

Transoniq

Hacker

The Independent
Newsletter for Ensoniq Users

You Don't Know What You've Got Till It's Gone:

The MRD-101 MR Disk from Ensoniq

Pat Finnigan



For: MR-61, MR-76, MR Rack.
Product: MRD-101 Sound & Sequence Disk.
Price: Free.
From: Ensoniq Corporation, 155 Great Valley Parkway, Malvern, PA 19055, <http://www.ensoniq.com/html/downloads.htm> (Mac and PC versions).

Wouldn't you know it? As soon as Ensoniq discontinues a keyboard people rail about it and get nonlinear about nobody supporting the instrument. There's a mad rush of people dumping their perfectly good gear and bagging something newer or current in the product line. There're also guys like me who are waiting to bag this heavily discounted "obsolete" Ensoniq gear at a fraction of its price (still looking for a TS-10, gang)...

This month we review the MRD-101 disk from Ensoniq's "NEW" web page. Michael Chen's pastels are gone, and Gary Houk's creations are now resident at w3.ensoniq.com. And although not as colorful, they certainly load faster, are clear and concise, and organizationally, it's a lot more friendly to navigate. It was up there that I discovered the MRD-101 image, and initially glossed over it, thinking it was the MR-100 disk I downloaded last

August. Mac owners need Stuffitt to un-binhex the file; PC'ers need WinZip or other unZIP app to decompress these files. Go to w3.ensoniq.com, click on the "Download" link, select the "Musical Instrument Files" link, and select the "MR61/71" link. Click on the MRD-101 link and specify a folder to save it in. Once you've pulled it down, decode/decompress it, copy to a 1.4 Mb floppy, stuff it into your MR-61/76 and press that load button...

The Roses

This is Pelle Piano stuff. I could be wrong, but I doubt it: sure sounds like his work. If you don't know who this is, he's largely responsible for most of the Ensoniq factory demos you've ever heard, at least if you're an ASR'er or an MR'er. Remember the "Someone's Got" demo of CDR-4? Or the "Atomic Dance" demo built into the MR-61 and MR-76? This is the guy, and lemme tell you something here. I'm a pretty proficient Ensoniq guy, but this guy is WAY over the top with an MR. And I mean like no one I've ever heard on an MR. I feel like Wilford Brimley telling Paul Neuman "Don't get too smart: pretty smart myself" from "Absence Of Malice" but that's how sterling this guy's work is. That's edification for you readers who weren't impressed with his factory demo work.

His organ sounds (not to mention the sequence work yet) deserve an 11: the 8 organ patches are nails. Starting with the "Clicky B3," the key contact noise is a pure lift from a B3: rolling the mod wheel forward is like pulling the 1' drawbar on top of the first 3 drawbars (888000008 in B3 registration) w/o 2nd harmonic percussion. To top it off, the 1' drawbar

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only affects notes above the 2nd G below middle C: this programming habit follows all of the representative organ sounds on this disk. You get an organ bass split to F and comp/lead organ above the F. Ingenious AND flexible. "Soft B3" is the same thing with only the first and last drawbars (800000008) and the same split point. "PP Solo B3" is very similar to "Clicky B3" but not as bright; more subdued in texture and harmonic content. "PP B3 Full" is the standard all-out (888888888)

Transoniq-Net HELP WITH QUESTIONS

All of the individuals listed below are *volunteers!* Please take that into consideration when calling. If you get a recording and leave a message, let 'em know if it's okay to call back collect (this will greatly increase your chances of getting a return call).

All Ensoniq Gear – Ensoniq Customer Service. 9:30 am to noon, 1:15 pm to 6:00 pm EST Monday to Friday. 610-647-3930. Ensoniq's Fax On Demand line, (1-800-257-1439) can also be used to retrieve specs, OS info, hard-drive info, and the like.

All Ensoniq Gear – Electric Factory (Ensoniq's Australia distributor). E-mail address: elfa@ozemail.com.au; their web site at <http://www.ozemail.com.au/~elfa>; or e-mail their resident clinician, Michael Allen, at mallen@geko.com.au. Phone calls, Business hours – Victoria. (03) 480-5988.

All Ensoniq Gear – The Electric Factory in New Zealand, phone (64) 9-443-5916, fax (64) 9-443-5893, or e-mail geoffm@elfa.co.nz (Geoff Mason).

TS Questions – Pat Esslinger, Internet: pate@execpc.com, CompuServe: 74240,1562, or AOL: ESSLIP.

TS, VFX, and SD-1 Questions – Stuart Hosking, stuh@ozemail.com.au.

SD-1 Questions – Philip Magnotta, 401-467-4357, 4 pm – 12:30 EST.

VFX, SD32, and EPS-16+ Questions – Dara Jones, Internet: darajones@juno.com or call 214-361-0829.

SD-1, DP/4, ASR-10 Questions – John Cox, 609-888-5519, (NJ) 5pm – 8 pm EST weekdays. Any time weekends.

SQ-80, VFX Questions – Robert Romano, 607-898-4868. Any ol' time (within reason) EST.

