

TRANSONIQ HACKER

The Independent News Magazine for Ensoniq Users

Notes From the Northwest

Clark Salisbury

One of the more interesting projects I've been working on lately has been for the band Quarterflash (remember their #1 hit from a few years back, "Harden My Heart"?). They have a new album due out soon (with some great stuff, by the way), and they're in the midst of preparations for a tour to support the record.

Quarterflash's sound relies heavily on the guitar sound of the band's leader/songwriter Marv Ross, and the lead vocal and sax stylings of his wife and co-leader, Rindy. Keyboards are used primarily for textures and accents. My involvement was two-fold—first, to recreate as faithfully as possible the keyboard sounds from their records (using their live rig), and second, to set up a control system for the keyboards and modules that would involve the least amount of button pressing for their keyboard player, Mel Kubik. The band had made extensive use of sequencing in the past, but for this tour they wanted to use no sequencing whatsoever, going for more of a live feel. This meant, though, that a number of complex setup changes had to be handled as easily and quickly as possible by human beings during the heat of a live performance.

The setup that Marv decided on for the live show is quite straightforward—a VFX-sd, an SQ-80, and an Akai S-1000. The VFX-sd was chosen for its ability to re-create the rich, multi-layered sounds that had originally been the product of multiple synthesizers and samplers in the studio. The other advantage of the VFX-sd is in its capabilities as a controller keyboard—we'll chat more about

both of these topics in a moment.

The Akai S-1000 is used primarily to play back vocals sampled from the original Quarterflash studio tapes—not just ooohs and ahhs, but entire phrases. These are then blended with the live vocals to create a real big vocal sound in performance. This is a tremendous gobler of memory, however, and one of the reasons the S-1000 was chosen for this job.

The SQ-80 was included in the setup primarily because of Marv's particular fondness for a number of its sounds. It was used extensively in the studio, particularly to double guitar tracks, for ethereal pads, and for gritty analog-synth type sounds.

Recreating the band's studio sounds using this keyboard setup proved both challenging and rewarding. The most difficult sounds, by far, were those that were originally assembled using analog, FM, and L/A synths all layered together. The problem would be in trying to dissect these very complex sounds by listening to the original studio tapes. Fortunately, in most cases Marv remembered which particular synthesizers were combined to create the original sound—it proved much easier to analyze a sound if knowing in advance that the sound was a layer of a Prophet 5, a couple of TX-816 modules, and a D-50. Simulating the Prophet 5 and other analog sounds usually meant finding an appropriate Transwave (more often than not one of the Pulse transwaves), and finding a start point that would yield a raw sound with similar characteristics to

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the original sound. Sometimes a bit of LFO modulation of the start point would give us that nice sweeping sound so characteristic of analog string patches and synth pads. For somewhat richer sounds, I'd find myself using the 'Synchro-X' or 'Planet-X' waves (two of my favorite transwaves) layered with a simple sawtooth wave, although in one case we layered with the 'Synbass-1' wave tuned up a couple of octaves, and with its start point set to '99' to remove the percussive attack. This provided a way fat sound, dude.

The FM simulations often sent me back to the transwaves, particularly for the metallic textures. Applying an envelope (often of the piano-type) to control start time of the 'Digital-X', 'Synchro-X', 'Omega-X' and 'ESQBell-X' waves provided a wealth of starting points for simulating FM-type keyboard sounds. Again, the 'Synchro-X' and 'Planet-X' waves were used extensively for fattening. To achieve some of the additional brilliance associated with FM, unobtrusively blending in simple sine or pulse waves, or occasionally something a bit more complex (such as the 'Marimba' or 'GTR-HARMO') tuned a couple of octaves higher than the main body of the sound, worked nicely.

The characteristic breathy and metallic textures that Marv favors from the land of L/A synthesis was pretty easy to nail, often by using the 'Inharmonic' waves—'Anvil LP' and 'Cluster LP' were pressed into service, usually blended in subtly with other waves, and often in the upper octaves. We also used a number of the 'Breath-Sound' waves in the same way—particularly the vocal waves. The 'Rack Bell' and 'Kagong' waves were also used, but with their start times set later in the wave to remove the obvious attacks of these sounds.

In one instance, we needed a really, really big B-3 type of organ sound. Northstar has an excellent B-3 disk for the S-1000, but there is no easy way to simulate the characteristic speed change of a Leslie speaker. So we layered the B-3 sample with a B-3 patch I created on the VFX. This would allow us to use the roto-speaker effect from the VFX to get the leslie effect that we wanted. We surmised (correctly) that even though we couldn't apply the roto-speaker effect to the S-1000, the overall effect of the two sounds together would provide a convincing Leslie-speaker simulation. We also added a bit more bite to the VFX patch by layering in the Kalimba wave, in non-transpose mode and with a pretty short envelope. The amount of click could then be tweaked by simply adjusting the output level of the Kalimba wave. The end result was a B-3 organ patch to die for.

Once the basic keyboard sounds were together, the task was to create performance presets that would involve the least amount of button-pressing. We decided to use VFX-sd sequences as presets; this would allow us to set up the configuration for the entire system—splits, layers, program changes, mix, etc., and recall that setup with the press of a single button.

We chose to run the SQ-80 in multi mode, with sequence 1 set up to respond to MIDI data on channels 5-8. This would leave channels 1-4 open for expansion of the keyboard setup later on, and allow us to layer and control up to four sounds simultaneously on the SQ-80, though, as it turns out, the SQ-80 is never playing more than two sounds in any one

song, at least for this tour. Also, we set the base MIDI channel of the SQ-80 to 16. We assumed we wouldn't be using that channel for anything, and we wanted to make sure that the SQ-80 would be responding only to data meant for it. We thought about using channel 5 as the base channel, since it was already designated as an SQ-80 channel. We realized that if we did that, however, program changes received on channel 5 would not show up in the sequence track select window, even though they would play correctly. This is because the SQ-80 gives priority to the 'Main' instrument over the sequencer track when the two are set to the same channel. Even though the correct patches would be called up, they wouldn't necessarily show up in the 'Tracks' window, and we wanted to be able to monitor the 'Tracks' window to make sure that the correct program changes were occurring.

The S-1000 was set up to respond to MIDI channel 9, logically enough. We ran into a bit of a snag here, too. Even though the S-1000 is set up to respond to MIDI data on channel 9 only, it responds to program changes on all channels, as though it were in OMNI mode. This default setting can be changed after the S-1000 is booted, but Brian knew of no way make this change a default setting. Since we are all well-acquainted with Mr. Murphy, we wanted to insure that we'd have to do as little resetting of equipment as possible in the event of a crash or power outage. We found, though, that the VFX-sd sends its program changes sequentially, from the lowest numbered track used to the highest. In other words, when a sequence is selected, program changes are sent first from track one, then from track two, then from three, and so on. Once we discovered this, it was a simple enough matter to make sure that the S-1000 always be assigned to the highest numbered track in any given sequence. The S-1000 would still respond to all the program changes from all the tracks used in the sequence, but the last program change it received would always be the correct one.

Once all of this had been hashed out, it became a simple enough matter, generally speaking, to do the setups. A typical setup might include three vocal samples played by the S-1000 controlled by the low C, D, and E of the VFX-sd keyboard, with the next octave and a half or so of the keyboard set up to play a guitar-like patch comprised of a VFX sound layered with an SQ-80 sound (we made extensive use of the 'Key Zone' button on the VFX-sd—not to mention the volume, transpose and patch select buttons). The rest of the keyboard might be taken up with a VFX-sd pad of some sort, and this sound might be set up to layer with another sound or octave shift (or some combination of the two) or even change completely at the press of a foot-switch or patch select button (we configured the VFX-sd to use FS-1 for the left patch select, leaving FS-2 to control sustain). In performance, then, Mel might be triggering one of the three samples with the little finger of her left hand while arpeggiating the guitar sound with the other fingers, and comping on the pad sound with her right hand.

Unfortunately for Mel, she'd have to hold down the key that triggered the sample for the duration that the sample played—sometimes for several seconds. Experience had told us that it was extremely unwise to program the samples to continue playing to their conclusion once triggered—you never know when a key assigned to trigger a sample might accidentally be brushed or bumped. It became common for us

to find ourselves with the S-1000 samples assigned (for example) to the middle F#, G#, and A# of the keyboard so that Mel could trigger them with one of her thumbs while playing a two-handed keyboard part in the key of C. In at least one instance, she actually finds herself playing in a different key with each hand—A in the left, and Eb in the right, I believe—to accommodate all the splits needed in one particular song! As for the sustaining sample problem, we thought about turning the sustain pedal off (available from the 'Patch Select' page on the VFX-sd) for all the tracks except for the S-1000, but generally it was needed available elsewhere in the song, so we resigned ourselves to the fact.

One technique we used many times was to create a VFX sound with all its layers turned off. We could then use either the patch select buttons, or the double footswitch Ensoniq makes to turn on any or all of the layers, depending on what was required. By then layering this patch with the other patches in a sequence (using the double-click method) we had an easy way to add or switch a whole bunch of VFX-sd layers at once with the simple press of a button or switch.

Patch selects were put to use in many instances—in one song, for example, we needed a synth pad that would hold through the introduction of the song, but would not be used again. The pad was set up to play only when the right patch select was pressed. When no patch selects were being pressed the VFX-sd would set up with a percussive sound

used in an arpeggiated part that was to follow. At the beginning of the song, then, Mel could press the right patch select, hit the chord for the pad sound, release the patch select, and begin the arpeggiated part with her other hand. In some cases we used the patch selects in the 'Hold' mode (available from the Patch Select page) to allow Mel to "activate" the patch select function (by holding the patch select button and playing something), play for a while, then "de-activate" it (simply by tapping on the button again) to go on to another sound.

Of course all the mixes, program changes and transpositions were handled easily by the VFX-sd. The one thing I could wish for is programmable effects on the slave instruments—the built in effects proved so handy on the VFX-sd, it would have been nice to have been able to handle the other effects in the same way. But hey—gotta leave something for the sound tech to do. But we did accomplish what we set out to do—all the sounds and keyboard effects are set up literally with the press of a single button—definitely in the happenin' mode, as Paul Youngblood from Roland used to say.

And watch for Quarterflash's new album "*Girl In The Wind*" on Epic—particularly the title cut "*Girl In The Wind*," and a lovely ballad called "*Is It Any Wonder*"—some real nice pop tunes. And now I'm off to see if I can't figure out my new programmable microwave oven. Now where was that manual...? ■

Front Panel

RND (♪♪♪)

News from Ensoniq—We've sent our dealers many materials supporting the SQ-1 Personal Music Studio, including an exciting new video, a great new demo sequence and even free buttons. With the release of the rack-mount SQ-R, now is a great time to stop in your local Authorized Ensoniq dealer to see these dynamic new products.

Hacker News—As mentioned last month, Keel Productions has moved across Canada. We now have their new address: P.O. Box 1347, Banff, AB Canada T0L 0C0. Phone: 403-762-8737.

Error Alert! The WHISTL patch in Cap'n Kirk's SQ-80 article in TH#62 had the following info missing: LFO1 = Freq = 63, Reset & Human = Off, Wave = Noise, L1 = 63, Delay = 0, L2 = 0, Mod = Off.

We've got a new listing for TransonIQ-Net: Pat Finnigan is now available for SQ-1 questions. (See Pat's first impressions of the SQ-1 elsewhere in this issue.)

TRANSONIQ-NET HELP WITH QUESTIONS

ALL ENSONIQ GEAR - Ensoniq Customer Service. 9:30 am to 6:30 pm EST Monday to Friday. 215-647-3930.

EPS QUESTIONS - Erich Swanston, Maestro Sounds. 718-465-4058. Call anytime. (NY) If message, 24-hr callback.

VFX QUESTIONS - Sam Mims, Syntaur Productions. 818-769-4395. (CA). 10 am to 11 pm PST.

SEQUENCING - Larry Church, Danlar Music, 503-692-3663. Call anytime.

SQ-80 QUESTIONS - Michael Mortilla, 805-966-7252 weekends and after 5 pm Pacific Time.

EPS QUESTIONS - Garth Hjelte, Rubber Chicken Software, Pacific Time (WA). Call anytime. If message, 24-hour callback. (206) 242-9220.

ESQ-1 AND SQ-80 QUESTIONS - Tom McCaffrey, ESQUPA. 215-830-0241, before 11 pm Eastern Time.

ESQ-1 QUESTIONS - Jim Johnson, (503) 684-0942. 8 am to 5 pm Pacific Time (OR).

MIRAGE 24-HOUR HOTLINE - M.U.G. 212-465-3430.

ESQ-1 QUESTIONS - International, Brendon Sidebottom, (03) 689-5731 Australia. No calls between 4 am and 10 am Australian ES Time.

SAMPLING & MOVING SAMPLES - "Mr. Wavesample" - Jack Loesch, (201) 264-3512. Eastern Time (N.J.). Call after 6:00 pm.

MIDI USERS - Eric Baragar, Canadian MIDI Users Group, (613) 392-6296 during business hours, Eastern Time (Toronto, ONT) or call MIDILINE BBS at (613) 966-6823 24 hours.

SAMPLING - Mark Wyar, (216) 323-1205. Eastern time zone (OH). Calls between 6 pm and 11 pm.

MIRAGE OPERATING SYSTEM - Mark Cecys. West-Coast Time. Days. (408) 253-8547.

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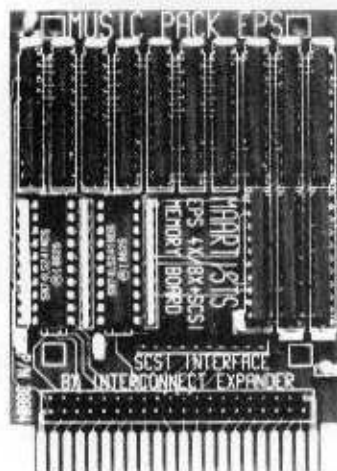
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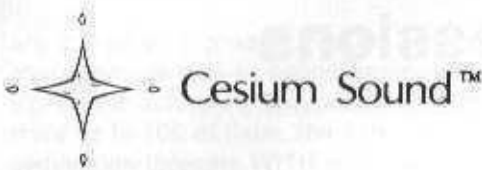
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The SQ-1: First Impressions

or Who Do These Guys Think They Are?

