Biography

My name is Richard Kaapke, and I have been in multimedia since 1984 when I worked for a company that invented the laser disc-based arcade games Dragon's Lair and Space Ace. A couple of years earlier, I bought one of the first IBM personal computers. That was when they came with 64K of memory and used cassette tape storage. Much to the detriment of my pocketbook, I wasn't loyal to the PC brand. Over the years, I've owned Macintosh, Amiga, Atari ST and three other IBM clones. My enthusiasm for multimedia stems from a vision of its potential as I saw it way back in 1984. Multimedia can be an effective educational tool, holding interest and relating more information better than monomedia formats like books and video tape. It's a lively entertaining medium with the escape potential found only in good movies or books and has an as yet untapped potential for improving communication of thoughts and ideas amongst people. This potential, if cleverly applied, could even bridge cultural and language gaps.

Regarding MIDI, my first experience came from a demonstration at a computer dealer where I saw and heard a CASIO CZ 101 attached to an Atari computer. I later bought the same keyboard for use with my own Atari and started brushing up on music. I didn't learn how to play - I'm still quite lost sitting in front of a piano style keyboard, but by editing and experimenting with precomposed music, as MIDI lets you do, I was better able to understand it. In the years since, I've delved deeper into the nature of sound itself, as I needed to develop digitally reproduced, as well as FM synthesized, sound for use with gambling machines I program here in Las Vegas. The chime of a coin falling into a slot machine and the rising scale of notes you hear when winning a hand of video poker are but a couple of my programming efforts.

I reproduced the human voice with success, but the architecture of video poker games could not support the massive amounts of data required to store it. Times are a'changin.... So digitally reproduced sound may be heard on the new generation of gambling devices coming out tomorrow.

Back to the subject of MIDI, just by remembering my own experience of digital instruments and programming, I know it's difficult to understand them, let alone get them to work with each other and play music the way it's intended to be heard. Professional MIDI musicians are something like computer programmers themselves, and those who can't cope with the complexities hire technically skilled people to help. Fortunately for the MPC user, General MIDI Mode, or GMM as it's called, helps reduce the confusion involved in MIDI set-up and programming. MIDI instruments that offer 128 voice full GMM compatibility can usually plug right into any MIDI interface for your PC and play music exactly as it's meant to be heard, using the default, or straight MIDI set-up. Because of the success of the MPC platform, and increasing support of GMM instruments, MIDI music should gain momentum and be enjoyed on a wide variety of machines, not just the PC-based ones.

This is Richard Kaapke, hoping all the notes you take on MIDI are good ones.