Hard Drives & Drive Systems, Studios, & Computers – Rob Feiner, Cinetunes. 914-963-5818. 11am-3pm EST. CompuServe: 71024,1255.

EPS, EPS-16 PLUS, & ASR-10 Questions – Garth Hjelte. Rubber Chicken Software. Call anytime. If message, 24-hour callback. (320) 235-9798. Email: chickenEPS@willmar.com.

EPS/MIRAGE/ESQ/SQ-80 M.U.G. 24-Hour Hotline – 212-465-3430. Leave name, number, address. 24-hr Callback. Email: G4Prod@aol.com.

SQ-1, KS-32, SD-1, SCSI, MR & hard drive Questions – Pat Finnigan, 317-462-8446. 8:00 am to 10:00 pm EST.

ESQ-1, MIDI & Computers – Joe Slater, (404) 925-8881. EST.

Hammond sound with the mod wheel adding 2nd harmonic percussion, just the thing for your "Green-Eyed Lady" sequence genre. "Nasal B3" is 2nd harmonic percussion on top of just the 8' drawbar (008000000); I don't find it very useful in my repertoire, but it's not only a convincing sound, it's credit to Pelle that he could do this sound on an MR. I won't get into a great detail on "PP Old B3" but suffice to say this is a VERY novel use of the mod wheel and velocity. Let's just say it took half an hour poking around to figure out just how in the hell he did it...

Hey, there's more than the best organ patches for an MR here as well. The "PP Upright" has the best amp envelope for sequencing I've ever heard: none of this initial "thump" followed by about a 1/2 second of string: this doghouse swells like a Roland GM Fretless sample, except it swells in the BASS register, not the midrange. Not exactly accurate, but when mixed with the crisp drum sounds of the Song Edit Kit supplied, it works very well. Most convincing stuff I've heard, and coming from an ASR'er like me, that's as high a praise as can be given. Come on, a wavetable synth sounding more convincing than a sampler? Only when it's an Ensoniq wavetable synth, where the wavetable comes from the ASR library. Obviously Pelle's done some jazz quartet gigging. The drum sounds (and kits) are the most realistic I've heard. I've always said the drum sounds of an MR were the best, and you can really tell it in the context and arrangement of these sequences.

And just to show he's just as bent as the rest of us, the first sequence file is called "3 by Pelle" when in fact it's just two. What you might gloss over? Go to the "Load from Disk — 1 Song" page: there's 16 more tunes there as well.

The "PP Rhodes" is the best I've ever heard: wonder why the ASR samples aren't THIS good? The keys even thump when lifted: finally a patch besides a harpsichord that uses release velocity. Kudos here. Every key played on the "PP Wurlie" tremelo starts at the top of the LFO sine wave modulator: if you play two notes simultaneously it's tremolo, if you play them a fraction apart it's a trill. This guy is the Sam Mims of the MR...

And you're absolutely gonna love the saxes. The "PP Soprano" breath noise is aftertouch-routed as well as randomly phased: what's novel is how Pelle routed this. Pressing harder on the key doesn't increase the breath noise, but softens the sax wave, so the breath level is consistent with that of a real sax: same breath noise at all levels, but only noticeable as a real component of a lyrical sax emulation at pp levels. Well done. "Tenor Lead2" is dead on the money: harder

velocities make the sax's "bite" harder, soft velocities give a round and warm tenor. Ultimately convincing. "Tenor Squeak" is one of those clever patches that sounds absolutely convincing in the mix and absurd by itself. Aftertouch brings in a flatted 5th, which, by itself, seems silly until you listen to this sax in the context of its parent sequence "Sax Squeek" (or SONG#0007). Pure genius...

The Thorns

I couldn't get a number of the sequences to play. Sequences like "Drop It" and "Factory" would load, I'd press play and get no sound while the counter whizzed along. I'd press a track button and get a "Sound Not Available!" message, so either I scrambled some data pulling this down from the w3 or I literally didn't know what I was doing.

And since this is freeware, Pelle doesn't get any money for this...

The Deal

Duh? Hey, it's free! I'm gonna pull a Bill & Ted here and say "Bogus"? Not in this lifetime. I can't begin to illustrate or describe *how* convincing the organ sounds are, and with some FX tweaks, what unbelievable organ sounds are possible here. The two drum kits are astounding, even if one is only a 3-piece trap kit. The upright is way cool, the Wurlitzer EP is nails...

And the sequences/songs will simply amaze you. It's one thing to be a virtuoso on an instrument; it's a completely different thing to be a virtuoso at programming. And it's an extremely rare thing to find both these abilities in one individual. I can only assume these sounds represent a small fraction of what Pelle's done with this instrument: now that it's discontinued maybe he's just putting into the public domain what Ensoniq planned to sell for this instrument...

At any rate, a must-have for any MR owner. Given, rack owners can't enjoy the sequences the way keyboard-types can, but the sounds will certainly find a home in even the most elemental of MR-Rack users. The definitive obscure Hammond registrations are collected here in this set, and NO MR'er should be without these, especially at this price...