Pat Finnigan

WARNING! INTRUDER ALERT! There's a VFX-sd mutant running around with a ROM-based OS (NO CRASHES!) sans disk drive and aftertouch keyboard, with 16 of the VFX-sd's 24 sequencing tracks and half its programming complexity. Be warned; it sounds like an M1, looks similar to an SY55, programs like an ESQ-1, and costs half what a DPM3 lists for. And guys, beyond any reasonable doubt, this is much, MUCH more than the entry-level keyboard the A & R people would have us believe. Since it doesn't have a disk drive, huge display or an aftertouch keyboard, we Ensoniq veterans (and others) are expected to gloss over this new offering and lust after the VFX-sd. Guess again...

This new piece is so deep, one article isn't nearly enough to cover the bases this new "entry level" keyboard is capable of running around. Initially, I was expecting an ESQ-2; since then, I can't help but compare it to Ensoniq's flagship, the VFX-sd, as THAT'S more what the SQ-1 really is. The SQ-1 has a whole lot more heart than meets the eye. . .

SOUNDS

A typical keyboard convention seems to be aimed towards sample-playing keyboards; the SQ-1 is no exception to the current bill of keyboard fare. But now Ensoniq has integrated the original DOC waveform chip and its ESP digital effects chip into DOC III, the new engine that drives the SQ-1. And before you ask, yes, it holds the same 121 waves and 13 effect algorithms as its bigger brothers, and will Transwave just like the VFX series. Since it can only mix three waves at once there are about half as many parameters to wade through (envelopes, waves, modulation sources), so it's not as easy to get lost in programming labyrinths as in the VFX's. But unlike any new keyboard, the learning curve is about 85% shorter due to the SQ-1's intuitive user interface and front panel. The smaller display isn't an I/O bottleneck at all; Ensoniq simply added a few more menu pages. More on that later.

Digital sounds are as bright and clean as a CD, indicative of the 16-bit architecture; not the granular sound of that new \$1100 12-bit "vector" synth. Analog sounds are as fat as I've ever heard; kudos here. I knew there was a reason I never bought an FM synth, and after hearing the "Encore" patch, I know why. And wonder of wonders, the original ESQ-1 pitch bend implementation of "held" (not sustain pedal "held") is back! I've spent hours perfecting my Buddy Emmons technique using the "Pedal Steel" patch. Not that I'm there yet, but believe me, Nashville may very well ban this instrument. If it already hasn't...

Editing is a breeze; you're no more than 4 button presses from any particular menu page. The "Bank Select" and "Instrument Select" buttons perform triple duty as sound edit

and sequence edit menus, and a less cryptic interface is not to be found on any other keyboard. You select "Sound" or "Sequence," press the "Sound" or "Sequence" edit buttons, and away you go! The SQ-1 shows that power and complexity are not synonymous.

Drum sounds are tuneable, programmable, punchy and clean. Mercifully, Ensoniq provides 20 kits (drum sets, if you will) to use immediately if you're not in the mood to design your own kit. In fact, they're so good I didn't even bother to remap the SQ-1 kit to my R-8 drum/key map. In fact, is anybody out there interested in a used R-8 cheap? The 20 kits may occupy more patch space than you require, but whether you need that many or not, Ensoniq has included them as a baseline drum section. It's easier to delete than design, right? Voice ROMs do not displace the drum kits; inserting the SC-1 ROMcard adds 2 banks of 80 new voices each, allowing a whopping 340 resident sounds in the instrument (not inclusive of the drum waves)! And you don't have to delete space in internal memory to make room for these extra ROM voices; they become bank selectable as soon as the card is inserted. Slick...

EFFECTS

Many curious shoppers have probably looked at the effect algorithms and said "There's not enough reverbs here." Ensoniq wisely incorporated a diffusion parameter on the reverb programs to allow greater flexibility of the given reverbs, and in doing so, had enough leftover RISC space in DOC III to allow chorus, flange, distortion, compression, rotary speaker algorithms, phase shifting, or combinations of the above. They even included our old friend, the extinct Mutron Biphasor in the phase shifter algorithm. And yes, ALL are modulatable via mod wheel, our old friend CVP-1 pedal, or 14 other mod sources. Suffice it to say effects routing and modulation are synthesis in itself with the SQ-1. Patch select buttons are absent from the SQ-1; with the user-definable "Timbre" control, I didn't really miss them. It's doubtful whether they would be very practical or useful in 3-oscillator architecture anyway...

PRESETS

Anybody who owns an EPS is already familiar with these. The real power of presets in the SQ-1 is in live performance, of course, but they may also be used as multi-timbral templates for sequencing tracks, identical to a "patch" of voices in other manufacturers terminology. Again, Ensoniq goes a few steps further than the competition and allows you splits, layers, key ranges in both Local and MIDI modes without the attendant frustration of keyboard MIDI channel # definition. Local is local, NO keyboard channel need be specified, and ALL sound performance parameters

are stored as a preset. Presets can be named up to 16 characters (as well as sounds/songs/sequences) and since a preset is actually a sequence without note data, you can store up to 100 of them, the only limit being the number of sequences (presets WITH note data) resident in memory. Powerful stuff, and, unlike any other manufacturer's implementation, manageable.

SEQUENCER

Once again, the standard of the industry. Non-destructive editing, audition "new" and "old" before committing to the track, pattern-based, add/delete/quantize/punch in-out anywhere in a sequence, metronome level, etc., plus advanced VFX sequencing features. Actually, the SQ-1 sequencer IS a VFX sequencer with the exception of step entry and 8 fewer tracks. Everything else is identical, down to scaling velocity and step edits. And the sequencer is an honest 16-track sequencer. Once sequences are chained together in Song Edit Mode, 8 discrete "song" tracks are added, and can be assigned local or MIDI status, channel #, program #, etc., unlike the EPS sequencer which can only address its 8 "instrument" parameters. Since base sequencer memory is only around 8K, the optional SQX-70 58K expander will be necessary for power gurus (like you and I). But since Ensoniq's sequencer design is so memory-efficient, you can afford to wait a couple months before popping for the expander and not push sequencer memory too ragged exploring the SQ-1. The most powerful sequencer I've ever seen at 3 times the price, and it's standard on every SQ-1. I've worked with Macs running Performer 3.4.2 and IBMs running Cakewalk, Voyetra's SP3, various stand-alone MC-500 MKII's and the like, and I'm still amazed at how much closer to the music I get, how much MORE music I get sequenced, and most of all, how fresh and how FAST I get things done on Malvern sequencers.

HARDWARE

The SQ-1 is the one lone keyboard in the Malvern arsenal to NOT use the familiar hinged-lid plastic case; as much as is going on inside this box, it probably wouldn't pass RFI standards unless some mu metal shielded this particular mutant motherboard. It's an attractive and sleek black case with easily readable front-panel markings. Stereo outputs are provided, as is a headphone jack. The back of the instrument is taller from top to bottom than other Ensoniq products, so it's a bit tougher to plug things into the back panel from frontside, but since back panel connections are labeled on the front panel and the back panel (a convention most other keyboard manufacturers are ignoring), it's really no big deal. Everything else appears the normal Ensoniq bill of fare, although I don't believe I've ever seen a bigger "Ensoniq" logo before. And to be frank, I don't really miss the after-touch keyboard like I thought I would. Since the SQ-1 DOES respond to poly-key and channel pressure (its sequencer DOES record both types), drive it from your EPS or other aftertouch keyboard if that's a significant factor.

STORAGE

Here we find the only weak link in this product, but at this price, who cares? Sys-ex all your data to your EPS or VFX-sd and save to disk, use RAMcards, or pop for a sys-ex disk drive. RAMcards are available in 32K or 64K capacities, so if you're a hobbyist who buys an SQ-1 for home compositional use, RAMcards are the most convenient for data storage. If you push Ensoniq silicon as hard as I do (and try to make it revert back to sand), sys-ex the data to your EPS and save as a sys-ex file on floppy disk (or hard drive, if you're really serious!) Since RAMcards can hold sound OR sequence data (a feature lacking in the original ESQ-1), or in the case of the MC64 RAM, BOTH sound and sequence data, they greatly expand the convenience and flexibility of the SQ-1 as both compositional workstation and performance keyboard. So go on and pop for a couple cards; keep your other gear at the gig...

CONCLUSIONS

Since the Hacker hasn't the time, space, or desire to publish a 200 page treatise on the SQ-1, I've only scratched the surface of the SQ-1. I haven't listed voice architecture, specs, or the like as that information is available at your music dealer on the release sheet. Currently, a cursive glance and a quick listen to a demo sequence seem to be the norm in keyboard appraisal; the SQ-1 deserves better than that—give it a thorough perusal.

In summation, the SQ-1 is actually 2/3 of the VFX-sd; it provides half as many oscillators per voice (3 compared to the VFX's 6), but since it incorporates 2/3 of the VFX-sd sequencing environment (16 tracks versus 24), I'd place it between the VFX and the VFX-sd. I WOULDN'T have put it there until I had about a week of it under my belt. I'm sure some of you will value poly-key and disk storage more than a sequencer, but to get gestallian about it, the whole of the SQ-1 is greater than the sum of its parts. If you long for a VFX-sdII and don't have \$2695, you should examine the SQ-1 closely. At \$1595, to quote another company, "Nothing even comes close." To call it an "entry-level" keyboard is like calling a Bosendorfer a practice piano.

I think they're planning on taking over the world. . . ■

BACK ISSUES

Back issues are \$2.50 each. (Overseas: \$3 each.) Issues 1-9, 11, 13-23, 27, 29, 30, 36, and 38 are no longer available. Subscriptions will be extended an equal number of issues for any issues ordered that are not available at the time we receive your order. ESQ-1 coverage started with Issue Number 13. SQ 80 coverage started with Number 29, (although most ESQ-1 coverage also applies to the SQ 80). EPS coverage started with Number 30. (But didn't really get going till Number 35.) VFX coverage got started in Number 48. Permission has been given to photocopy issues that we no longer have available - check the classifieds for people offering them. Reprints in our "Quick and Dirty Reprint Series" are available: MIRAGE OPERATIONS, for \$5, and MIRAGE SAMPLE REVIEWS for \$4. Each contains material from the first 17 issues.

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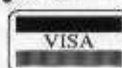
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ZimmerWorks Zeebar Fingerstrip

Sam S. Mims

For: All Ensoniq synthesizers, EPS, EPS-M.
Product: Zeebar Fingerstrip
Price: Suggested retail: \$149.00.
From: ZimmerWorks, Inc., 3909 Hidden Springs Drive, Lexington,
KY 40514. (800) 345-9757.

One minute I'm writing an article on strange devices that you can plug into your Ensoniq CV pedal jack, the next minute a Zeebar Fingerstrip arrives at my doorstep. Crazy, how this universe works.

The Fingerstrip is, in appearance, reminiscent of the old ribbon controllers that were available on some early synthesizers. (Before you were born—remember, kids?) It's a long rubbery pad, almost the length of the keyboard, that sticks on the panel just over the keys. Alternately, it can be mounted on the ledge underneath the keys, so that pressing the keys down hard will apply pressure to the strip.

When pressure is applied to the Fingerstrip's surface, the strip emulates the function of the CV pedal. In other words, if you have the pedal set to control volume, pressing harder on the Fingerstrip will increase the volume of the keyboard. I was hoping, at first glance, that this device functioned more like a ribbon controller, in that pressing it at the left sent out a slight amount of "CV pedal" modulation, with the amount increasing as you pressed farther to the right. But in fact, it's the amount of pressure that you apply that varies the modulation, not the location of the pressure.

This precludes doing ribbon-controller effects (like controlling pitch accurately, since you have the keys as reference points), but it does allow the use of the Fingerstrip underneath the keys, to mimic the aftertouch effect. This is useful on the ESQ-1, but the other targeted keyboards all feature polyphonic aftertouch, and they can already do what the Fingerstrip does. The Fingerstrip emulates channel aftertouch, as it can only send out one value at a time, and—a more serious limitation—it is only contacted by the white keys. Pressing a black key will have no effect. Initially, too, it took a lot of pressure to get the Fingerstrip to kick in with it mounted this way. In answer to this, ZimmerWorks now supplies a plastic strip to shim the Fingerstrip higher. Two of them helped out quite a bit, but I still would have preferred a lighter touch.

So I preferred the Fingerstrip mounted above the keys where I could punch on it as needed. It is VERY responsive and ZimmerWorks has done a good job of making this controller work in a smooth and predictable way. There is a built-in "hot spot" for extra sensitivity, if needed. The strip looks like it is very well built, it's simple to attach to the keyboard (with removable adhesive strips), and it won't get in the way of anything (unless you need to pop the hood

open). Alternatively, you could mount it just about anywhere that pressure can be applied. If you play in a seated position, you could stick it underneath the keyboard, and press up on it with your knee.

The Fingerstrip is a great idea, but it has one drawback that limits its usefulness, at least for my applications. Since it plugs into the CV pedal jack, it precludes the use of the CV pedal. So, instead of using a foot to modulate, the Fingerstrip requires a free hand, of which there are seldom enough around. One way around this would be to construct a simple switch box to select either the pedal or the Fingerstrip as a controller. (This might be a good accessory for ZimmerWorks to offer.)

Like any new controller, mastering the Fingerstrip takes a bit of practice. Also, it won't do a darned thing unless your sounds are programmed to respond to PEDAL modulation. So, if you're not aware of how to alter your patches to do this, you'll miss out on much of the Fingerstrip's potential. But if you're into alternate controllers for your keyboard, be sure and check this out. ■

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or mutilate.**

**(but you can, press,
wiggle, lean, shimmy,
stomp, rip, pulsate, tap,
jiggle, jam, lash, tickle, whip)**

Zeebar FINGERSTRIP
TM

Just plain express yourself !

Advanced EPS Programming for the Beginner

Garth Hjelte

So the EPS is two years old! Wow, it seems like since then there's been a huge sampler revolution. Now everyone has an EPS (even my church down the street has two of them). As far as I'm concerned, NOTHING beats it under \$5000.

I know they say 80-85% of sampler owners don't sample at all, much less program-change the pre-set samples. But I guess that's all right. With the mass of samples available publicly, maybe you don't need to. But, let me persuade you, follow these relatively simple tips in "advanced" programming, and you can make a good sample sound even better.

Let's start with this. One inherent problem of samplers is that although it can achieve a vastly greater variety of sounds than, say, sample-players like the M-1, it has a greater problem in what I call "manipulation integration." Sure, you can modulate just as powerfully with the M-1 as the EPS, but when you modulate a waveform in the EPS, you're modulating an infinitely more complex waveform than with the M-1. It sounds more natural when you fiddle with a simpler wave, because our present modulation sources aren't that complex. Most of our modulation affects the entire frequency spectrum of a wave, but in real life, nature affects certain bands differently. So, with a sampler, we have a challenge.

