



Keeping Score

...it's 2.0 to Cubase – Steven Helstrip gives you a sneak preview. Plus more tips for programming percussion tracks, and the New York sessions...

Programming Percussion Tracks (Part 2)

Last month we looked at sequencing rhythm tracks using a standard kit consisting of kick, snare, hi-hats and tambourine. This month we'll be introducing more

percussion elements including cabassa, ride cymbal, bongos and congas to add more texture and rhythmic interest. Before programming percussion, or any other sequenced part, it's worth setting up a metronome, or click track, to help

you keep in time. Every sequencer has a metronome with several options allowing you to choose which instrument plays the click (usually a side stick on C sharp 1), how many bars count-in you want, and whether or not you want the sequencer to play a few bars of the arrangement before you start to record – called "pre-roll".

Fig 1 shows a simple four-bar pattern based on last month's examples. This time round, instead of playing quavers or eighths on a closed hi-hat, quavers are being played on a ride cymbal giving the track a different feel. To add further interest, the ride cymbal is accented on the off beat. Off beat simply means not playing on beats one, two, three and four. A cabassa is also playing on the off beat.

Towards the end of the four-bar section (bar four, beat four, second quaver) there's a splash cymbal with a kick drum underneath. This helps to set up the next four-bar phrase which has a crash cymbal on beat one.

Congas can be used in most styles of

The beat goes on

Fig 1 A variation on last month's examples using a basic kit with ride cymbal. **Fig 2** A simple conga pattern can add rhythmic interest to a percussion section. **Fig 3** The kick drum in this example is playing a different rhythm, and there's a simple hi-hat pattern. **Fig 4** Don't be afraid to have two snares and two kick drums, so long as they don't clutter up the track and their levels are mixed well

Cubase Update

Users of Cubase Score will be chuffed to know that version 2.0 is now in a shop nearby, or on the end of a telephone line should you have access to a modem. This first major PC upgrade has full-colour interface allowing tracks and parts to be coloured separately; guitar tablature and 200 new symbols in the score editor; support for Video for Windows, and plenty more.

Not only does the colour interface look better, it has some serious benefits. Percussion tracks can be coloured red, string arrangements maybe in yellow, vocal triggers in a nice purple, making the Arrange window much easier to work with. The transport bar has been revamped and now looks identical to the Mac. If you work with tape, or even tapeless tape (disk-based recorders, etc) the new SMPTE reader will be welcomed as it can be displayed in two sizes, large and extra large. Your PC could be sitting at the opposite side of the studio and you'll still be able to read the timing references.

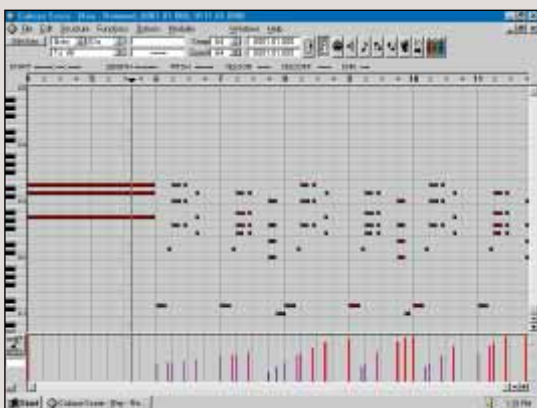
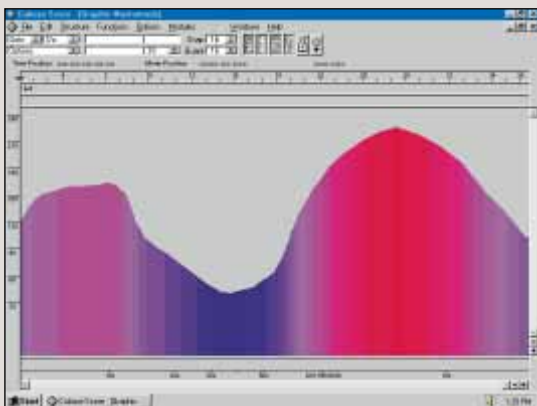
One area where Cubase has fallen behind is the tempo map, or master track editor. Version 2.0, however, fixes this. The master track now has a graphical interface, enabling changes in tempo to be drawn in the same way as controller information in the piano role editor. Alternatively, arrangements can now be recorded without a metronome, allowing you to work out changes in tempo later. That said, it does need a little help – first you have to mark the start of each bar, then the software makes its calculations.