Now if Creative Labs would introduce their new MIDI-controlled diaper changer I'd find enough time in the day (and night!) to get those other sequences working... ■

Bio: Pat claims Bill Clinton's defense hinges on the word "Sechial" which can legally be misconstrued to mean (and sound like) "sexual"...

Front Panel

RND ()

Ensoniq's new keyboard was announced at NAMM this year. You'll find the specs reproduced below. There's also a NAMM report from Sam Mims elsewhere in this

issue. Spring is in the air!

We're still adjusting to our new printer and bindery schedules. Publication dates may be a little more... "irregular" than in the past. Hang in there.

ZR-76 Specifications

Over 1200 Sounds – From realistic instrument sounds to our unique second-generation TransWaves™, from analog emulations to evocative digital timbres, plus over 70 drum kits, made up from more than 750 fully programmed drum elements.

Perfect Piano – The ZR-76 comes with our new EXP-4 ROM Expander installed. This 16 meg expander features William Coakley's acclaimed "The Perfect Piano™," along with two practically perfect electric pianos.

Idea Pad™ – Whenever you sit down and play, the ZR is recording your performance. If you like an idea you can send it to the 16 Track Recorder for further development.

Drum Machine – Our innovative drum machine is the perfect accompa-nist, with 8 fills and 8 variations per rhythm, extensive rhythm and drumkit editing, and seamless integration with the 16 Track Recorder.

SoundFinder™ – Makes locating sounds a breeze. The left knob selects the sound category, the right knob selects the individual sound. You can even use the ZR's keyboard to type in the first few characters of the sound name to instantly locate it.

16 Track Recorder – A powerful 16 track sequencer with advanced quantization options (featuring our exclusive Delta Quantization™), Song Editor, dedicated FX and Mixdown sections, MS-DOS-based disk format, and support for Standard MIDI Files.

24-Bit Effects – Featuring our powerful 24-bit

ESP-2 digital signal processor. You also get 6 stereo busses, including 3 global reverb busses, a chorus bus, a dry stereo bus, and an insert effect bus with 40 great algorithms.

Keyboard

- 76 key (E-G) weighted-action keyboard with programmable velocity, release velocity, and channel pressure sensitivity
- 3 programmable keyboard zones for splits and layers

Controllers

- Programmable Pitch and Mod Wheels
- Up to 4 programmable foot switches (SW-2, SW-6, optional SW-10)
- Programmable Mod/Volume Pedal (optional CVP-1)

Output

- 44.1 kHz sample playback rate
- 18-bit D/A conversion with 108 dB dynamic range
- 103 dB signal-to-noise ratio
- 2 Hz – 20 kHz frequency range

Inputs/Outputs

- Left/Mono and Right Main and Aux outputs (balanced TRS)
- Stereo headphone output
- 1 Mod/Volume Pedal input, 2 single/dual foot switch inputs
- MIDI In/Out/Thru

Display/Interface

- 12 "Favorites" buttons giving instant access to the 18 sounds most used 40 (2 x 20) large character LCD display
- 4 knobs, 89 buttons (46 with LEDs), volume slider
- SoundFinder™/RhythmFinder™ interface – one knob selects sound/rhythm type, another knob selects specific sound/rhythm. Sounds/rhythms can be searched for alphabetically within musical categories, numerically within bank locations (ROM, RAM, Expansion Board, GM, User, Demo), or with keyboard spelling
- Onboard Help function

Internal Sound Memory

- 468 ROM sounds (2 banks of 128, 79 drum kits, 128 GM sounds, 11 GM/GS drum kits),

- 751 ROM drum elements
- Up to 256 RAM sounds possible (70 sounds shipped from factory)
- Installed EXP-4 Piano Expander with Steinway Grand and 2 Electric Pianos
- 52 ROM Presets

Wave Memory

- 112 Megabits (14 MB) of 16-bit internal wave ROM, and 16 MB EXP piano expander installed for a total of 30 MB wave ROM. Up to 4 MB additional flash memory for loading .WAV and .AIF sound files
- Over 5000 variations possible from the 424 waveform selections, including 28 Megabits (3.5 MB) of acoustic piano, multi-sampled acoustic instruments and synthesizers, second-generation Transwaves™ (created through digital synthesis and resynthesis technologies), sustained synth wave-forms with harmonic and inharmonic structures
- Modulatable start point, forward or backward playback, and multi-sample key shift (4 modes) for most waves
- Pitched/non-pitched playback of all waves possible

Expansion Memory

- 3 expansion slots, for a total of up to 688 Megabits (86 MB) of ROM wave data
- A Wave Expansion board holds up to 192 Megabits (24 MB) wave data, multiple banks of sounds (up to 128 per bank), and demos
- A FLASH sample memory board provides 4 MB of re-writable FLASH ROM memory for loading .WAV, or .AIF sampled sounds
- Expansion boards are user-installable

