condition, still guaranteed. Tel: 081 944 6269.

FOSTEX E16 with 8316 full remote. One owner, mint condition, £2200. Yamaha REV7, £325. Akai S950, £750. Tel: 061 483 8551 anytime.

FOSTEX 250 mixer 8:4:2, good condition with manual, £250. Ian. Tel: 021 770 9073.

FOSTEX MODEL 20 2-track, 2-speed, reel-to-reel, £350. Cheetah MS6 module (unused), £180. Rack box 21"x19", £40. Roland R8 RAM card, £40. Arron. Tel: 0245 490408 anytime.

FOSTEX R8 MTC1, 5 reels, looms, Alesis compressor, Alesis gate. All as new and boxed, £900. DX7, £250. Paul. Tel: 0253 58524.

REVOX A77 stereo, twin speed, complete with reel cover, manual, NAB reels, XLI and UB tapes, £350. Tel: 0793 740630. Contact: 12 Draycott Rd, Chistledon, Swindon, Wilts.

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Century 100A speakers, £600 ono. Allen & Heath GS3, £1750 ono. Hit amp, £250 ono. Tel: 081 462 6261.

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SPL VITALISER, £550; Aphex Type C, £150. BBE 322 Sonic Maximiser, £170. Steinberg Cubase V2.01 key and manual, £100. Kevin. Tel: 0270 872558.

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YAMAHA REV7 professional studio reverb. Excellent condition, £350. Tel: 0270 872558.

YAMAHA FX500 good condition, £200. Paul. Tel: 0302 538304.

SEQUENCERS

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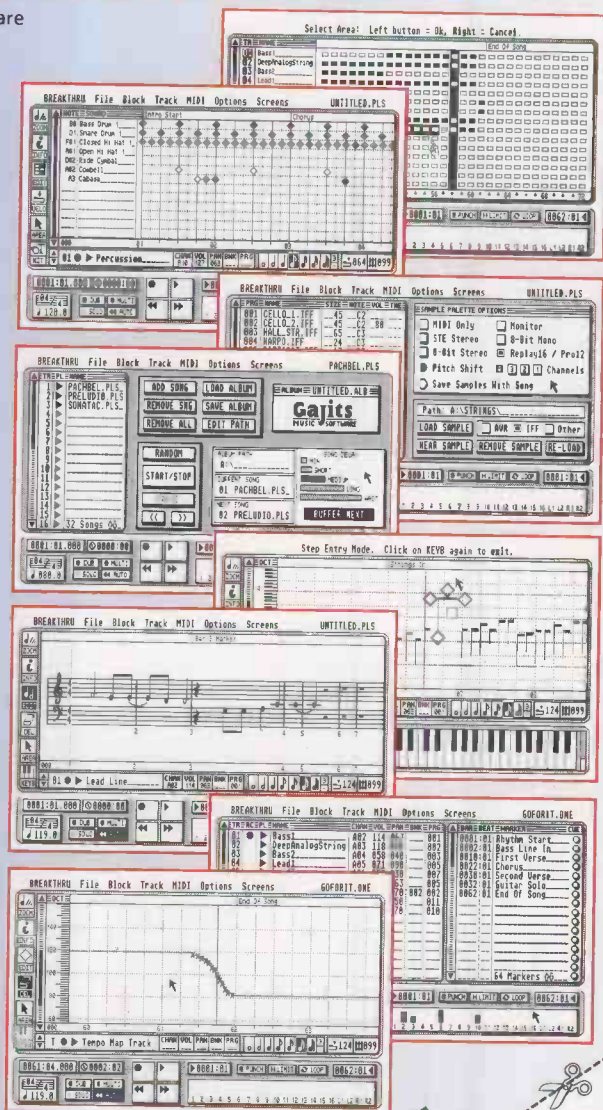
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