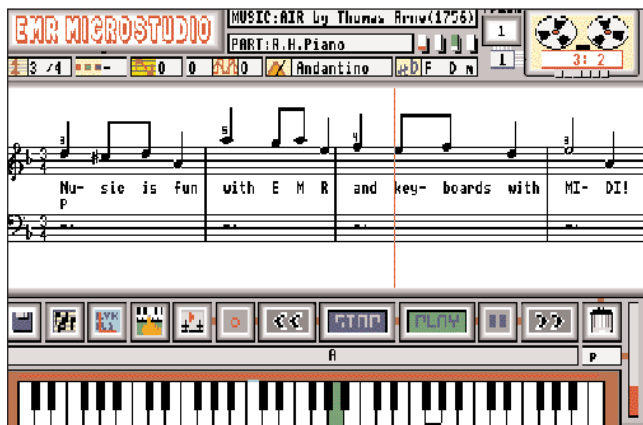


Education: Face the Music!

by Chris Drage

Music should be an integral part of any child's education, and there is a wealth of music software available for the Arc to suit all ages. In this month's feature we'll take a look at the best of what's available, for use at home or in the school.

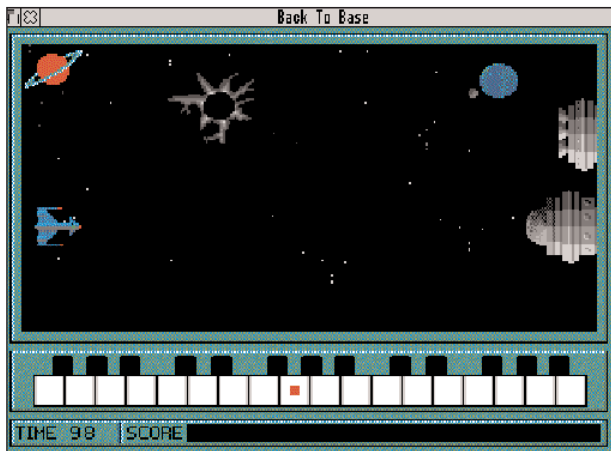
Music Box (Topologika) is a super little program which provides



MicroStudio from EMR

children with opportunities for musical composition, and it was while reviewing this program for RISC User (7:6) that I was motivated to investigate music software further. After all, the integration of I.T. and music must be one of the least exploited uses of computers in schools, or at home for that matter. I suspect the problem is a preconception that in order to use music software you have to be an accomplished musician and very computer literate to boot. In fact the opposite is true.

To start with, you can begin composing and creating music with little or no expertise using nothing more than an Archimedes and software like Music Box, Compose World, Song Book or RhythmBox 3. Obviously you do need to be able to load and save



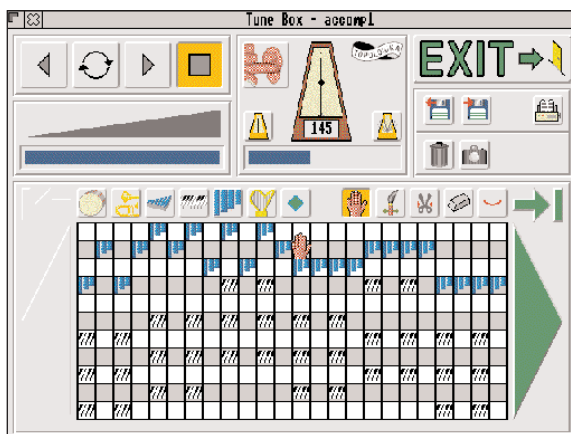
Keyboard trainer from Minerva software

files and use a mouse reasonably well. Do you need a musical keyboard? Well, initially no, but as you become more confident the need to connect a keyboard becomes clearly apparent. Don't forget, if you are reading this, then you already have access to a musical instrument: viz your own Arc!

With its built-in voices and sound capabilities, the Archimedes computer is begging software exploitation - you already have Maestro as part of the accompanying applications, and to start with it is worth experimenting with this. Output can be via the internal speaker (poor) or via the monitor's speaker (hardly ideal) or via a pair of amplified speakers (£60



Compose Word from ESP



MusicBox from Topologika

- £200) which are very acceptable. Software like E.S.P.'s Voice Pack1 can add new and interesting voices to the computer's existing set, and helps provide considerable variety.