Performance Features

- 12 "Favorites" buttons for instant access to 18 user programmable sounds
- Any footswitch can be programmed to select "next" or "previous" favorite sound, for hands-free sound selection live performance
- Dedicated Split and Layer buttons, with the ability to save up to 3 sound combinations as a new single sound (for sequencing split or layered sounds on a single track), or as a performance preset
- Each of the 3 zones can play local sounds or external MIDI sources
- Extensive sound "tweaking" (global editing) including:
 - Volume, Volume Polarity – Amp Envelope
 - Mix (Expression) – Attack, Decay, Release
 - Pan – Filter Cutoff
 - Effects Bus – Filter Envelope
 - Pitch Bend Up/Down – Attack, Decay, Release
 - Envelope Velocity – Pitch Table
 - Key Range Lo/Hi – Glide Mode, Glide Time
 - Velocity Range Lo/Hi – LFO/Noise Tempo Sync
 - Velocity Mode – LFO Rate
 - Pressure Mode – LFO Depth, Delay
 - Controller Filtering
 - Tuning (Octave, Amp & Filter Semitone, Fine)

eTH — A Faster, Cheaper Hacker

If you can receive e-mail via the Internet, you can take advantage of avoiding the post office and get a faster, cheaper, e-mail version of the *Hacker*. The e-mail *Transoniq Hacker* contains all of the same information as the printed version, but it's only \$20/year. Interested? Just send a message to us at eTH@transoniq.com and we'll e-mail back complete information.

- Voice Architecture (accessible via computer)
- 64 dynamically assigned voices
- Dynamically sized voice architecture (up to 16 layers), with the following parameters (per layer):
 - Independent waveform selection
 - Volume and Pan
 - Layer delay up to 10 secs or by key-up trigger
 - 2 independent multi-mode dynamic digital filters (low-pass, high-pass, variable bandwidth band-pass) with key tracking (33 settings, including fractional scaling)
 - 3 five-stage envelope generators (time and level) with level and attack time modulatable by velocity (8 possible curves), key scaling, and response to release velocity
 - 22 modulation sources, 8 modulation destinations
 - 1 LFO (7 waveform choices), can sync to 16 Track Recorder, Drum Machine, or external MIDI clock (12 subdivisions)
 - Variable rate noise generator, can sync to 16 Track Recorder, Drum Machine, or external MIDI clock (12 subdivisions)
 - Octave, semi-tone and fine tuning
 - Pitch tracking (33 settings, including fractional scaling)
 - 45 ROM Pitch Tables (256 steps per semitone resolution)
 - 1 RAM location for receiving a pitch table sent from any device that supports the MIDI Tuning Standard (Bulk Tuning Dump and Single Note Tuning Change)
 - Key and velocity ranges
 - Voice trigger options (key-up or down, MIDI controller enable)
 - Glide mode, glide time
 - Mono/poly playback
 - Pitch Bend on/off, Held Pitch Bend mode (range is programmable for both positive and negative wheel directions)
 - Sustain on/off
 - Key group assignment
- Drum Kit architecture offers 64 keys (B1-D7): each key points to a fully-developed sound (up to 16 layers per key), plus effects bus, volume, pan, and tuning overrides.

Effects

- New VLSI 24-bit digital signal processor (ESP-2) with 26 MIPS of DSP power, 52-bit accumulation
- New UMTE (Universal Multi-Timbral Effects) architecture with 6 stereo busses:
 - 3 stereo busses with independent sends into global reverb
 - 1 stereo bus with a wet/dry mix into global chorus and a send into global reverb
 - 1 stereo bus with a wet/dry mix into an insert effect, a wet/dry mix into global chorus, and a send into global reverb
 - 1 dedicated stereo dry bus
- Dedicated buttons for global reverb, global chorus, insert effect, and FX bus routing
- 40 insert effect choices (dynamically modulatable by MIDI controllers)

- Effects can be routed to Main or Aux outputs

Idea Pad™

- Free-running sequencer that is always recording in the background, capturing whatever you play on the keyboard
- Divides up recordings into phrases based on selection of new sounds or pauses in your playing
- Any phrase can be sent to the onboard 16 Track Recorder for further development
- Also records the Drum Machine playback, to capture rhythm choice and Fill/Variation events, synchronized with keyboard performances
- Adjustable buffer size (16 or 31 Kbytes)

Drum Machine

- 119 onboard rhythms with 8 Variations and 8 Fills per rhythm, adjustable tempo (25-350), volume, and part muting
- Drum Kit zones (Kick, Snare, Hats, Cymbal, Toms, Perc 1/2/3) can be edited to adjust Sound, Volume, Pan, FX Bus, Tuning
- New drum or percussion kits can be selected from ROM, RAM, or

Wave Expansion boards

- Each Variation and Fill can be set to use pattern data from any other Rhythm (selectable per Zone)
- Rhythms can be sent to Track 10 in the 16 Track Recorder for synchronization with sequence data (links Drum Machine operations)
- New rhythms can be loaded from disk