Fortunately for us, the EPS has some real esoteric functions that can at least touch the surface of the problem. I'd like to go over the use of some of these, as well as provide some general tips on greatly improving the playability of your samples. The first is...

Sample Start Modulation

It seems that nature and the ear work in peak fashion; that is to say sound doesn't just occur, it either rises to a peak (quickly or slowly) or falls from a peak (again very quickly or slowly). Try yelling, not inflecting your voice, for a long period of time. It's boring, tiring, and real vain, isn't it? So let's apply that to the keyboard. When you strike a key hard, you generally expect a sharp peak, a large dynamic, compared to the remainder of the sound. When you strike a key softer, you expect less of a peak, and somewhat the same dynamic as the rest of the sound.

A good example is a Fender Rhodes/DX-7 electric piano sound. Quick, bright, and sharp when played hard. Soft, less dynamic, more constant sound when played softer. Now, the usual way of simulating this is with the SOFT VEL CURVES=ON on both the filter envelope page and the amplitude envelope page. But, let's go further and add this to the effect. With the EPS you can modulate where

your sample start point is going to be by how hard you strike your key! What this means is that by playing harder, you can introduce the actual recorded hard attack into the sound just by, you guessed it, hitting the key harder. And vice versa, of course. When you play softer, the attack portion of the sample won't even be sounded.

Here's a common, one-size-fits-all way of doing this to any sample that would fit the above criteria:

1. Select WAVESAMPLE
2. Set SAMPLE START[(0) to(99)] to, say, [(26) to (99)]
3. On the next page, set MOD=START
4. Set SOURCE=VEL or VEL 1 or VEL 2
5. Set MOD AMT= -99 (adjust for fine control)
6. Set RANGE= 16K—32K (this varies, depending on wave size)

Try this on anything—guitars, synths, percussion, or anything with a percussive attack setting down to a consistent tone. Again, this is a great way to make a sample more expressive—modulating the actual data directly, rather than adjusting it through frequency or amplitude.

Here's a spin-off application...Commonly to "stereoize" a sample you copy the WAVESAMPLE to another LAYER, detune the copy, and split the pans. Instead of detuning (which sometimes muddies the clarity of the sample—it's good not to chorus EVERYTHING), do the same six step approach as above, only set SOURCE=RNDM. Now your samples will be in "true" stereo—there'll be different waveforms happening on both sides. This won't work with sounds with definite attacks (you'll end up eliminating the attack), but is more for pads and smoother sounds.

Truncating Sample Start Points

Sometimes a split second really makes a difference and samples are no exception. Just a couple of seconds between a key strike and the instrument sound can really influence your playing and feel. Here's a no-fault way of getting rid of any unwanted silence occurring before your samples.

Select and isolate the intended WAVESAMPLE. Go to the pitch page and take note of the present ROOT KEY. Now, lower the ROOT KEY to C8 (that's the lowest it will go). Now play the wave on the keyboard. If there's any silence, you'll really hear it now. Go to the SAMPLE START and adjust, until the sample makes a sound exactly when you hit a key. It's best to hit the lowest key on the keyboard. As soon as you do this, readjust the ROOT KEY to the former note, and check it out. Feels better? Then truncate the

sample making sure you adjust all the copies. Of course you can go too far and screw-up the attack a bit, but otherwise, get as close as you can get. This approach works best with the same type of sounds described in the first section—sounds that peak immediately, then come down in intensity and level out to a consistent tone.

On a related issue (keystroke feel), mushy sounds usually have a problem of being sluggish and non-responsive in the low end. Here's a way to compensate. The reason the sound is so mushy is that since the sample is so slowed down to respond at a lower pitch, the attack portion is too lengthy to have any definition to it. So, try this: assuming the LAYER in question has only one WAVESAMPLE, copy that WAVESAMPLE to that same LAYER, assign it to the lower 1 1/2—2 octaves of the keyboard, and move the SAMPLE START up about 10-20 percentage points. This will do the same thing as the above—compensate for the overly slow, sluggish attack.

Random Pitch on Short Loops

On the EPS we have two different kinds of looping—short and long. Long looping is for complex sounds that are rich in harmonic character—that are changing for more than a few cycles of wave. Short looping is for more straight, consistent, "cycled" waves. When you short loop, what you're actually doing is creating a pitch by looping the loop so short! So to speak.

Well, the trade-off between short and long looping comes down to this: long loops are more exciting, short ones are sometimes dull. Short loops are extremely memory efficient and long loops are very memory expensive.

So what do you do? Well, here's a way to make short loops a little more exciting. Using this, you'll find more acceptable short-loop candidates, and thus, save memory. Go to the pitch page and find the page that says RANDOM FREQ= 15 AMT= +0 (that's the default). On a short-loop wave, find that page and increase (or decrease) the AMT by one or three. Now that short loop doesn't sound so "static," or as another put it, it's no longer perfect—rarely are people playing real instruments perfectly. Try increasing the RANDOM FREQ—sometimes that adds a greater variety. Or, use it when "stereoizing" a wave. It's a good option to just detuning everything.

Epilogue

As I gaze into my crystal OEX-8 expander, I see...I see...what is it?...it's...a new Ensoniq sampler! I wonder how it will sound (or when it'll appear). Oh well. I'm pretty content for now.

By the way, Ensoniq, I went to the ear doctor the other day and he freaked on how bad my hearing's getting. I might have to check out your new EPHA (Ensoniq Performance Hearing Aid). Can I get it at my dealer? ■

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MZpatch

Visual Sample Editor for EPS and Atari ST from Maartists

Tim O'Connor

For: EPS
Product: MZpatch. Visual editor for EPS and Atari ST.
Price: \$149.95.
From: Maartists Inc., PO Box 956172, Duluth, GA 30136. (800) 832-2737.

Let me begin this review of MZpatch by saying that I long felt that the EPS didn't really need a visual editing system. Its user interface seemed quite adequate, and its sophisticated looping algorithms seemed to preclude the necessity of visually looping a sample. Suffice it to say that after a week of editing samples and instruments using this program I am a VES convert for life. The EPS will quickly find a good loop point on a fairly static waveform, but locating a seamless, natural sounding loop on a sample which is full of subharmonics, periodic changes in amplitude due to heavy chorusing and other nasty imperfections which make music so wonderful to listen to is asking an awful lot from any mere computer program. There is also a lot to be said about being able to view an entire instrument layout at once: all samples and their copies, layers, their enabled/disabled status per patch select, etc. This may not seem important for many simple instruments, but try to uncover the architecture of something like the Grand 88 using only the fluorescent display of the EPS and thou shalt experience the loss of many brain cells and shall surely weep.

The first thing I needed to do before using this program was to run out and buy an Atari monochrome monitor. Like most music software where wave data is displayed, the high resolution screen is a must. MZpatch will only run in high-res mode (this was not made clear in their initial advertisements).

The program is not copy protected so backups are not a problem. A hardware key inserted into the joystick port is required to run the program, however. This seems a fair enough trade-off, and is only a nuisance if you have several programs with keys that you use often.

The program is laid out in four main pages: the Instrument page, the Sample Parameter page, the Loop page and the Cutout page.

The Instrument Page

This page gives you an overview of the entire instrument. Across the top is a picture of the keyboard extending from note A0 to C8. Beneath it are eight rows corresponding to the eight layers of the instrument. Samples are represented as horizontal bars with little boxes at their endpoints. To change the range of a sample, simply drag an endpoint with the mouse to another key and you're done. Same with the root key—move it with the mouse to a new key location. This program will not allow samples on the same layer to

overlap or get "buried" as they can when using "set keyboard range" function on the EPS. To move a sample from one layer to another, simply select the sample, then click on its new position.

Another option allows you to see the wavesample copy relationships. Clicking this on creates a spider web of lines on the screen connecting each original sample to any copies. The left-hand column of the screen can display either (a) which layers are key-down or key-up layers and their patch select activation status, or (b) a bar graph showing the layer's velocity response range. This is extremely handy for showing velocity crossfades and splits in an obvious way. The patch select buttons themselves appear in the upper left corner. Move the mouse to them and the left and right mouse buttons become the two patch select buttons. Clicking on them the same way you would on the real patch select buttons shows which layers are active for that patch, shading in gray those layers which are deselected. When you play a note on your EPS keyboard, a vertical line appears on the page extending completely from the piano keyboard diagram at the top, through all layers to the bottom. No doubt as to which samples are activated by a keystroke. A "Playmode" allows you to play notes from your Atari by clicking the mouse on various key ranges on the screen.

The Parameter Page

This page is used for modifying and displaying sample parameters, including all envelopes, wave playback mode, pitch modulators, LFO and filter settings, and amplifier parameters. Personally, I think Mr. Zetterquist (the author of MZpatch) went a little icon crazy on this page. Icons are a fine thing, especially when accompanied by the English name of the function, but some of these are a bit arcane, too cutesy or downright enigmatic (it took me the longest time to figure out that a skull and pitchfork meant "undo" (!?!?!)). Envelopes are a pure joy to modify, compared to the "digital" alternative. They are also easily copied by moving them with a small hand on top of the one to change. The pitch, filter and amp envelopes for a given wavesample can be copied to one another but no provision exists to copy an envelope from one sample to another other than doing it on the EPS. This is a shame since this is by far the most commonly performed type of copy. And the EPS contains preset envelope templates which are handy. MZpatch takes this concept further by allowing you to load and save to disk any envelopes you might want to use at a later date.

Cross-fade breakpoints are also easily viewed graphically. This is a nice feature of the EPS which is almost never used because of the confusing nature of the parameters. One thing that has always bothered me about this function

is that the parameters for the crossfade are MIDI note numbers rather than the more intuitive key pitches (how many of us remember that C2 is note 36, etc.). MZpatch had a perfect opportunity to rectify this situation and didn't. The parameters are still entered numerically, though the resulting graph is very nice. It would be nicer, however, if all crossfades on all layers could be seen at once as an option on the instrument page to show graphically how the samples overlap.

The Loop Page

The loop page includes the basic looping functions. Along the bottom edge of the screen you see the wavesample in its entirety. A click on the left mouse button on the sample graph sets the loop start point, a click on the right button sets the loop endpoint. The looped region is then highlighted in black. The upper two-thirds of the screen is a display of the loop start and end points back to back, with the end of the sample on the left and the beginning on the right. Buttons exist just below the loop windows to move the loop start or end points one sample at a time or to the next zero crossing (except in the case of bi-directional loops, it moves it to the nearest peak). The vertical scale of the loop windows is selectable, to adjust for a wide range of sample amplitudes. The cross-fade loop commands are not included on this page as these are not wave parameters but operations which effect the content of the wave data itself.

Being able to view the entire sample at once is a real blessing. I was able to locate very good loop points on some samples with a lot of movement in them. I was able to locate long-term repeating patterns in the samples on which to loop. It would have been extreme good luck to have found them any other way.

The Cutout Page

This oddly named page is for setting sample start and end points and for truncating the sample. It looks very much like the loop page except that the main window shows sample start and end points rather than loop points. The entire wave is also visible at the bottom of this page, and with the mouse you click on where you want the sample start and end points to be. This page is very useful for removing wasted space at the beginning and end of a sample. The page also features the normalize gain function and an auto zerocross search (technically, the wave should always begin and end at zero amplitude).

Conclusion

Life is imperfect, and this program does not break this rule. However, overall I am very pleased with it.

BOOS: It is possible to crash this program, or the EPS, or both. If you are loading a very large instrument or wave-sample into the Atari, it will take some time and you will be tempted to while away the time by doodling on the ivories. Don't do this. The program is expecting sample or instru-

ment layout data, and it will get very confused if it sees MIDI note values and may lock up. Restarting the Atari with the MIDI cables connected to the EPS will then very likely cause the EPS to crash (I did both). It is best to save your changes on the EPS, disconnect the MIDI cables, restart the Atari and then reconnect.

There is a maximum wavesample size that MZpatch will handle defined by the remaining memory of your computer. I'm not sure what this size is, but I have a 1040ST and samples which take up the better part of a diskette will not load.

I would like to see the low level wave data commands (ADD, CLEAR, INVERT etc.) included in this program. Barring this, it would be nice if the loop and cutout pages would show you the address of a sample by positioning the mouse pointer on the graph. Then if you wanted to use a low level command you would at least know the sample addresses you want to specify. The only way to do this currently is by temporarily setting a loop or endpoint at a particular place in the sample and reading its position value.

Though very understandable, the manual is chock full of atrocious grammar and spelling mistakes. My suspicion is that English is not Mr. Zetterquist's native tongue.

Though you can select which instrument (1 through 8) is to be loaded into the Atari for editing, when the program first starts up it immediately loads instrument 1. If this is not the one you intended then you will have to wait (perhaps a while) until it is finished and then select a different instrument and load it. This seems like it would be a minor change to a future software update.

HOORAYS: Despite my remarks about the manual, credit is due for including (get this) a manual for people who don't read manuals! This is just a single page of gotchas or hidden features that would drive even the most hard-nosed hackers to the nearest Twinkie vending machine in desperation.

All data is transferred to the EPS continuously as you change it on-screen. This means that if MZpatch were to crash, you haven't lost anything because it's in the EPS. It also means that at any time you can do edits on the EPS and you will be working with current data.

The program is not copy protected. 'Nuff said. The program is cheap. \$149 when I ordered it early this year. I give it a two thumbs up. If you're in the market for a VES for your EPS and you have an Atari ST, check it out. ■

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ESQ-1 Sequencer Tricks

Buster Whitlock

Here we are in the 1990s. By now, perhaps you've decided that your trusty ESQ is obsolete, limiting your musical creativity and inspiration. Fact is, though, this little wonder is still one of the most versatile and easy to use main keyboards around. So here's a few hints and pointers to get more mileage out of your ESQ-1.

One of my main gripes with the ESQ sequencer is its 30 sequence/10 song arrangement. If you're like me, it's easy to use eight or ten different sequences to build a song. You use up the 30-sequence limit long before you get anywhere near the 10-song limit. This is a waste of song locations and memory - especially if you have the 20k expander (which you can presently pick up for a VERY reasonable price). I found that merely by joining sequences together by using the ADD function, I could get a lot more mileage out of my sequencer locations.

Another limitation I have overcome is implementing program changes WITHIN a sequence. (My dealer swore it couldn't be done.) Again, I turned to the ADD function for an answer. By putting the program changes at the beginning of each sequence, then adding the sequences together, the program change would occur in the middle of the new sequence. One warning however, this requires very careful planning of your program changes to avoid getting yourself into some complicated pinches.