Essentially, there are two types of music software available: composition and score writing programs, and those which enable children to manipulate musical sounds and rhythms and to construct and edit simple compositions without demanding they learn or read notation. Compose World is an excellent example of the latter type as it does not require any form of notation but instead represents notes or musical phrases with graphic pictures

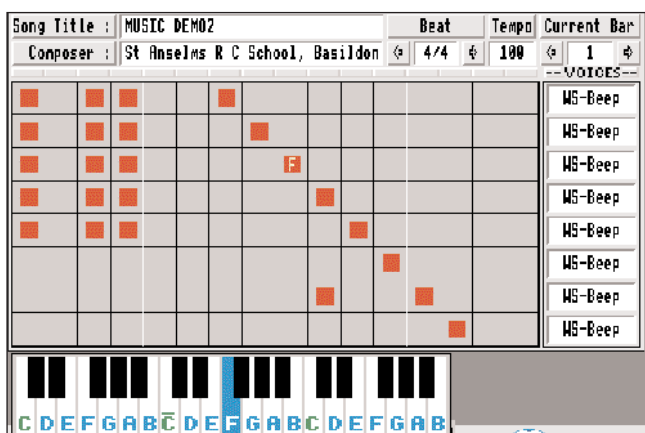


Rhythm Maker from ESP

and/or words. The range of prepared musical phrases available with Compose World and Compose World Files 1 admirably illustrates the educational potential of this little gem of a program. An enormous range of compositions can be created by simply dragging and dropping pictures in a sequence - even repeating phrases where necessary. Music without a note in sight! Simple prepared tunes can be played once their

component pictures are assembled in the correct order - visual clues helping in the process. If a MIDI instrument is available you can play any music from Compose World in any of its available voices. For pre-notational musical experiences Compose World together with Music Box cannot really be beaten.

The next step requires a degree of financial commitment - the addition of a keyboard (like an electric piano) and MIDI interface with sound sampler, both of which will transform your computer music-making experiences. Without the space to go into



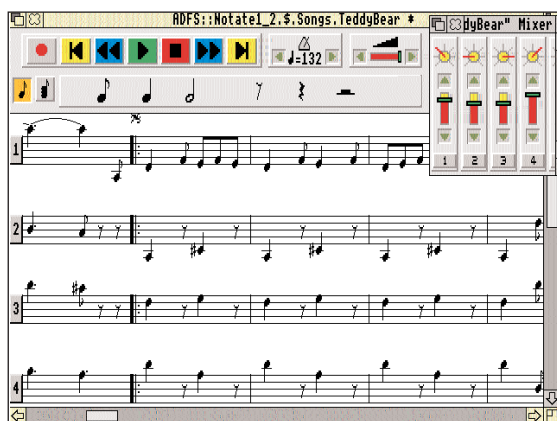
Rhythm Box3 from EMR

detail here, suffice to say that Midi Micros and Music from EMR is recommended reading, while the HOCs Midi card/sound sampler is recommended hardware - cost-effective, robust and easy to fit to their Ultimate Expansion System. The sampler, incidentally, coupled with a suitable microphone or other sound source (HiFi or tape recorder), will provide a

range of digitised sound samples which can be mixed with music in the computer. With MIDI (a well established industry standard) there is no limit as to the number of MIDI instruments you can connect.

To learn how to play the keyboard, Minerva's Keyboard Trainer provides a graded series of 62 on-screen lessons which makes learning music very enjoyable. It is specifically designed for use with MIDI

keyboards, and probably offers the most interesting means of learning to read music and play a keyboard to date. Keyboard Trainer lessons divide into three types: study lessons, games, and tunes. The lessons are often very short, often only imparting a single piece of information, and feature note playing and rhythm exercises. The games also contribute to the overall enjoyment, as does the multi-timbral factor - the ability to play more than one sound at a time. The games are graphical, animated and include heavily disguised traditional five-finger exercises. Another useful aid is to see the



Notate from Longman Logotron

keys on the screen representation of the keyboard being depressed as you play a key. I suspect many beginners will gain improved access to music reading and composition via Keyboard Trainer, but beware, as you will also need supplementary practice materials.

The Micro Studio is a unique three-in-one program for the teaching and learning of keyboard music, the creation, editing and printing of music, all with an easy to use 24-track recording facility for use with any MIDI keyboard. What is novel about Micro Studio is that music notation appears automatically on the screen as you play, yet basic music skills are not required in order to create quite sophisticated multi-track sounds. The program is RISC OS co-existent (i.e. not a Desktop program itself, but runnable from the Desktop), but somehow it does not seem to matter. Once you become familiar with Micro Studio's modus operandi it soon becomes second nature. Music can be composed by playing parts on a keyboard or by inserting notes onto the staff using the mouse, with computer sampled sounds added too for special effects. Two features I particularly like are the learn mode, in which the music waits for you as you play any selected part of a score, while you follow the music and use the keyboard guide, and the fact that teachers or parents can purchase pre-recorded music discs from EMR suitable for different learners' abilities. Micro Studio has a great deal in its favour and should find a niche in both primary and secondary schools.