16 Track Recorder

- 16 tracks, each with a complete set of track parameters (same as performance presets)
- Up to 64 internal voices per track, dynamically assigned (no limit on MIDI voices per track)
- Exclusive ENSONIQ Delta quantize will re-clock any performance to regular time so it can be used in a sequence
- 24 sequence per song structure (3 banks of 8 each, A-H)
- 231kBytes memory (Recorder and Idea Pad)
- 384 PPQ, synchronized to internal or MIDI clock source
- 5 real time record modes - Replace, Add, Step-Entry, Track Mix, and

Final Mix

- Automated punch/edit/auto-locate regions remembered for each sequence
- Quantize from whole note to 1/64 triplet, normal or Delta quantization, strength, swing, random, shift, key range, window, quantize Note Offs, move Note Offs, user-definable templates
- Copy (with/without data), Erase (all, within region, data only) Track
- Copy (with/without data), Erase (all, outside region) Sequence
- Click/Countoff with selectable sound (click, vocal, both, stick), volume, pan, FX bus, timing (1/2 note to 1/32T), # of bars

- Tap Tempo control (25-350)
- Song Playlist allows creation of a song form quickly from the dedicated front-panel controls
- Dedicated Pan and Mix knobs, Track Mute and Solo buttons
- Final Mixdown of all tracks records continuous volume and tempo changes
- Step Entry Record with Auto Step, Gate Time and Gate Percentage
- MIDI-In Record to the sequencer
- 32 ROM Performance Presets

MIDI

- Supports Bank Select and Program Change reception/transmission
- Able to respond in Multi Mode on up to 16 polyphonic channels
- Responds to polyphonic pressure
- 4 system controllers (any of 120 MIDI controllers) can be used for voice or effects modulation, or transmitted via MIDI
- General MIDI compatible

Disk

- 1.4 MB High Density (HD) 3.5" floppy, MS-DOS compatible
- Loads and edits Standard MIDI Files Type 0 and Type 1; Saves Type 1
- Save All-Session (all FLASH & RAM), All-RAM (all songs, RAM sound bank, rhythm bank), 1-Song, All-Songs, 1-MIDIFile, Rhythm-Bank (loadable to FLASH or RAM), 1-Rhythm (loadable to FLASH or RAM), Sound-Bank (loadable to FLASH or RAM), 1-Sound (loadable to FLASH or RAM), Preset-Bank, 1-Preset

Standard Accessories

- ZRD-100 System Disk (contains sounds, rhythms, demos)
- Musician's Manual
- Detachable power cord
- SW-6 Single Damper Foot Switch

Optional Accessories

- EXP Series Wave Expansion boards
- FLASH Sample Memory Board (.WAV and .AIF files)
- SW-10 Dual Damper Foot Switch - 2 pedal piano-type for sustain, sostenuto, sequencer control and other functions
- CVP-1 (CV Pedal) - for voice/FX modulation, volume control, or MIDI controller transmission
- Detachable MS-1 music stand

Physical

- Dimensions: 50 1/2" (128.27 cm) wide x 5" (12.7 cm) high x 15 5/8" (39.69 cm) deep
- Weight: 51 pounds (23.13 kilograms) unboxed, 63.9 pounds (29 kilograms) boxed

Limited Warranty

- One year, parts and labor
- Prices and specifications subject to change without notice.

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NAMM News: Ensoniq Makes Keyboards!

Sam Mims

For months, rumors have been flying right and left about the health of Ensoniq Corp. Will the company switch from making musical instruments to become solely a manufacturer of computer sound cards and digital recording setups? What will become of the company, now that Creative Technologies has bought it? Why is the MR series apparently being discontinued? More to the point, will there ever again be a new Ensoniq keyboard?!

The NAMM show answered these questions with a flourish. Amidst the 70,000 attendants, the hundreds and hundreds of exhibitors, and the squillions of new products, the most exciting thing I saw at the show was an Ensoniq booth, featuring not only Paris and the ASR-X, but a new keyboard as well! The snappy-looking ZR-76 (\$2795 list price) didn't sport any fancy new technology — it is basically an upgraded MR-76 featuring a new 16-Meg piano and "Favorites" buttons that allow quicker access to the 1200 sounds on board — but its mere existence stomped, flattened, squished, and kicked-in-the-nether-regions any rumors that Ensoniq was no longer in the keyboard business. And with the new improvements, the ZR will sell for \$200 less than the MR-76 it replaces.

What's more, there are more keyboards coming down the pike. No one could (or would) say exactly what was to follow, but everyone I asked confirmed that the new ZR was not going to be flying solo for long.

With the Creative acquisition so fresh, there will be a period where Ensoniq, new sibling E-mu Systems, and the parent company will be working out a strategy where the two keyboard manufacturers aren't butting heads with new products. It wouldn't make sense, for example, for both E-companies to come out with products that are competing head-to-head in the same market. Ensoniq, therefore, probably won't come out with a \$5,000 sampler that competes with E-mu's E4, nor will E-mu likely release a digital recording system that competes with Paris.

The good news is that with the shared technologies and shared R&D expenses of the companies, future products will be built better for cheaper. I think we're all in favor of a better keyboard for less dinero.