Score 2.0 is available on disk and CD-ROM, the latter

contains a video tutorial and costs £499.

Upgrade prices have not yet been set.

Contact Harman Audio (see "PCW Details", page 321) for more information.



Cubase 2.0 is now available for the PC. Seen here running under Windows 95

music, from chilled-out jazz tunes through to dance. *Fig 2* shows a typical pattern playing yet another off beat-ish rhythm. A low conga plays on beat one, followed by a mute conga on beats one and a half, and high congas on the last two semiquavers of beat two. Although this sounds daunting, it's fairly straightforward: hear how it sounds by loading the MIDI files on this month's cover CD-ROM. The files can be found in *hands\sound*.

The ride cymbal is boosted here, as a skip, or push, has been introduced just after the third beat of the bar. Try different rhythms on the ride to create different feels. Quantising to 16 triplets, or a slow shuffle, will give the part further interest. Try adding a clap to beats two and four, or simply replace the snare drum with a side stick to slow down the pace.

When placed in context with your music, it should become obvious whether this pattern works. If it doesn't, play around with each element until it sounds right. As I mentioned last month, the kick drum needs to work with the bassline. Also, if you quantise the percussion track to a slow shuffle, do this for each other part.

Fig 3 is a variation on the previous examples. Although the conga pattern is the same, the track has a different feel as the kick drum is playing a different rhythm. A hi-hat track has been introduced that simply plays quavers, and an open hat on the second quaver of beat four adds more interest. In this example, the cabassa is playing the same rhythm as the ride cymbal, only the skip comes after beat one as opposed to beat three.

New York City Drumworks

Six of New York's top session drummers play 146 minutes of inspiring rhythm. Miles, Sting, Luther Vandross and Manhattan Transfer are just a few of the credits. There are over 730 loops (copyright free) each played with a New York vibe. Styles covered include funk, rock, house, hip-hop, Latin, Cajun, R&B ... the list goes on. Not only are all these styles covered, but at every tempo you could wish for and with six different drum kits from vintage Ludwig up to the current Yamaha Recording Series.

This two-CD set kicks off with Kenwood Dennard playing rock, reggae, Brazilian and African styles. Tempos here range from 72 to 156bpm. Not only have "full kit" loops

been recorded, there are hi-hat loops, loops without the kick drum, and so on. Each percussion instrument in the kit has been sampled separately, both dry and with effects. This way you can loop a four section and add, for example, your own snare pattern. At the end of each drummer's section there are several tracks of fills, an invaluable production tool.

This is the best live drum CD I have heard in a long time, covering every contemporary style. Three of the tracks are on this month's cover CD as .WAV files in the *hands\sound* folder.



It's important to match the instrument levels to get the best possible balance. In a live situation each instrument would have its own input on a mixing desk, with a fader to enable you to get a decent mix. When sequencing, however, there are no faders for each instrument – just numbers, or velocities.

Although it's important to hear what each part is playing, no one instrument should stand out. If you find that the congas and ride are too prominent, reduce their velocities; in Cubase, this can be done in several ways. The quickest is to use the drum editor to highlight the notes you need to "turn down" by dragging across them with the mouse, then hold down Ctrl H and type "- 10" in the velocity box. Do this again if they're still too loud.

The rhythm track now has some good

patterns, but you can spice it up even more. In *Fig 4* there is a second kick and snare giving the track a hip hop/acid jazz feel. The levels of the second kick and snare are quite low compared to the original idea. Try changing them, as this will allow you to create different feels. Also, have a go at changing individual velocities and try different quantisation grooves.

PCW Contacts

Readers' contributions to the Sound column are music to our ears. If you have any hints or tips, any MIDI-related items or general comments, send them in to the usual PCW address, or to shelstrip@cix.compulink.co.uk

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