As stated earlier, most music software usually falls into one of two categories: sequencers which record sequences of notes and then play them back through synthesizers, and music printing software with which

Ultimate Expansion System is available from H.C.C.S. Associates Ltd, 575-583 Durham Road, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear NE9 5JJ, tel. 091 487 0760.

Prices:	A3020/400 Midi Starter kit	£109.00
	A5000 Midi Starter kit	£89.00
	MultiModule	£38.00
	Midi Micromodule	£49.00
	Midi & HQ Sampler Micromodule	£69.00

Music Box is available from Topologika Software, P O Box 39, Stilton, Cambs. PE7 3RL, tel. 0733 244682.

Price:	£35.00, £60.00 (Primary Site Licence), £70.00 (Secondary Site Licence) £105.00 (Teacher Training Site Licence)
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Keyboard Trainer is available from Minerva Software, Minerva House, Baring Crescent, Exeter, Devon EX1 1TL, tel. 0392 437756.

Price:	£69.95 ex. VAT
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Compose World, Voice Pack 1, Rhythm Maker, Compose World Files 1 are available from Expressive Software Projects, Holly Tree Cottage, Main Street, Strelley Village, Nottingham NG8 6PD, tel. 0602 295019.

Prices:	Compose World	£48.00
	Voice Pack 1	£15.00
	Rhythm Maker	£34.00
	Compose World Files 1	£12.00

Mr. Sound, Micro Studio, Rhythm Box 3, and Songbook are available from EMR Ltd, 14 Mount Close, Wickford, Essex SS11 8HG, tel. 0702 335747.

Prices:	Mr. Sound	£34.00
	Micro Studio	£67.23
	Rhythm Box 3	£34.00
	Songbook	£24.95

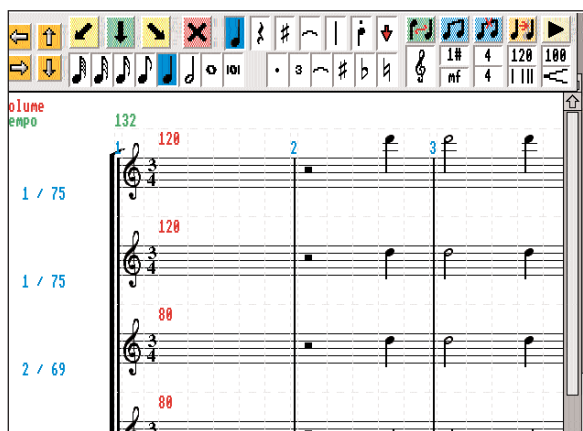
Notate is available from Longman Logotron, 124 Cambridge Science Park, Milton Road, Cambridge CB4 4ZS, tel. 0223 425558.

Price:	£59.00
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Rhapsody 3 is available from Clares, 98 Middlewich Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 7DA, tel. 0606 48511.

Price:	£85.06
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Sibelius is available from Sibelius Software, 4 Bailey Mews,



Rhapsody 3 from Clares

musical scores can be written, stored and printed out (a sort of music processor). Notate is a little of both, offering the ability to write and print scores but also to play back what has been written. In fact, scores can be as simple as a single melody line, or up to eight different parts. There are many example tunes and a large number of voices like drum beats, saxophones, clarinets etc. The program can export and import MIDI Format One files, and has the ability to play via a MIDI

keyboard. Unfortunately, it cannot accept notes from a keyboard. Though it makes use of conventional music notation, Notate is eminently suitable for musicians at all levels of musical ability, from youngsters experimenting for the first time, to those who need a powerful tool for composing and printing scores.

Rhapsody and its satellite software has long been recognised as one of the best, all round, value-for-money score writing programs for the Arc, and this is reaffirmed by its third evolution.

Rhapsody 3 now includes almost all the enhancements and alterations asked for by its aficionados, and should continue to find a niche in secondary schools as well as at home. To get the most out of this comprehensive score writing program though, you should seriously consider purchasing Clares Voxbox suite of programs for sound editing and synthesis, and ScoreDraw for high quality printed output.



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