The Ensoniq folks were there in numbers —

18 staffers, to be exact — and they were clearly excited to be at the show, to be exhibiting great new products, and to get such a good response from attendants. The 20 x 40-foot booth was always abuzz with industry types test driving the ZR-76, the ASR-X, and the PARIS systems. Some years ago, Ensoniq decided to quit exhibiting at NAMM, and though they finally returned last year with a small booth to preview the PARIS system, this year's substantial appearance left no doubts that they are a contender in the music industry.

So, how did the Ensoniq news stack up to the rest of the show? I set out across the huge noisy expanse to see what else would excite me. In the keyboard department, I can't really say that anything totally knocked me out, though several things did grab my attention. Korg's Z1 synth is a really cool board, with its piles of analog-type knobs, and the TR-Rack packs over a thousand very nice Trinity sounds into one rack space (I helped program them, so I gotta like 'em!).

Yamaha is back in the sampler business, after a dismal first attempt, with the A3000 sampler, a two-rack-space unit which sells for \$1995. It sounded very good, and with 64 voices, built-in SCSI, and 4-Meg sample RAM expandable to 128 Meg, it's likely to stir up some excitement. E-mu's ESI-4000 sampler will be going head-to-head with it, with a price tag \$500 cheaper.

I keep trying to like Roland products, but I spent 10 minutes on one of their workstations just trying to figure out how to change from one sound to another. I never figured it out, and left their booth with a renewed appreciation of the Ensoniq user interface.

One new synth I really got excited about was E-mu's Audity 2000, which features 12th-order resonant modeling filters. Finally, some new technology at work? Alas, my excitement ebbed when the single-rack unit on display was nothing more than a pretty picture. In the words of the E-mu staffer I queried, "It doesn't work yet." Oh well, may as well show off the pretty blue box.

The synth that got me the most excited was only a virtual synth — Seer Systems' *Reality*, a software package that allows you to build your own synthesizer and hear the output through your 16-bit sound card (Pentium sys-

tem required). It's like a Moog modular system, all in software. But in addition to subtractive (i.e. classic analog) synthesis, you can also do FM, wavetable, physical modeling, and "modal" synthesis. Modal synthesis uses "a bank of eight resonating filters (the frequencies of which can be exactly defined) coupled in a unique feedback structure that is ideal for creating percussive and clangorous sounds and effects." The sounds didn't floor me — though they were pretty good — but the potential of this thing is wicked. In the hands of a good sound designer, *Reality* should rock your socks off!

Other cool items were Ilio's *Vocal Planet* sampling CD (with an excellent demo by creator Eric Persing, who traveled the world sampling everything from Zulu children to Alpine yodelers) and Mackie's Digital 8-Bus console, which gets software upgrades not by EPROM replacements, but by phoning E-mu's web site via its own 33.6 kb modem and automatically downloading the latest OS at the single push of a button.

The general vibe of the whole NAMM show has changed in the last few years. Everything seems to be "groove"-oriented now — phrase samplers, software that automatically merges sampled loops of two different tempos, software that melds one sampled sound into the overall sound of a loop, groove boxes from Roland with theremin-like controls that manipulate the loop in different ways depending on how you wave your hand, etc. And the other noticeable difference: Much fewer posers. It used to feel like every rocker in L.A. was making an appearance in full stage garb, trying to make folks wonder if they were someone famous. This year, it felt like only half of L.A.'s rockers were there. Maybe the other half cut their hair and wore normal clothes...

For me, the most exciting item was that single Ensoniq ZR-76, laying to rest lots of nasty rumors, and laying the foundation for future keyboards rolling down the Pennsylvania Turnpike. ■



Bio: Sam Mims is a professional keyboardist and programmer, and the owner of Syn-taur Productions in Houston. He currently works with Malaysian pop star Zainal Abidin, and tours throughout the world.

The X Sounds

Garth Hjelte

I'm excited about the ASR-X. I've been using it steadily for several months, and it has tons of flexibility, and it sounds great! To those who have followed my writings and my company, I like to dig deep into my gear and understand what it can do. If you are like that, this article is for you!

I refuse to believe that the majority of people would rather play the presets on any musical machine — even if it is true. Especially with a sampler, the musical instrument is *waiting* for you to dinker with it, to fiddle, and make new sounds. That's what the features are there for.

This article will talk about the ASR-X sound structure, the ASR-X Editing ability, and some clean-up miscellaneous topics.

King, Queen, Prince, Princess

To everything there is a hierarchy; a way of organization. Musical instruments are made up that way too. A well designed sampler has clearly defined units that are broken down into smaller units.

Figure 1 shows the hierarchy of the ASR-X. You have 16 Tracks that can play audio simultaneously. In each Track you can place a Sound on each of the 60 Pads (or Keys, or MIDI-Notes, whatever you want to call it). That's a lot of control! Every Pad has (at least) a Volume, Pan, FX Bus, and Tuning parameter easily accessible with the PAD-EDIT button.

For example, look at Gizmo Kit, the demo sound on the X. Press PAD-SOUND. By pressing on each Pad, you can see what sound is programmed for that particular Pad. By

pressing PAD-EDIT, you can change them too (we'll get to that in a second).