A final limitation of the ESQ sequencer is the lack of a disk drive. (My, haven't we gotten spoiled the last year or two!) This is where my other trusty ol' piece of "obsolete" gear - my rack-mount Mirage - really comes in handy. Of course, many of the dedicated MIDI disk drives now on the market also fill this hole. ■

Bio.: Buster Whitlock confesses that (in spite of all the wonderful things he continues to say about the ESQ) he recently sold his to buy a VFX-SD.

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VFX-SD Hidden Functions

Gary Giebler

The following are several hidden functions I discovered on my VFX-SD running version 1.37. In each case hold down the first key while pressing the second key. (I've also listed the ones Ensoniq tells you about in the user's manual.)

- Presets/top left soft button:** Reinitialize the VFX-SD.
- Presets/top middle soft button:** Erase sequencer memory.
- Presets/top right soft button:** Recalibrate the keyboard.
- Presets/master:** Display the software version.
- Presets/compare:** Display controller values (analog test). I use this function to precisely set the master volume control. This helps in situations where I can't do a sound level check prior to a performance.

Display:

ANALOG PTCH=064 MOD=000 PED=127 VOL=100
TESTS KNOB=255 PSL=000 REF=093 BAT=145

The displayed codes have the following meanings and ranges:

Code	Device	Range
PTCH	Pitch Wheel	000-127
MOD	Mod Wheel	000-127
PED	Ext Pedal	000-127
VOL	Vol Control	000-127
KNOB	Data Slider	000-255
PSL	Patch Select	000 (none), 032 (right), 064 (left), 127 (both)
REF	Ref Voltage	Internal reference voltage
BAT	Battery Level	Battery output voltage

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This is a group of sixty patches programmed by West German Arnd Kaiser, so his collection is dubbed, (not surprisingly) the "German" collection. This doesn't mean that the sounds themselves are German, although there is an accordion patch essential for those German Beer Barrel Polkas. And, a nice plus, each set of patches from the International Sound Collection comes with a biography of the programmer, a cultural description of the country, a description of that country's music scene and patch descriptions.

The patch descriptions are very well done. For each patch, the sound is briefly described, the patch's effects program is listed (great idea), and all the performance parameters—patch select, mod, timbre, etc., are listed. This is all printed in a small, convenient booklet.

Overall, the patches cover a wide variety of sounds and textures. I would not consider it a complete set of every sound, but this isn't really necessary with the collection of standard sounds in the VFX ROM.

Let's explore some of the more interesting sounds then I'll give some thoughts on the overall product.

The first patch, VFX-ALIVE, is one of those great sounds demonstrating the VFX's awesome programming power (like the WOW-SOUND) that you will probably never actually use in a song. Just holding down one note the thing practically plays a whole song by itself. After that are a few chorused electric guitar sounds which are fairly usable. The best one is a patch called STRATUS, creating a beautiful, distinctive sound via the CLAV.VAR waveform—no cheap strat imitation.

There's a page of six symphonic sounds: two strings, one woodwind, and three orchestral sounds—all very subdued and mellow. The two strings are very light and delicate. These sounds are fine for something along the lines of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, but they lack force and dynamics (velocity controlled volume and brightness) necessary for music with a harder edge.

There are some horn sounds, nothing worth mentioning, except for a decent SOPRANO-SAX. There is no realistic piano patch. However, there is a patch called TEXTURE-PAD which is an excellent surreal piano sound. Of course, there's the inescapable group of bass sounds—several

patches which cover all the bases. All are punchy and quite usable.

Some of the sounds I like the most are the original synthesizer textures. These sounds are pure VFX creations and are not imitative synthesis. They are uninhibited by the confines of reality where acoustic instruments reside. OPEN-SKY has an eerie timbre created by some SPECTRAL transwaves. OMNIVERSE and ASCENSION are ethereal choir type sounds with thick effects and a repeating windchime sparkle in the background using an ALL-WAVES loop. These two remind me of that M1 thing, but these are better. The effects are well-applied to enhance many of the sounds. Also to be included in the synth category are several good mellow synth pads.

In general, I felt that the VFX's performance control capabilities were not utilized to their full potential. The TIMBRE control usually changes the hi-pass filter which is useful, but in many cases does nothing. The MOD wheel never does anything exciting, just occasional vibrato—better handled by the patch select functions. They usually have little effect on the sound. In a lot of cases, certain patch select combinations mute all the oscillators. I don't know if this is some sort of mistake, but it's a bad idea. Sometimes you may just hit the left button when you meant to hit both. If the left button mutes all oscillators, this could be fatal in a performance.

As far as the programming of the sounds goes, there is really no revolutionary programming techniques demonstrated. On the other hand, it's not that hard to create beautiful sounds on something as powerful as the VFX. Being essentially a wavetable synthesizer with sampled sounds, the samples provide complex attacks and unique timbres which are easily manipulated.

Overall, the collection is ok, with a few really impressive sounds. I personally like the unique synth textures the most. Someone doing a wide variety of pop and new age music should certainly find usable sounds in this collection. If you're looking for good orchestral sounds, look elsewhere. Anyway, I think you should certainly exercise your capitalistic freedom and go to the nearest music store to hear these for yourself. ■

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Time Stretching on the Mirage

Scott Fisher

With all those Mirages sold, there must be thousands of people wondering what they can do to feed their starving dinosaurs. The original dinosaurs, as one theory postulates, ran out of software when a comet plunged to earth polluting the atmosphere with debris, blocking out the sun. No sun, no photosynthesis, no vegetation and no warmth. Today a comet of technological change has smashed its way to earth seeding the atmosphere with 24-bit full bandwidth samplers. As our Mirages wallow in the darkening twilight, many feel the chill setting in. Does history really repeat itself? Is the Mirage destined for the same cruel fate? Well, unlike the original dinosaurs, the Mirageosampler can make its own food. Undaunted, the Mirage samples all who get in its way to feed on them at leisure, at a later date. Many would say, to suffer cruelly in the 8-bit digestive tract.

Now, if the Mirage is not in danger of starving to death, perhaps another danger is that of boredom. As the light levels dropped, what did the original dinosaurs do for entertainment? No longer able to see in the dim twilight, many may have become bored and depressed, perhaps even took their own lives. Well, here we arrive at the point of this article. We have established the Mirage will never starve to death; it is boredom that is the No. 1 enemy of the Mirage. Following is a fun application of the sequencer and Sample Start parameter to cheer up many of the anxious Mirages out there.

1. THE SAMPLE: Samples of instruments with seamless crossfade loops are right out for this procedure. Be brave, make your own, and take a sample of some vocals or a piece of music. Go on, be greedy too, and fill up an entire bank with one sample (the following example can use either the upper or lower bank just as effectively). No loops, just a one-shot full-memory sample.

2. THE SEQUENCE: Most, if not all, Mirage owners have at some stage tried (and probably successfully) to lock up the machine by making an extremely short one note sequence that plays in loop mode. This is what you must do next. Turn Sequencer Loop Switch [88] on, play a SHORT (just tap a note briefly) ONE note sequence (start by playing the note at the original pitch of the sample; you can experiment later), and quickly hit the footswitch or stop button. Some of you may have been a bit too good at this stage and managed to lock up the Mirage already. Sorry, reboot! Others may need several goes to get a reasonable sequence. Those of you who have a quickly repeating note, go to internal Clock Rate parameter [87] and adjust it so that the sequence plays over and over just on the verge of locking up the machine (the point at which the display begins to glitch worse than usual). All you should

hear is the attack portion of the beginning of your sound (if there is no silence at the beginning of it) similar to a short loop.

3. THE ACTIVITY: While you have the sequencer running (on the verge of lock-up), go to Sample Start parameter [60] and hold down the increment button [up arrow]. At this point anything could happen, however the three most likely cases are considered. A) Nothing. Dolt! You are manipulating the wrong bank; try again on the bank in which your sequencer is playing the sample from. B) Lock up. Try again with a slightly slower repeat on the sequencer. C) It works! For the first few seconds parameter [60] (yes, you have to keep your finger on it) will increment slowly then it will speed up. Listen! Fun, eh? Darth Vader returns? Or is it Elvis trying to speak to us from the dead? Try holding down the decrement (down arrow) the same in reverse! Backward masking freaks will love this one.

A cool thing to do with this sound is to run it through a large hall type reverb, or an echo. So there you have it, your own Mirage FX unit. Share and enjoy. Some of you may have noticed that this sounds similar to the time stretching facility on some other samplers, whose names shall remain unuttered. If only I could smooth out the sound. I have done something similar with the EPS, making a short loop and running it through the sample with the loop position parameter. Anyway Hackers, keep beating those boards. I have a Mirage and an EPS, and still use my Mirage regularly. They are my Land Rover and my Jaguar—basically do the same thing but suit different occasions. May our dinosaurs live on. ■

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Hackerpatch

By Sam Mims

HACKERPATCH is intended to be a place where patch vendors can show their wares and musicians can share their goodies and impress their friends. Patches designated "ESQ-1" will also work on the SQ-80. The reverse is not always true. Once something's published here, it's free for all. Please don't submit patches that you know to be minor tweaks on copyrighted commercial patches unless you have permission from the copyright owner. All submitted patches are subject to consideration for mutilation and comments by Sam Mims—our resident patch analyst. If you send in a patch, PLEASE include your phone number. Requests for particular patches are also very welcome.

ESQ Patch: MOOGOO

by Steve Munro, Guilderland Center, NY

This is my version of one of the classic synth sounds I like best. It uses all square waves, detuned. On the Modes page, Glide=6 adds a slide or a slight pitch bend to the attack. The filter and DCAs are wide open. LFO2 does the panning, and it is modulated by VEL2 - the harder you play, the wider the pan range. LFO1 adds vibrato via the mod wheel. For more expression, you could increase the velocity response on ENV4 and/or use VEL2 as a modulator on the Filter page, but for my money, it sounds more accurate with everything going full blast.

The Hack

Here's a very nice version of a popular Minimoog sound, reminiscent of Keith Emerson's "Lucky Man" solo. You can easily make it a monophonic patch by switching MONO to ON (MODES page), but it's great to be able to play it polyphonically. The mod wheel effect is a little strange to me; I prefer a straighter vibrato, so I set the MOD#1 DEPTH of OSC 3 to +3, to be consistent with the other oscillators, and turned the FREQ of LFO 1 down one notch. My only other recommendation would be to tune all the oscillators down, since the overall patch is tuned slightly sharp. Turning on the AM function gives a somewhat different sound that you may find usable as well.

ESQ Patch: HEART1

by Carlos Macias, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Here is my shot at the sound effects library with the imitation of a heartbeat. It's most effective when used in the G#1 to G#2 range. Have fun!

The Hack

Okay, so you're not going to need this one in every tune, but it's a great imitation of the human heart. The key to the patch is the filter; note that the frequency is zero, and the resonance is on full. ENV 4 is used to open the filter frequency just enough for a quick heartbeat to squeeze through. (Just for fun, turning the filter frequency up to 127 shows that this patch may have started as a normal brass sound.) If you do need this for an effect during a song, you could raise the OCTave of each oscillator by one, then set this up as a split pro-

gram. With SPLIT KEY set to 37, SPLIT=UPPER, and your normal song patch chosen for the split program, you can play the heartbeat just on the lowest keyboard note.

SQ-80 Patch: FNTCPN

by P.T. Brown II, Myrtle Beach, SC

FNTCPN is a soft, mellow piano, leaning towards a new age or slow ballad theme.

The Hack

I really love this one. It's a great sound to start with, and some minor tweaks can give numerous variations. For example, try turning the filter resonance up full (to 31) for a layer of digital icing. Or try turning AM on for a more percussive sound. Finally, lots of interesting attack sounds can be had by simply changing the waveform and OCTave of OSC 3, and this makes it possible to easily use FNTCPN on an ESQ-1. One of my favorites for this was the SINE waveform, with OCT=+3.

SQ-80 Patch: 8' LES

by Kirk Slinkard, Lakewood, CO

This patch sounds like a Vox organ mellow 8' voice sent through a Leslie. By combining two envelopes at the DCAs, you can get simulated reverberation with full control of all parameters. This method even works on ESQs.

The Hack

Kirk's patch was done on an SQ-80, but there's nothing at all to stop ESQ users from plugging it in too. For an organ sound, I would tone down the reverb effect quite a bit; the easiest way is to turn all the DCA LEVELs to zero. But I prefer to forget the organ aspect here, and use this as an ambient ethereal sound. By playing a note and immediately rolling the mod wheel slowly forward, you can give a beautiful motion to the sound; it's not exactly a Leslie to my ears, but it's a great effect. I also liked turning the filter resonance up to 25; as the mod wheel is kicked in this gives a bit of "burble" to the sound.



Bio: Sam Mims is a studio session player and programmer in Los Angeles, and is keyboardist for Richard Elliot. He owns Syntaur Productions, a company that produces music for film and TV and markets sounds for Ensoniq keyboards.