Take Sound-ings

Obviously, the most basic unit in a sound module is the SOUND itself. Alas, the scribe says, many a manufacturer has tried and failed to develop an intuitive and simple sound structure. (The scribe probably has a Wavestation.)

Personally, I think the EPS/ASR sound structure was the easiest and best of them. Maybe I'm biased, being around it so long, but upon studying other brands, I think you might agree.

The ASR-X builds upon that structure, confusing it a little, adding better flexibility — still easy to understand. Figure 2 shows the different type of 1-SOUNDS. From my count, there are two types of BASIC sounds, and two types of SPECIALTY sounds. They are what is represented in the 1-SOUND directory category.

Basic Sounds

Ensoniq defines the BASIC sounds in the manual — STANDARD sounds and KIT sounds.

BASIC SOUNDS — STANDARD SOUNDS

This is easy. This is a sound which has one mono or stereo wavesample with a set of parameters associated with it. No multi-samples, no keymap, no nothing. Standard sounds can be the ROM or EXP sounds that come in the X, or they can be AIFF or .WAV files that you load in, or sounds that you

sample yourself. ROM and EXP sounds don't have full editing capability from the front panel.

BASIC SOUNDS — KIT SOUNDS

This sound-type is a keymap of 60 STANDARD sounds. Go back to Figure 1. This is the most versatile type of sound — you have full control of what sound each Pad plays, and associated parameters. For me, the term "KIT" is somewhat confusing — I'd rather think "KEYMAP" when I see the term "KIT" — because the ASR-X is more than a drum, percussion, or "gruv" machine — so matter how Ensoniq markets it.

Specialty Sounds

Okay, this is a term I made up. But I have a good reason — there are a couple of sound-types that don't fit the BASIC sounds' mold. This was perhaps the most confusing thing about the ASR-X to me.

SPECIALTY SOUNDS — FACTORY KIT

Reset your ASR-X, and scroll to any drum kit — let's take Gizmo Kit, the demo sound. Press PAD-SOUND, and press several Pads. You can see the different STANDARD sounds associated with each key — so this must be a RAM-KIT, right? Wrong! Press EDIT-PAD, and you get the familiar prompt "Make a RAM kit..." All the ROM and EXP sounds that are listed under DRUM-KIT and DRMKITGM are special STANDARD sounds I call FACTORY KITS. That means they control different STANDARD sounds without being technically RAM-KITS. So once you press PAD-EDIT, and make them RAM-KITS, they kind of become a sort of "preset" RAM-KIT for you.

SPECIALTY SOUNDS — EPS/ASR TRANSLATED

Hang on — this is where it really gets "funky." Let's consider Figure 1 again.

Where in the hierarchy is it where you can layer two different sounds in one track? What if you have a bell, and you want to layer it on the same Pad with a string sound? You're right — there is none.

When I observed the X when it was released last June 1997, I wondered the same thing — where are the Layers? Where are the Patch Selects? Ensoniq had promised EPS/ASR sound reading — how were they going to do it? Or were they going to back out of it, like they did with the MR series?

Figure 1

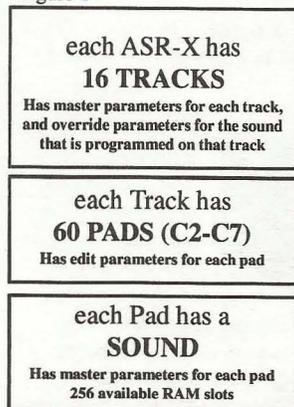


Figure 2.



Well, Ensoniq did it — by creating a “Super RAM-KIT” within a single I-SOUND file. It’s like the FACTORY KIT in that it’s not defined as a RAM-KIT — but it holds practically all the magic that the original EPS/ASR Instrument had. All the Patch Selects are there, all the Layers, etc. And with the latest OS (2.53 as of this writing), most sounds are translated pretty good, under critical A-B listening tests. Although one person commented this way — “The translations seem to favor the Pad response rather than external keyboard response.” I’d have to agree.

Editing

Let me be Frank. (No, I’m Garth!) I had a heart attack when I got the ASR-X. I was so excited about a new sampler from Ensoniq that would fulfill the promise of the larger-than-life EPS/ASR. Then — I tried to edit a sound directly. NOT.

Ensoniq has chosen to not supply full direct editing from the ASR-X front panel. That’s too bad — but I do admit that Ensoniq has made a very good trade-off. Full direct editing can be available from a computer (currently Ensoniq ASR-X Tools, from my company, Rubber Chicken Software, is the only program (albeit Windows) available for this purpose — there is no profile available for Unisyn available as of this writing). Ensoniq has sacrificed full editing, instead implementing a different clever scheme.

Have you ever had to make many copies of one particular sound, just because of one particular edit to accommodate one particular sound? Ensoniq addresses this — remember Figure 1? You can place one SOUND per track. With each Track you have a set of OVERRIDE parameters, that affect the SOUND you have selected for that Track. These parameters are saved as part of the SESSION files that are saved. There are a little under 50 important parameters that can be altered. Thus, you can program slight (or drastic) variations to a particular sound, eliminating the need to save different versions. Very cool.