ESQ-1 PROG: MOOGOO										BY: STEVE MUNRO										
OCT SEMI FINE WAVE MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
OSC 1	-1	0	0	SQUARE	OFF	-	LFO1	+3												
OSC 2	-1	0	2	SQUARE	LFO1	+3	OFF	-												
OSC 3	-1	0	6	SQUARE	LFO1	-1	OFF	-												
LEVEL OUTPUT MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
DCA 1	63	ON		OFF	-	OFF	-													
DCA 2	63	ON		OFF	-	OFF	-													
DCA 3	63	ON		OFF	-	OFF	-													
FREQ Q KEYBD MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
FILTER	127	0	50	OFF	-	OFF	-													
FINAL VOL PAN PAN MOD DEPTH																				
DCA 4	63		0	LFO2	-25															
FREQ RESET HUMAN WAV L1 DELAY L2 MOD																				
LFO 1	23	OFF	ON	TRI	0	0	0	WHEEL												
LFO 2	10	OFF	OFF	TRI	63	0	0	VEL2												
LFO 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
L1 L2 L3 LV T1V T1 T2 T3 T4 TK																				
ENV 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
ENV 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
ENV 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
ENV 4	+63	+63	+63	25	0	0	29	52	25	9										
SYNC AM MONO GLIDE VC ENV OSC CYC																				
MODES	OFF	OFF	OFF	6	ON	OFF	OFF	OFF												
SPLIT/LAYER S/L PRG LAYER L PRG SPLIT S PRG SPLIT KEY																				
	OFF	-		OFF	-	OFF	-													

ESQ-1 PROG: HEART1										BY: CARLOS MACIAS										
OCT SEMI FINE WAVE MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
OSC 1	-1	0	0	SAW	OFF	-	OFF	-												
OSC 2	-1	0	5	SAW	OFF	-	OFF	-												
OSC 3	-2	11	27	SAW	OFF	-	OFF	-												
LEVEL OUTPUT MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
DCA 1	49	ON		OFF	-	OFF	-													
DCA 2	48	ON		OFF	-	OFF	-													
DCA 3	47	ON		OFF	-	OFF	-													
FREQ Q KEYBD MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
FILTER	0	31	0	ENV4	+32	OFF	-													
FINAL VOL PAN PAN MOD DEPTH																				
DCA 4	63		8	OFF	-															
FREQ RESET HUMAN WAV L1 DELAY L2 MOD																				
LFO 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
LFO 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
LFO 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
L1 L2 L3 LV T1V T1 T2 T3 T4 TK																				
ENV 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
ENV 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
ENV 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
ENV 4	+63	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	0										
SYNC AM MONO GLIDE VC ENV OSC CYC																				
MODES	OFF	OFF	OFF	0	ON	OFF	ON	OFF												
SPLIT/LAYER S/L PRG LAYER L PRG SPLIT S PRG SPLIT KEY																				
	OFF	-		OFF	-	OFF	-													

SQ-80 PROG: FNTCPN										BY: P. T. BROWN II										
OCT SEMI FINE WAVE MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
OSC 1	-2	11	31	SPK02	LFO1	+4	ENV2	+1												
OSC 2	-1	0	4	SPK02	LFO1	-2	WHEEL	-1												
OSC 3	+1	0	0	STEAM	OFF	-	OFF	-												
LEVEL OUTPUT MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
DCA 1	63	ON		ENV2	+31	OFF	-													
DCA 2	63	ON		OFF	-	OFF	-													
DCA 3	30	ON		ENV2	+53	OFF	-													
FREQ Q KEYBD MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
FILTER	28	1	33	ENV2	+63	ENV3	+23													
FINAL VOL PAN PAN MOD DEPTH																				
DCA 4	63		8	LFO2	-32															
FREQ RESET HUMAN WAV L1 DELAY L2 MOD																				
LFO 1	20	OFF	ON	TRI	0	1	3	OFF												
LFO 2	12	OFF	OFF	TRI	63	0	20	OFF												
LFO 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
L1 L2 L3 LV T1V T1 T2 T3 T4 TK																				
ENV 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
ENV 2	+63	+6	0	63L	20	0	9	0	0	18										
ENV 3	+63	+39	+1	63L	22	1	46	50	39	45										
ENV 4	+63	+60	0	50L	63	0	26	47	44	9										
SYNC AM MONO GLIDE VC ENV OSC CYC																				
MODES	OFF	OFF	OFF	0	OFF	OFF	ON	OFF												
SPLIT/LAYER S/L PRG LAYER L PRG SPLIT S PRG SPLIT KEY																				
	OFF	-		OFF	-	OFF	-													

SQ-80 PROG: 8'LES										BY: KIRK SLINKARD										
OCT SEMI FINE WAVE MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
OSC 1	0	0	0	SQR2	LFO1	+1	OFF	-												
OSC 2	0	0	0	SQR2	LFO1	-1	OFF	-												
OSC 3	0	0	0	SQR2	OFF	-	OFF	-												
LEVEL OUTPUT MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
DCA 1	63	OK		ENV1	+18	ENV4	+36													
DCA 2	63	OK		ENV1	+18	ENV4	+36													
DCA 3	63	OK		ENV1	+18	ENV4	+36													
FREQ Q KEYBD MOD#1 DEPTH MOD#2 DEPTH																				
FILTER	0	0	43	WHEEL	+9	ENV1	+10													
FINAL VOL PAN PAN MOD DEPTH																				
DCA 4	63		8	LFO2	+63															
FREQ RESET HUMAN WAV L1 DELAY L2 MOD																				
LFO 1	16	OFF	OFF	TRI	0	0	0	WHEEL												
LFO 2	29	OFF	OFF	TRI	0	0	0	WHEEL												
LFO 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-												
L1 L2 L3 LV T1V T1 T2 T3 T4 TK																				
ENV 1	+63	+63	+63	0L	0	3	0	0	3	0										
ENV 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-										
ENV 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-										
ENV 4	+63	+63	+63	0L	0	3	0	0	49	0										
SYNC AM MONO GLIDE VC ENV OSC CYC																				
MODES	OFF	OFF	OFF	0	OFF	OFF	ON	OFF												
SPLIT/LAYER S/L PRG LAYER L PRG SPLIT S PRG SPLIT KEY																				
	OFF	-		OFF	-	OFF	-													

VFX Hackerpatch

Prog: K. EMERSON, By: Jim Grote, Cincinnati, OH

NOTES: Here it is, folks—a genuine Hammond B3 organ imitation. (A genuine imitation?) This patch has all the bite and character of the real thing; it sounds like Keith Emerson's B3 sound found on all of ELP's early albums. The most important part of this patch is the waveform delay applied to the main oscillators—they kick in slightly behind the percussive hit which is comprised of two sinewaves and noise, much like the real thing. This is most noticeable with staccato notes. The overdrive effect also helps, giving some bite and fattening it up a bit. This sound uses a lot of oscillators which limits polyphony, but it's really worth it. The patch select buttons choose variations of the basic organ sound. Also, the TIMBRE slider fades out the percussive hit. The mod wheel toggles the speed of the speaker rotation.

WAVES	1	2	3	4	5	6
Wave	Org-V.3	Org-V.4	Sine-W	Sine-W	Sine-W	Noise-LP
Wave Class	Waveform	Waveform	Wave	Wave	Wave	Inharm
Delay	007	008	008	006	000	000
Start						

MOD MIXER	1	2	3	4	5	6
SRC-1	LFO	ENV1	Pedal	Pedal	Pedal	Pedal
SRC-2	ENV1	LFO	Wheel	WL+PR	WL+PR	Wheel
SRC-2 Scale	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.8
Shape	Linear	Linear	Smoother	Smoother	Smoother	Smoother

PITCH	1	2	3	4	5	6
Octave	+0	+0	0	+1	+1	-2
Semitone	00	00	00	00	+07	00
Fine	-01	+04	00	+02	-01	+06
Pitch Table	System	System	System	System	System	System

PITCH MODS	1	2	3	4	5	6
MODSRC	Off	Off	Off	Off	Off	Keybd
MODAMT	-	-	-	-	-	-98
Glide	None	None	None	None	None	None
ENV1	00	00	00	00	00	00
LFO1	00	+01	+02	+04	00	-01

FILTER 1	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mode	LP/3	LP/3	LP/3	LP/3	LP/3	LP/3
Cutoff	001	001	000	068	068	001
KBD	+79	+79	+79	+80	+80	+01
MODSRC	Off	Off	Off	Off	Off	Off
MODAMT	-	-	-	-	-	-
ENV2	+70	+70	+98	+41	+41	+98

FILTER 2	1	2	3	4	5	6
Mode	LP/1	LP/1	HP/1	LP/1	LP/1	LP/1
Cutoff	077	126	057	077	077	001
KBD	+64	+64	-01	+66	+66	+01
MODSRC	Timbre	Timbre	Off	Timbre	Timbre	Off
MODAMT	-35	-39	-	-37	-37	-
ENV2	+48	+48	00	+46	+46	+59

OUTPUT	1	2	3	4	5	6
VOL	87	88	85	79	92	85
MODSRC	Off	Off	Off	Timbre	Timbre	Timbre
MODAMT	-	-	-	-46	-43	-10
KBD Scale	+21	-11	-01	00	00	+10
LO/Hi Key	A0/B7	A0/B7	A0/B7	A0/B7	A0/B7	A0/B7
Dest Bus	FX1	FX1	FX2	FX1	FX1	FX1
Pan	62	65	49	51	49	50
MODSRC	Mixer	Mixer	LFO	LFO	LFO	LFO
MODAMT	-24	-34	-12	-28	-30	-13
Pre-Gain	Off	Off	Off	Off	Off	Off
Voice Prior	Med	Med	Med	Med	Med	Med
Vel Thresh	000	000	000	000	000	000

LFO	1	2	3	4	5	6
Rate	15	15	24	28	27	28
MODSRC	Wheel	Wheel	Mixer	Pedal	Pedal	Mixer
MODAMT	+20	+20	+22	+25	+25	+20
Level	31	28	01	08	08	02
MODSRC	Wheel	Wheel	Mixer	Mixer	Mixer	Mixer
Delay	23	11	67	-65	65	64
Waveshape	Tri	Tri	Tri	Tri	Tri	Tri
Restart	Off	Off	Off	Off	Off	Off
Noise SRC RT	01	00	01	00	00	00

The Hack: Slammin! This is definitely an organ with punch, and the patch selects are all very useful. I have only two minor suggestions. First of all, all the voices are rated MEDIUM priority (on the third OUTPUT page); by rating some at LO priority—the NOISE-LP voice, for instance—you can cheat a bit more polyphony out of the patch with minimal adverse effects. Secondly, I hate having to send my left hand to the mod wheel to control the Leslie speed. By assigning MODSRC=PRESSURE on the second EFFECTS page, and MODE=SWITCH or CONTIN (whichever suits your playing style), the Leslie speed can be controlled from aftertouch for a much more expressive effect. The distortion adds an aggressive growl to the sound, but if you prefer a cleaner sound, merely switch the effects type to ROTO-SPKR+DELAY, with the same parameter values. - SM

SELECT VOICE

00	1	2	3	4	5	6
0*	1	2	3	4	5	6
*0	1	2	3	4	5	6
**	1	2	3	4	5	6

ENV1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Initial	01	01				
Peak	78	78				
Break 1	01	01				
Break 2	75	75				
Sustain	01	01				
Attack	33	33				
Decay 1	33	33				
Decay 2	33	33				
Decay 3	33	33				
Release	01*	01*				
KBD Track	+01	-01				
Vel Curve	Linear	Linear				
Mode	Repeat	Repeat				
Vel-Level	01	01				
Vel-Attack	01	01				

ENV2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Initial	98	98	98	01	01	98
Peak	98	98	98	39	39	01
Break 1	80	80	80	01	01	00
Break 2	80	80	80	01	01	00
Sustain	80	80	80	01	01	00
Attack	02	02	02	02	02	03
Decay 1	01	01	03	03	01	00
Decay 2	41	41	39	41	41	00
Decay 3	41	41	39	41	41	01
Release	01*	02*	07	17	17	00*
KBD Track	-01	+98	+98	-01	+01	-01
Vel Curve	Q-rise	Q-rise	Q-rise	Q-rise	Q-rise	Q-rise
Mode	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal
Vel-Level	01	01	01	01	01	01
Vel-Attack	01	01	01	01	01	01

ENV3

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Initial	98	98	98	98	98	98
Peak	98	95	95	04	02	01
Break 1	98	98	98	00	00	00
Break 2	98	98	98	00	00	00
Sustain	98	98	98	00	00	00
Attack	19	19	19	40	40	17
Decay 1	21	19	19	19	19	00
Decay 2	21	21	19	19	19	00
Decay 3	19	19	19	19	19	01
Release	03*	00*	41	01*	02*	00*
KBD Track	+01	-01	-01	-01	+01	+16
Vel Curve	CV-1	CV-1	CV-1	Linear	Linear	Q-rise
Mode	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal	Normal
Vel-Level	01	02	01	01	01	26
Vel-Attack	01	01	01	01	01	02

PGM CONTROL

Pitch Table	Off
Bend Range	**
Delay	X1
Restrike	00
Glide Time	00

EFFECTS (1)

Effect	Dirty-rot+delay
Delay	120
FX1	04
FX2	30

EFFECTS (2)

Hi-rotor slow	09
Hi-rotor fast	61
Overdrive	33
Modsrc	Modwheel
Mode	Contin.

EFFECTS (3)

Lag	020
Repeats	+19
Amounts	-12
Lo-rotor Vol	40

PERFORMANCE

Timbre	00
Release	00

Pressure: Key

Classifieds

USER GROUPS

I'm interested in joining or forming an EPS users group in the L.A. area. Contact: Jim Norman, Audio Images, 20847 Sherman Way, Suite 202, Canoga Park, CA 90290. Ph.: (818) 703-7934, Compuserve: 71321,2814; GEnie: J. Norman7.

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The Interface

Letters for The Interface may be sent to any of the following addresses:

U.S. Mail - The Interface, Transoniq Hacker, 1402 SW Upland Dr., Portland, OR 97221

Electronic mail - GENie Network: TRANSONIQ, CompuServe: 73260,3353, or PAN: TRANSONIQ.

This is probably one of the most open forums in the music industry. Letter writers are asked to please keep the vitriol to a minimum. Readers are reminded to take everything with a grain of salt. Resident answer-man is Clark Salisbury (CS).

Dear TH,

I'll try to keep this short. I ran into a problem which I think might be of interest to VFX owners. I found that backups of my VFX that I'd just made were being ignored when sent back. The "problem" turned out to be that the Base MIDI Channel is used in the header of the SysEx messages. This means that if I back up my VFX then change the Base MIDI Channel, and then send the backup back to the VFX, it will be ignored. This was not obvious to me and is different from most machines I've used, since the SysEx command byte itself is not channelized.

I think I understand why it was done, but the problem is that I didn't find it in my documentation and thought something was either wrong with my VFX or my librarian sw/hw (Midicaster running on a Mirage). Luckily the next morning a light bulb went off and I checked the SysEx headers: sure enough the Base MIDI Channel is one of the bytes Ensoniq codes into the header.

So, when you make a backup of your VFX patches, make sure you either write down the Base MIDI Channel, or ALWAYS backup/restore your VFX with the Base MIDI Channel set to the same value.

(For the record, I would have preferred something more akin to what Roland did with the "unit" number since Base MIDI Channel can be used for more than just distinguishing one VFX from another).

Johnny Klonaris
CompuServe 75036,1351

Dear Hacker,

Today I was reading some old Transoniq Hackers and discovered that "Ensoniq would like to address the issue of the full-fledged Advanced Applications Guide," (Issue #42) And that it would be distributed to all registered owners. But when I bought my ESQ-1 (serial number 4463) there wasn't any such thing as a warranty card. Is the guide out? What do I do to become a registered owner and receive my book?

By the way, I have a big problem with my Roland R-5 and my ESQ-1. I can't save the sys-ex data from the R-5 to the ESQ-1's sequencer. Please tell me what to do. It would really help if I could save the R-5 data with songs, patterns, setups, etc. on my ESQ-1.

Sincerely,
Kenneth Albinsson
Tumba, Sweden

[CS - First of all, you seem to be confusing the ESQ-1 with the EPS. The "Advanced Applications Guide" was written as an ad-

dendum to the EPS owner's manual, not the ESQ-1. Also, the ESQ-1 will not receive sysex data (as the EPS, SQ-80, and VFX-SD do). This is mainly because the ESQ-1 has no disk drive or other media capable of efficiently storing sysex data. As for your not receiving a warranty card with your ESQ, I'm sure it's just some kind of oversight. I'd recommend sending a copy of your sales receipt, making sure that the date of purchase, serial number, and your correct name and address are included, to Ensoniq Corp., 155 Great Valley Parkway, Malvern, PA 19355.]

[Ensoniq - Our distributor in Sweden is: Muskantor & Co. AB. They can be reached at 46-31-87-8080 and will be able to help you with all your current and future needs.]

Dear Hackers,

And I do mean hackers. A couple of years ago, I bought the Soundprocess operating system for the **Mirage**. I played with the stock bank of sounds and I thought it was really neat having all those sounds available without reloading. I also really liked the multi-timbral capability that it had through MIDI etc. But the OS was fairly complicated to program, especially through the 2-digit display of the Mirage.

So I took it upon myself to write a visual editor for the Macintosh, which I call Soundprocess Visual Editor (or SPVE pronounced spiffy). Pretty original, huh? You see, I make my life difficult to make it easier. I am making this program available under the Bankware system. That is, I give you this program if you give me an ORIGINAL sound bank of programs/samples for the Soundprocess operating system after you have used SPVE for a while. Shareware is too easy. I want this program to be USED. If SPVE is used for commercial purposes, please contact me to discuss the terms.

To cover postage, mailer, disk and duplication time, send \$5.00 check or M.O. (U.S. currency). After you have used SPVE for a while, send me your original sound bank.

By the way, why have I not seen any ads for Soundprocess for a while? I hope they are still in business (writing a new OS for the EPS!). I called them on a few occasions and left a message for them to return my calls but they never did.

Also, I am curious to know how large a market there might be for my program. Having a Mirage and a Mac, and then running Soundprocess must really cut the market down...

Happy hacking,
Barry Kirsch
2500 Skyview Dr.

Langhorne, PA 19053

[CS - I'm afraid I haven't had much luck reaching Triton, either. As for how large the market for such a product might be, your guess is as good as mine - although I suspect that it's a pretty small market.]

Dear TH,

I would first like to offer my deepest thanks and appreciation to the dedicated and informative staff of the Hacker.

Since purchasing my **SQ-80**, two years ago this month, with a lot of hours of learning this instrument, gaining a lot of short-cuts and knowledgeable information from every issue received, I have become confident in my (and my SQ's) ability and received much pleasure when I power up, and feel the technology which causes crowds of people to relax, to turn on, and to release inhibitions to enjoy the sounds they love to move to.

I do lack some self-confidence in understanding the programming techniques, not being a computer electronics technician, but what I have learned and received through your issues and with experimentation with the SQ, I am enclosing my contributions to the ESQ-SQ Hackerpatch, with all hacking - 100% plus - welcome (improvements may reign!).

My SQ was my most satisfying addition to my mini-mini-studio. I am seriously considering an **EPS**. My question is, and an honest opinion would be highly regarded, is it possible that the EPS will be taken out of production in the near future? (As was the SQ-80.) I have found Ensoniq has given me much satisfaction, and I would like to stay with some one I know, that will benefit my needs within my price range. (I especially admire American-made.) I share thoughts and concerns with Mark Lyth's letter (TH #61 July, '90) of the Interface. I don't want to spend my money unwisely, then to find out I've invested in an endangered species.

Incidentally, I have never had a major problem with my SQ (knock, knock...). With the production of the VFX-SD, and the SQ-1, what happens to the dedicated SQ-80 owners? Are we also to be considered collectors' items?

Thanks again for your involvement with us dedicated trans-Ensoniq believers,
P. T. Brown II
Myrtle Beach, SC

[CS - There have been rumors of a new sampling-type product due out from Ensoniq, but we have no confirmation of this, so you're kind of on your own here. Of course, there will always be new products introduced by any music-technology company, so the

question becomes more "when," not "if." If you have made the decision to upgrade your system with a new instrument there are a couple of things you might want to keep in mind.

First, the design cycle for most products seems to run about 18 months to 2 years. So if a whizzy new product has just been released, chances are that there will not be a major upgrade of the product for at least a year and a half or so. This is not to say that another manufacturer will not introduce a similar product in a shorter time frame — it seems that many of the music technology manufacturers are working on similar designs more or less simultaneously. It just means that if manufacturer "A" introduces the "BOB" keyboard in early 1989, that you probably won't see the "BOB II" until late 1990 or early 1991 (assuming that the original "BOB" is a success).

Of course, if you just love the "BOB I," but it's too much money, one tactic is to wait for the "BOB II" to come out, then take advantage of the lower pricing available through nervous music retailers who have large inventories of the "BOB I". If the original "BOB I" was a popular product, there should be a good deal of third party support for it, even though it may officially be discontinued (witness the ESQ-1/SQ-80 — thousands of sounds still available, as well as great deal of software support). It should also be noted that the manufacturer will continue to warranty the product for the

full term of the warranty, regardless of whether the product is discontinued or not — as long as the product was purchased new from an authorized dealer.

Another approach that occasionally works is to talk with your local dealer. In some cases, you can work out an agreement with the dealer to purchase the product of your choice now, with the stipulation that it can be returned within, say, 30 days in exchange for some new product that might be available within that time period. Some dealers will agree to this because they'd rather have your money now, rather than take a chance that you might spend it somewhere else. For your part, you may end up spending a bit more for this privilege, so you may want to consider whether this kind of short-term insurance is worth it.]

Friends,

First, I would like to thank Dan Walker for his interest in the Minotaur Early Instrument Samples. In your listing of the Minotaur reviews, however, you left out the review of Disk 1 which appeared on pages 6 and 7 of the August '87 issue of the Hacker.

I would like to point out that all of these reviews are of **Mirage** samples. Since Mr. Walker has an EPS, these may be of limited interest to him. There are Minotaur EPS samples somewhere at the Transoniq Hacker offices waiting to be reviewed.

Second, I would like to offer a hot tip to those EPS owners who feel like doing something a little out of the ordinary. David Grebos has put together a disk of Scottish drum samples (see the classifieds, December '89) and sequences using the, Play along with some of these with a huge synth voice; play fifths with the left hand and go nuts with the right. Watch out for flying shrapnel!

Barry Carson
Minotaur Studios
Canton, NY

Dear Hacker,

I am writing to express my concern over the degradation of our beloved interface section. (Hopefully I'm not contributing to this now!) When our mag only contains 32 pages (with five full-page ads and three half-page ads in the last issue), it sure makes sense to "keep the vitriol to a minimum," to use your words.

My main concern has been with letters written by folks with instrument problems who have not contacted Ensoniq's customer service department. Knowing the problems that exist with a particular keyboard is valuable information to us all and should be a part of this forum, but if I want to hear someone whine and moan for six paragraphs, I can find more entertaining sources elsewhere.

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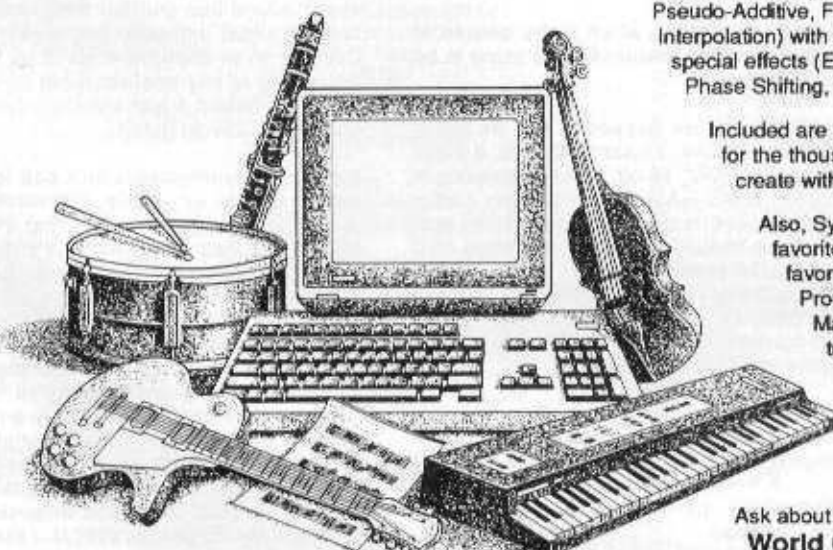
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This also applies to our long, drawn-out arguments between reviewers and reviewees. Let's work these things out among ourselves, shall we, instead of taking up space in a valuable magazine like TH. Can we get back to the basics - helping each other to understand our instruments?

I also wanted to see if our guys would run a review of the Zeebar, which has been advertised in the Hacker. Heck, send me one - I'll do the review myself!

Finally, I think it's very interesting to see how Ensoniq hasn't been able to fix all the bugs in the EPS (another space-gobbler in the Interface), but has found time to develop the EPS-M, VFX, VFX-SD, SQ-1, and the VFX-SD Version II. In support of my fellow hackers who own EPS's, I am willing to wait a while for a VFX rack version, or any other new Ensoniq product, until the bugs are fixed FOR GOOD. Whadda ya say, Ensoniq? Peel the egg off your face and get on with the business of making quality instruments.

By the way, I just bought a VFX-SD. Does that make me a masochist or an optimist?

Regards,
Buster Whitlock
Lexington, SC

[CS - As we've said before, the letters you see in the Interface are pretty representative of what we get. I tend to agree that the "gripe" letters are among those of least general interest to our readers. However, the people who write them are subscribers too and deserve representation in this forum. Still, I would prefer to see a few more questions regarding operations and tips. I think that these might have the greatest general appeal for our readership.]

As for the idea that Ensoniq hold up new product development in favor of tracking down every single bug in their existing products, I'm afraid it's a bit unrealistic, even if it is idealistic. An electronic instrument manufacturer simply cannot remain in business without developing new products to sell. And if the manufacturer goes out of business, chances are none of the bugs will get fixed, ever.]

[TH - A review of Zeebar appears elsewhere in this issue. (And when did we ever have five full-page ads???)]

By the way:

I have been using two hard drives with my EPS that have worked perfectly for over a year. I have a CMS SD-81U 81MB Hard Drive and a MicroNet MS-30 30 MB Hard Drive. MicroNet is a national brand that is very high quality and especially reliable (because of quality control). Both are based on the Seagate mechanisms. Again they work great and I have not had a single error. You might want to include them in the approved hard drives.

Thanks,
Craig Duncan

Los Angeles, CA

[CS - The hardware that appears in the "Approved" listing is hardware that has been specifically tested and approved by Ensoniq, so I'm afraid that we can't include your recommendations there. We do appreciate your letting TH readers know about your experience with these drives, though.]

Dear Hacker,

I recently purchased a new 170MB Quantum Pro Series hard drive that I had hoped to use with my EPS but Ensoniq informs me that it won't. During my search for EPS SCSI nirvana I've come up with the following tips for my beloved hackers:

- 1) Don't try to use a Maxto 200MB hard drive with your EPS. It won't work. It doesn't even recognize it as a SCSI device.
- 2) Ensoniq has informed me that the new Quantum Pro drives, Connor, and Fujitsu drives won't work either.

I've also come up with the following questions for Ensoniq:

- 1) I have been told by third parties that no drive over 105 Megs will format on the EPS. Is this true? Was this published in the SCSI manual? I would rather use a large 200 MB drive than several removable cartridges. Banks would be much less useful with all instruments strewn about on cartridges.
- 2) Are the problems with the new Quantum Prod Drives going to be fixed in the long awaited ROM upgrade for the EPS?
- 3) Is the formatting problem with large capacity drives going to be fixed?
- 4) Are the problems with the Maxtor, Connor and Fujitsu drives related? Will the new ROM fix this?
- 5) And (of course), when is the new ROM (complete with backup utilities) going to be available?
- 6) When can we expect to see 64 oscillators, 32 voices, vector synthesis, 8 megs wavetable ROM; 16-bit, 52-kHz sampling in stereo; 8 MB RAM, direct-to-disk audio, 24-bit multi-effects processor, SCSI port with tape backup capability, 1/4 page LCD screen, 16-channel master keyboard, full compatibility with EPS and VFX samples and patches, - complete with editor/librarian/mixdown editor that runs on "all" computers via SCSI interfacing?

This is where it's all going. But who gets there first with a reasonable price (\$5k range)? Any comments Ensoniq?

Sincerely,
Jeff Papineau
San Jose, Calif.

[Ensoniq - We maintain a list of approved SCSI drives so customers can avoid problems like these. If you choose a drive which is not on our approved list, it may

work or it may not. We do not have the resources or time to test more than a few drives. Readers can help by relating their experiences with other drives to the Transoniq Hacker - as in this letter and the previous letter. Unfortunately, we cannot add readers' drives to our "official" list of approved drives without testing them ourselves, but the information is still valuable.

1-5) We are currently testing a ROM upgrade which will address these issues. However, the release date has not yet been determined.

6) At this time, the product you describe would be prohibitively expensive. However, we are constantly evaluating new technology and features for products. It seems to us that \$5000 and higher products would have a very limited market potential and may not be the best market segment for Ensoniq. We'd be interested to know how many of you readers would purchase a \$5000+ product - why not let the Hacker know.]

Face to Interface:

I was reading Charles R. Fisher's "Fighting Obsolescence" article last month and some thoughts entered my head.

It was with the same premonition that I came to my instrument-buying decision a couple of years ago. Charles is determined to get the most out of what he worked very hard for (in his case, his SQ-80). I, in the same way, was set on finding an instrument I could get the most out of, not only when I got it, but down the road a couple of years. Which is why I bought a sampler (an Ensoniq EPS). In my mind, the most critical factor in determining the sound of any particular keyboard is the way it manufactures its sound. With a sampler, you have an unlimited capacity of new sounds, because it, by nature, is open-ended. My EPS will never sound like another EPS, unless we use identical samples and disks. And it doesn't ever cross my mind to think it necessary to buy another synth because it "sounds" better. I just sample what I like, and save a couple grand.

Not to put synthesizers in a bad light (by synths I mean wavetable, subtractive, and analog types), but I just think that if you are buying one instrument with the intention of owning it a long time, your money would be best spent on a sampler. D-50's will always sound like D-50's. ESQ's like ESQ's, M-1's like M-1's, but a sampler can sound like anything you want it to. You can argue that synths have a greater ability to "sculpt" sounds, but I think that's mainly a misconception. For example, the EPS sound-modifying architecture is virtually identical to the VFX's, except for the VFX's digital sound processing chip. And once Ensoniq drops that into the EPS (the EPS II - the rumor starts - just remember you heard it here first), there isn't much more you can do on a VFX that you can't do already on an EPS.

Of course, Charles's point is well taken, since he already owns his SQ-80. We all



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 String Section 2
 String Section 3
 String Section 4
 String Section 5
 String Quartet
 Pizzicato Violas & Violins
 Harps 1-4
 Harps 5 & 6
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 Acoustic Snares
 Acoustic Toms
 Acoustic Hi Hats
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 Bells 2
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 Triangles, Finger Cymbals & Bell Trees
 Tibetan Bell
 Sound Effects 1 - Domestic Animals
 Sound Effects 2 - Wild Animals
 Sound Effects 3 - Cartoon FX
 Sound Effects 4 - Car FX One

Sound Effects 5 - Car FX Two
 Sound Effects 6 - Transportation FX
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 Sound Effects 8 - Military and War FX
 Sound Effects 9 - Household FX
 Sound Effects 10 - Industrial FX
 fairlight II Soundtrax 1
 fairlight II Soundtrax 2
 fairlight III Brass 1
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 fairlight III Orchestra
 fairlight III Reeds
 fairlight III Strings 1
 fairlight III Strings 2
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 fairlight III Percussion
 fairlight II Orchestra hits
 fairlight II Orchestra hits 2
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 fairlight II Soundtrax 3
 fairlight II Soundtrax 4
 fairlight II Soundtrax 5
 fairlight II Soundtrax 6
 fairlight II Soundtrax 7
 fairlight III Snare Drums
 fairlight II Sound FX
 Prophet 5 Strings
 Prophet 5 Brass and Bass
 Prophet VS - 1
 Prophet VS - 2
 Prophet VS/T8/2000
 D-50 1
 D-50 2
 D-50 3
 D-50 4
 M1-1 - Cloud Nine & Christmas sounds
 M1-3 - Lunapad and Barbarians
 M1-4 - Celestial and Stratos
 M1-5 - Ambrosia and Atlantis
 M1-6 - Galadriel, Lothlorien & Gandalf
 M1-8 - Orchestras 1 and 2
 M1-9 - Orchestras 3 and 4
 M1-10 - Bottlebell, Metal Hit, & Windbell
 DX-1 - DX Rhodes and Bass sounds
 Oberheim 1 - Xpander Bass & Brass
 Oberheim 2 - Matrix 6-1
 Oberheim 3 - Matrix 6-2
 Oberheim 4 - Matrix 12
 MiniMOOG - 1
 MiniMOOG - 2
 MiniMOOG - 3
 Jupiter 8

Super JX/MKS-70
 Juno 60/106
 Prophet 10 - 1
 Prophet 10 - 2
 Korg DW-8000
 ESQ-1
 SQ-80
 Kurzweil 250/1000
 Arp Odyssey
 Arp 2600
 Mellotron 1 - Strings
 Mellotron 2 - Flute & Choir
 Chamberlin
 Modular MOOG
 MOOG Source and Taurus Pedals
 Memory MOOG
 PPG Wave - 1
 PPG Wave - 2
 PPG Wave - 3
 Vocal Ensemble 1
 Vocal Ensemble 2
 Vocal Ensemble 3
 Vocal Ensemble 4
 Vocal Ensemble 5 - Chamber choir
 Voxes & Vocoder
 Rock & Roll Composition Set
 Jazz Composition Set
 New Wave Composition Set
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 Electric Guitar 3 & 4 - Rock 2
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could squeeze more out of our present gear rather than trade it in on the brand-new God's-gift-to-sound. I have two Korg Mono-Ploys (a monophonic/sort-of polyphonic synth from around eight years ago), and I still am totally fascinated with the new nuances and sounds I can produce out of them. And they only cost me \$225! Sometimes I am tempted to cut a record using only those instruments.

So, what d'ya think of this: Get the most out of your gear. There's sure to be potential there. But if you are at your limit, the point where you know you've gotten the most out of your present board, and you know buying something new isn't a crutch, go out and buy a sampler. It's sure to last you longer than most synths would.

Garth Hjelte
Rubber Chicken Software
Clucksville, WA

[CS - While I agree with much of what you say, I would hesitate to unilaterally recommend the purchase of a sampler for anyone looking for an electronic musical instrument. There are way too many variables that must be taken into account when making a decision about the purchase of any kind of electronic instrument - what equipment is already being used, manufacturer and third party support, and application are all relevant. Not to mention the user's comfort level in terms of dealing with things like disks and disk drives, microphones, computers, mixers, and signal processing equipment - any or all of which can be important if one plans to do serious sampling.]

TH,

I've heard there is a way to connect a C-64/128 (through MIDI interface) to get a CRT display of edit functions that would normally be indicated on the EPS LED display.

1. Who?
2. Where?
3. How much?

Thank you
Al Trautman
Lydia, LA

[CS - While it would be quite possible to create such a product, this is the first that we've heard of it. Any of you readers know anything?]

[Ensoniq - We've never heard of such a product either.]

Dear Hacker:

Thank you for printing my letters to you. I apologize for "jumping the gun" as you suggested in the June issue. Mail time to the U.S. is very slow and added to your lead time - I felt ignored.

I must however correct Ensoniq when they say that we should contact them directly and not rely on the Hacker to resolve our difficulties.

For the record:

1) I phoned well over 15 times over a number of days, long distance and getting charged for every call, before I got through. This was way back when I first had problems. At the same time I contacted my closest TECK, as well as calling the store where I purchased the keyboard.

2) When I did get through to Ensoniq, someone answered and said they'd get the guy handling Canadian Accounts to return my call. **NO ONE EVER DID.**

3) I then sent a **SPECIAL DELIVERY LETTER** to Ensoniq U.S.A. and never heard back.

4) The first call I ever got from Ensoniq was in response to my bitchy letters in the Hacker.

So seven months later I'm finally getting a replacement VFX-SD for what seems to be a hardware problem that was aggravated by software instability.

More of the story - God help the Manufacturers who continue to sell a product before it's ripe and are not equipped to IMMEDIATELY correct the problems. I still love the VFX-SD but I think my next purchase will be another brand.

Yours truly,
Orion Engar
Sardos, B.C. Canada

[Ensoniq - Again, we're very sorry that Mr. Engar had the difficulties he did. To say that this instance was the exception rather than the norm doesn't serve Mr. Engar very well, but the end result is that we tracked down his problem and took care of it. We hope that he will reconsider his feelings in the future and give Ensoniq products a further chance.]

Dear TH,

I own both an EPS and a VFX but am very disappointed with the lack of a decent piano sound for either instrument. I am amply satisfied with the myriad features the EPS has and the outstanding synthesis capabilities of the VFX. However, when I'm tired of noodling around with synthetic textures and had my fill of sampled orchestras, I'd just love to have a beautiful piano sample which will bring memories of that Baldwin grand I learned to play the keyboard on. Other manufacturers seem to realize that a solid piano sample is a must, and have it available in at least one instrument in their product line. The latest Ensoniq offering for the EPS, Grand 88, is their best yet, but it is all attack and not sustain - not at all bad for quick passages, but don't try playing the first movement of the Moonlight Sonata on it.

There are few third party sound developers who offer an acoustic piano, one of which is substantially better than the factory sample, but none will knock your socks off. It seems

that it takes quite an effort for third party sound developers to work up a sampled piano; many don't even offer it. How about a factory piano sample for the 4X memory expanded EPS's?

As far as the VFX goes, I understand that to keep the price down and to offer the greatest number of waveforms, the piano multisample was kept to a minimum, but would it be possible to create a sound cartridge with additional piano (or other) sample data that the VFX could address? I have read that this was done recently in some form by a third party developer for the SQ-80. Could the same be done for the VFX? I'd shell out a few bananas for it. Would anyone else?

And while I'm still making out my wish list, how about a VFX editor/librarian for the Mac, and then some year, when the penultimate operating systems is available, one for the EPS too.

Sincerely,
David M. Faunce
Riverton, NJ

[CS - As you have surmised, acoustic piano is one of the more difficult instruments to satisfactorily re-create, particularly when you take into account the extremely varied tastes of keyboard players - it's just plain hard to do one that everybody likes. If you are fond of the "Grand 88" disk, but don't care for the sustaining characteristics, why not try tweaking the envelopes? If you're not completely comfortable working with envelopes, you might try checking out Gary Dinsmore's article in issue #46 (April '89) of TH.

As far as Macintosh Editor/Librarians for the VFX are concerned, watch for an upcoming review of Opcode's new universal librarian, "Galaxy", in these very pages. As for the EPS, both "Alchemy" from Passport Designs and "Universal Sound Designer" from Digidesign offer sophisticated wave editing and processing, but no EPS-specific editing capabilities.]

[Ensoniq - We are constantly improving our products based on input from customers like yourself. The VFX-SD Version II has an additional Megaword of piano samples to create a more realistic piano sound. Adding these samples does require replacing the main board of the VFX-SD. We are also working on new piano samples for the EPS to be released sometime in the late Fall. Stay tuned.]

Howdy Hackers:

I'm writing to reply to Kirk Slinkard's letter in the June issue in hopes of providing a more detailed answer to his questions than Clark was able to give. As a Hacker contributor who also owns a number of classic analog synths including a cherry Minimoog and an Oberheim Xpander, I can assure Kirk that his ears ain't lying - the filters on most modern synths DO sound similar...for a very good reason: economics.

Originally, the synth filters in classic dinosaurs were designed and built using lots of generic parts like transistors or op amps. This approach required lots of loose parts and cost more money, but it had the advantage of allowing the designer to create a filter having its own unique flavor. That's why the "sound" of different models was more obvious to the trained ear than on newer synths.

Around 1978, several semiconductor companies began making ICs that functioned as VCOs and VCFs; the availability of these chips made instruments like the Prophet 5 and Oberheim X a reality. As time went on, almost every synth that had an onboard VCF or VCA used these ICs, as they were much less expensive than other alternatives. The result was (you guessed it)...lots of inexpensive instruments that sound pretty similar to each other!

By the way, the ESQ-1 does NOT have a digital filter; it has a 4-pole lowpass analog filter built around the CEM 3379 Voltage Controlled Signal Processor IC. The Minimoog uses a patented transistor configuration for its legendary sound which sounds completely different than Oberheim filters.

The moral of this story is that each generation of technology has its particular advantages and disadvantages, and that no instrument can be considered "obsolete" as long as it can still be played...

Sincerely,
Charles R. Fischer
P.O. Box 5372
Hercules, CA 94547

Dear Hacker

I use my EPS as the master keyboard and sequencer for my MIDI set-up. I sample, sequence and generally fiddle with it at least an hour every day. I must compliment TH on a great service and Ensoniq on a powerful and flexible machine. Actually, the first keyboard I ever bought was a Mirage, and TH can take half the credit in turning me into a fanatical Ensoniq supporter. The only other company I hold affection for is Alesis; now if Ensoniq started making FX units, then I could truly call myself faithful. How about it Ensoniq? It seems to me you have all the hardware and software spread through various machines not to mention the fact that the market for FX units is huge when compared to keyboards alone.

Questions: a) Is there a warm reboot for the EPS that I can get access to so I don't have to power down, like the ULOAD LLoad 0 on the Mirage OS 3.2?

b) Are there any other hidden pages besides the analog test page?

c) Are the ROM's in the EPS permanent, or are they powered by a lithium battery as in the ESQ family, or a big capacitor or what?

d) How many Mirages, ESQ-1, SQ-80, EPS, VFX, etc. have Ensoniq made to date - a breakdown of numbers would be interest-

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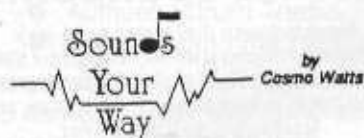
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ing?

e) What do the serial numbers on the EPS mean, mine is 500718-F, if anything? No, really I am interested in these kinds of details. OK, I admit it, I feel this uncontrollable need to know these things!

OS Update Requests: Scale velocity or Max-Min velocity limits for the sequencer and warm reboot if there is not one.

Is this a known problem? (# 500718-F). Occasionally, usually when I am working with the sequencer, the keyboard starts behaving as follows: Playing the keys from LOW to HIGH 2 notes don't sound, then all the sounds appear on the 3rd note in a discordant chord, 2 notes mute then chord in that pattern all the way up the keyboard. The sequencer still plays fine which leads me to suspect that the keyboard controller chip gets confused or something. Powering down doesn't seem to fix it; several power downs and much random button pressing eventually does. Is it time to head for the authorized Ensoniq repair facility? This raises my final Q: Are there low-level software/firmware/hardware things that can be set by random/too-fast/sill button pressing that stay set after power down?

Also, the PRE-TRIGGER function in the sample page does not work. When it is set at any value other than 0 ms, it is like having the sample threshold set to zero; in other words, the EPS starts sampling (no matter where the sample threshold is placed) as soon as you press the enter button. Now is

this a bug in the software? I have been reading the Interface since 88 and have seen no mention of a bug like this. I would have expected to see it mentioned as this would be a very useful feature (if it worked). Maybe no one out there uses it? Is it fixed in 2.4 or in the latest one that should have come out by the time this gets to press?

OK, time to complain... I would have OS 2.4, however, here in Australia my local distributor (as of 10-7-90) seems to think 2.4 is just about to be released. This brings me to my beef (I'm not sure who with - that's why I'm writing this). The "Electric Factory" is the company that imports Ensoniq products to Australia. Do you guys at Ensoniq send them all the latest documentation, software updates, bug lists, etc.? I don't know whether to hassle them or you. I am still trying to get the output boost upgrade. I know the Electric Factory has this information but has not passed it on to the dealers. I know the local technician has also complained about this information deficit. As a result, customers in Australia often have to pay exorbitant amounts in labour while technicians sort out problems from scratch. So, should I send the letter bomb to the Electric Factory or Ensoniq?

To put things in perspective, I am an avid Ensoniq supporter. I think their products are great. I bought a Mirage, an EPS, and have an ESQ-1 on loan from a friend. I try to persuade everyone I meet who is asking about buying a keyboard to buy Ensoniq. (Despite the fact that after-sales support in Australia amounts to helping you load it in your car...) However, I also tell them to avoid the Australian distributors whenever possible, subscribe to TH, do business direct with the US, and pray it does not break down after the warranty has expired.

Regards,
Scott Fisher
c/o Department of Psychology
University of Western Australia
Nedlands 6009 Australia.

[CS - a] There is no "warm reboot" function for the EPS. The warm reboot function operation on the Mirage is meant to allow to switch operating systems without powering down the Mirage. Since there is only one current operating system for the EPS, I would assume that the reason you'd want such a function is either to have multiple system setups available from disk, or to have the ability to recover from a crash without losing data.

If it's multiple system configurations you're after, simply set up the configuration you'd like, and use the "Save Global Parameters" function (available from the 'Command/System' page) to save those settings. You can create as many system configurations as you'd like, but you must store each configuration on its own OS disk. Then when you want to load a specific set of parameters from a specific disk, simply use the "Load Global Parameters" function, also found on the 'Command/System' page.

If, however, you are after a way to recover from a crash without loss of data from RAM, I'm afraid you're out of luck. It is the nature of a crash that there is no way to ascertain the integrity of RAM-stored data - you're better



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off starting over rather than continuing to work with data of questionable integrity.

b) There are a number of test and diagnostic functions available from the same area as the analog tests - press Command, then Envelope 1, then start scrolling. Be aware that initiating a number of these test will crash the machine, so be forewarned.

c) You are confusing the EPS ROM with the ESQ's patch data RAM, I think. The EPS ROM is permanent - there isn't a battery to be found anywhere in the machine.

d) For Ensoniq.

e) The serial numbers are simply a sequential numbering of the instruments which also indicate the instrument model and line voltage requirement.

Your keyboard problem sounds like a hardware problem that has cropped up on a couple of the later model keyboards; it's an easy enough problem to correct - I'd recommend getting the unit in for servicing. As far as I know, there is no combination of wrong button presses that the EPS will not recover from after powering down.

As for the pre-triggering problem you describe, this is also a matter for customer service. Ensoniq has had no reports of problems with pre-triggering, and my OS 2.4 unit works fine in that regard.]

[Ensoniq - d) We can't really list all of our unit sales here - you never know which of our competitors read the Hacker, after all.

As far as your commentary regarding Electric Factory, we try to work very closely with our distributors to keep them informed of all product news, service issues, updates etc. There is no reason why you shouldn't have O.S. 2.4 there and we have already forwarded your letter to Electric Factory.

P.S. Please, no letter bombs!]

Dear TH,

I have been an owner of a VFX-SD for the last 5 to 6 months now, and something has been bothering me. At first, I couldn't exactly put my finger on it, but now after using and working with the VFX-SD as well as other Ensoniq, Korg, Akai and Roland gear, I finally have discovered my troubles. These troubles all boil down to one word. Want to hear it???

Ambiguity. That's a rather ambiguous statement to make. But, after wrestling with the green monolith (the owner's manual) and the machine for the last 5 to 6 months, I can solemnly attest to this fact. (You need to take college courses in philosophy and parametric mathematics to understand the meaning of life my son.) At least as far as the VFX-SD is concerned. What do I mean???. You mean to say that all you've been doing for the last 6 months is using the factory sounds?!? I will try to explain myself, hopefully better than the owner's manual does in explaining the VFX-SD.

Let's start with something simple. Parameter values from the effects pages. Okay? (Page 4-9 of the green monolith) The book says

Decay-Time Range: 00-100. 00 to 100 what? Milliseconds? Pre-Delay (the next parameter listed) denotes its values as being in milliseconds. So as Marvin Gaye would say, what's going on???. This problem is prevalent throughout the whole manual. I thought that manuals were supposed to explain things like parameter values to you and not confuse the subject. Certain values should be given percentage values where applicable or practical. (i.e. Early Refl. Level, Depth, etc.) Decibel levels are also extremely helpful in describing parameters dealing with volume levels. (i.e. HF-Damping, LF-Decay, Gate-Threshold, etc.) Frequency values are also highly appreciated (i.e. Minimum & Maximum Notch frequencies, Resonance, etc.) The charts on page 4-17 describing frequency vs. time are pretty, but somewhat confusing since minimum and maximum frequency values should be listed in semitones, in keeping with the descriptions for Min and Max on pages 4-16. Maybe they should have changed Min and Max to absolute frequency values instead. Maybe some hints should be taken from the competition. The Korg M and T series synthesizers, as well as some of the Roland gear, delineate effect parameter values, oh, so beautifully! Oh well. Back to the old drawing board.

Secondly, how come at least some of the existing value descriptions aren't carried over into that gorgeous 80 character fluorescent display they boast about? (i.e. ms, %, Hz, etc.) At least they've got the plus and minus signs in there. They even have dollar signs. \$\$\$ What?!! Not enough room to accommodate these descriptions!!! I don't believe

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them. Put another chip in there. Give me a big, bold, backlit LCD display, complete with envelope graphs, and pictures. Give me, at least, a software editor-librarian for my Mac that will make sense out of those meaningless numbers. Give me something that will translate all of these esoteric values into something that I can get my teeth into. Something ABSOLUTE. Hey you guys at Ensoniq DO IT, DO IT, DO IT!!!

Thirdly, let's talk about the compatibility factor between my EPS and my VFX-SD. To be specific, sending more than one MIDI program change at a time from my VFX-SD's sequencer to my EPS with a hard drive. It seems that when I punch up a sequence on the VFX-SD, only one of the program changes is recognized by my EPS. All of the other program changes seemingly go unnoticed. I am assuming that the EPS will not recognize programs while it is accessing data from the hard drive. Am I right about this? It seems that I have to stagger my program changes, so that a program change is sent only after a previous sound or program is finished loading into the EPS. That's a tough break for the EPS especially when you have the Program Change parameter on your VFX-SD set to NEW instead of ON. The EPS will never, ever, get that particular program change, even if it's recorded later into the sequence track itself. Of course, first you could set up a dummy program change on the MIDI page of the sequence preset (any value higher than 40), and then send your real program changes within the sequence tracks, as the sequencer runs. Of course, if you needed to start the EPS off with more than one sound, I

guess you'd have to fly in a whole bank manually. It seems that the EPS does not respond to a program change that happens to be a bank file, only if the program change refers to an instrument file. Of course, why make things simple. I thought that these keyboards are supposed to be compatible!?!

Well, enough of this rhetoric for now. I hope that I have given you and the guys over at Ensoniq something to think about. I have to get back to composing music, after all, that is what people pay me for, not for solving the mysteries of life. Until next time, when I will discuss how great the VFX-SD's sequencer is, and why it always keeps having a nervous breakdown every time I try to feed it too much recorded MIDI controller data at once from my Vision program.

Ciao,
Peter J. Buchta
Staten Island, NY

[CS - You are correct in your assumption that the EPS does not recognize incoming program changes while it is accessing the hard drive, and that bank loading cannot be initiated via program change. Your idea for staggering program changes within a sequence (to give the EPS enough time to load each instrument before receiving the next program change) seems like a good (and probably only) workaround.]

[Ensoniq - We certainly try to create clear and informative manuals, as well as products, and will digest your comments for future consideration.]

As regarding the compatibility of the EPS and the VFX-SD, it seems logical to assume that the EPS can only respond to one Program Change at a time, as that requires it to access its disk drive. The staggering of Program Changes makes perfect sense, and shouldn't inhibit your music making.]

Dear Hacker,

1) Sometimes I get a DISK NOT FORMATTED message after turning on my EPS and inserting the OS disk. I have to turn the unit off, then back on and insert the OS disk again. The it usually loads. Although this occurs very seldom, it does occur. Can this be a loose connection between the drive and the main board?

2) Recently I also got a KBD FAILED - TRY AGAIN? message after trying to boot up. I didn't touch anything and it repeatedly happened about 10 - 15 times. Only after letting it sit off for about an hour and trying it again did it actually calibrate correctly. (The sequencer "STOP" display on the top right also lit up, yet there was no sequence or song in memory (of course) or disk. Although I will probably take it to a service center, any ideas why it might have occurred? Is it related in any way to #1?

3) Has the SLT-12 (with Miami Sound Machine brass sounds) been released yet?

4) Can "patches" be made for the EPS without sampling like the Mirage? If so, can there be some articles on this or even a Hackerpatch for the EPS?

5) Pressing LOAD and, while holding it, pressing one of the numeric buttons gets you a MACRO X display. What is that for?

6) Who writes the "TH" responses (other than Clark, of course), and how many regular employees does TH have (not including the "somewhat regular" writers and Eric, Jane and, what - Andrea)?

7) Does Jim Symonds still offer his sounds for the ESQ-1 (reviewed in TH #48)?

8) Please print an up-to-date list of all 4X expanders available for the EPS with their pros and cons.

9) Any tips on traveling through airports and on planes with keyboards and accessories?

And now a word or more for Ensoniq. After over two years of anxiously receiving the Hacker and reading every letter in the Interface, I've noticed that many of your customers, although very proud of their units, have begun to complain a lot; some with requests for new functions in the OS, others with software problems. Take into consideration that although you did great work with the early products and continue to bring great new wonders into the market, you must not begin to slack off. Putting out endless minor tweaks will undoubtedly turn off some customers. It is a shortcut some companies may take to profit more but eventually end up losing to the companies with new, innovative products.

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goodies. An extra OS (not custom, but general) for the EPS adding features would be something most, if not all, users would be more than happy to spend some cash on! I know a business can't run by dedicating itself to improving old products, but equally, it can't run by expecting people to spend their money for two units that incorporate what the first one should have had.

Ensoniq suggests that customers buy a synth/sampler according to what it does at that time and not to plan on having it improved in later OS's or upgrades. Yet, by releasing units with bugs and lacking some functions (fixed or added later), customers may be reluctant to buy at all and go off with another company's product.

I understand that Ensoniq is a small company with limited resources that has accomplished feats many others are jealous of, but for that reason I am writing this. Being a very proud and happy owner of an ESQ-1 and an EPS, I just hope you continue the great success you've attained without becoming a "once great company."

Sincerely,
Carlos Macias
Fort Lauderdale, FL

[CS - Questions 1 and 2 for Ensoniq.

3) Yes, SLT-12 has been released. It's a two disk set called "Unison Brass" - you should be able to track down a copy at your local dealer.

4) Yes, patches can be created right on the EPS without sampling. Creating an instru-

ment, then a layer, then a wavesample on the EPS will create a short square wave, which can be processed just like any other sample. I would recommend that you change the default of "Loop Forward" on the "Edit/Wave" page to "Loop Bidirection" - you'll get a smoother sounding wave. For more information on this technique, see Gary Dinsmore's article in issue TH#46 (April '89).

5) The EPS OS allows you to create and store Macros - essentially chains of individual button presses. These are meant to give you a way to "direct dial" sounds from a hard disk - a handy alternative to eternally scrolling through long lists of sounds, or attempting to navigate through a sea of directories and subdirectories when attempting to locate a specific EPS bank, instrument or sequence.

6) Yeah, who are you guys, anyway?

7) A call to Jim Symonds reveals that his sounds are, indeed, still available. He can be contacted at 4 Kenwood St, Portland, ME 04102. \$12 to Jim gets you a cassette tape with 40 ESQ voices.

8) I'm afraid such a list doesn't exist at this time. You should know that Ensoniq does not officially approve many third-party add-ons, but a few have been deemed acceptable. As always, we'd recommend that you check with Ensoniq before purchasing or using any third-party add-on. Use of non-approved products can lead to difficulty and frustration in the long run.

9) The only things to be concerned with in terms of airports are magnetic media (disks,

hard disks, and so on) and metal detectors and x-ray machines. Specifically, keep them apart. X-rays in and of themselves are not harmful, but the equipment used to generate x-rays may cause some problems. When going through an airport security checkpoint, hand your media to the security officer, and have them carry the media around the security station.]

[TH - 6] Why, WE do, of course. All of our employees are about as "regular" as square doughnuts. Andrea has gone on to the Big Time (finishing high school) and has been superseded by Marcia.]

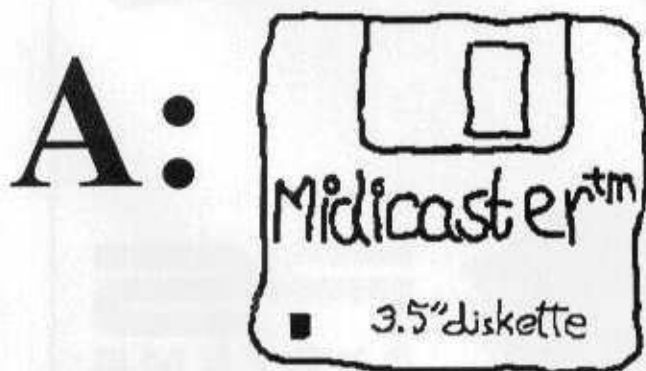
[Ensoniq - In response to questions 1 and 2 - the Interface is really not the best place to try to troubleshoot these kinds of things. If you will contact Ensoniq customer service at 215-647-3930 they will be happy to help you track down the problems.

3) Actually SLT-12 is more than the two-disk "Unison Brass" (Miami Sound Machine) disk. All SLT's are ten-disk sets. SLT-12 also includes "Power Guitar" (Basil Fung of Paula Abdul/Janet Jackson fame), "Glockenspiel," "Log Drum," "Chimes," "Gong," "Wind Chimes," "Talking Drum," "Xylophone," "Tympani," "Cymbal," "Star Chimes," "Steel Drum," "Hydrhphone," and "Timbale."

Current Ensoniq O.S.s

EPS	2.4	ESQ-M	1.2
EPS-M	2.4	SO-80	1.8
MASOS	2.0	VFX	2.1
MIRAGE	3.2	VFX-SD	2.0
ESQ	3.5	SO-1	1.0

Q: If you own a Mirage, what's the cheapest way to get a system exclusive data librarian, a 20,000 note sequence player, a disk copier and formatter, a synthesizer, and an improved operating system?



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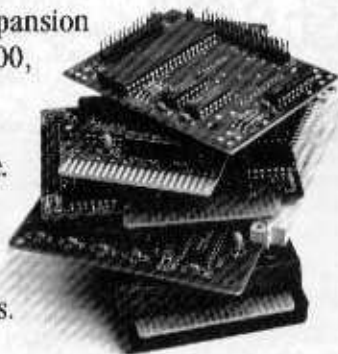


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