The only time direct editing is available is when a SOUND is generated from the Scratch Pad. Then all the sound parameters are available from the PAD-EDIT button — all pitch, envelope, filter, amp, etc. parameters.

(From RCS’s Ensoniq ASR-X Tools editor, edits can be made to any sound-type, including Patch Selects, all parameters, RAM-KIT information, and SESSION file information. ASR-X Instruments can be built from scratch, and entire EPS/ASR SCSI Drives and CD-ROM can be converted with a couple of button clicks.)

What’s Missing?

Effects, that’s what. So far in ASR-X history, Ensoniq has not programmed in the ability to save an individual effect for an individual instrument. For comparison purposes, it’s like this — the X is always in Multi-Mode, and there is no FX=INST, only a FX=BANK. In other words, there is no Effects information attached to a particular sound. This is a significant omission, as it forces you to usually work within the context of whole SESSIONS, rather than particular SOUNDS. There has always been the argument that “sounds shouldn’t rely on their effects” — but how true is that? Effects are still the best way to add “real-time performance” to a sound — such as the speeding/slowing of a rotary speaker, or touch-wah of a filter. The capability is there — certain ROM effects have a Effect structure attached (see CLANGEROUS or SNOOT GUIT), that change the Insert Effect when it’s selected. Simply put, every instrument/sound needs the ability to change the Insert Effect unto its own liking. I urge Ensoniq to add this feature.

Lastly, a question was raised in the *Hacker Interface* recently about “Why do all a sound’s .AIF files had to be rewritten every time an edit is made to the sound?” Ensoniq made a response that an “...answer [of] Exit-No to that question (“Overwrite?”), the X will write the new sound and continue to address the old samples.” This is incorrect — whether we are speaking of a new renamed sound file or a edited one. Pressing NO just

stops the ASR-X cold, as it should — it doesn’t write anything.

The bigger issue is whether Ensoniq should/could incorporate the simplicity of editing a sound’s parameters only and not rewriting the wavedata to the disk every time. The benefits are 1) much faster resaves, 2) less defragmentation to the disk. There are parameters that are saved onto the .AIF file itself, but it would seem to me that they could be stored on the .SOU file — isn’t that what it’s for?

More blahs — I think it has been a major mistake for Ensoniq to forgo Play-While-Load. This single feature stood Ensoniq apart from the rest of the sampler pack. Too bad it’s gone — please bring it back!

The Future...

I’ll be back in future issues with more X-News — this critter’s a moving target... ■



Bio: Garth Hjelte is owner of Rubber Chicken Software Co., an Ensoniq-only 3rd party developer since the last millennium. He was not on the Titanic.

Ensoniq CDR-12: Drums

Tom Shear

Product: Ensoniq CDR-12: Drums.
For: EPS-16+/ASR/TS compatible samplers.
Price: \$99.95.
From: Ensoniq Corporation, 155 Great Valley Parkway, Malvern PA 19355.
Phone: 610-647-3930 (voice)
610-647-8908 (fax).

Last time around we had a look at Ensoniq’s CD-ROM collection of Orchestral sounds for their line of samplers. That set covered every base and the sounds were impeccably created. So it was with eager ears and hungry sampler that I loaded up *CDR-12*, a collection of drum sounds put together by the same team.

As with the Orchestral set, all the instruments here are helpfully and logically organized into separate categories which makes finding the sound you need in this enormous collection dead easy. Another helpful feature is that

the kits as all mapped in essentially the same way, so if you were working on a track and need to find the perfect kit, all you need to do is load in a new kit and press play on your sequencer. Very nice.

The first category we encounter are Ambient Kits. There are a whopping 18 kits here which range from acoustic kits with barely any ambience at all, to more electronic/processed sounding kits with gated ambience. Each consists of a kick, a rimshot, a snare hit, open, closed, and mid hats, and a selection of toms. All the kits have a range of empty keys in the middle where various cymbals found later on the CD can be loaded in. Patch selects allow for very realistic flams, up/down key triggering, and more. The dynamics are well done, giving you a nice range without being difficult to control. The only problem I noticed with these sounds from the start is that quite a few of them have a very loud click at the end of the sample. It

didn't happen on every single hit, but it was enough to be highly annoying. I was using an EPS-16+ to listen to these, so that might have had something to do with it. I am sure a little tweaking of the sample end or the filters could alleviate this problem, but when I buy sounds, I expect them to be complete and ready to go from the start... no tweaking required.

Next up is a smaller variety of completely dry kits, including two jazz kits. These are great, very acoustic sounding kits played, as you might expect, with brushes for the most part. I really liked the presence of these sounds... you can hear lots of detail in them; the rattle of the snare... the ring of the drum body itself. These kits actually include rides and crashes, but you'd be better off just deleting them and loading in some of the others... they sound muffled and lack the bandwidth they really needed to live up to the quality of the rest of the sounds. The *Wavesample Information* says they are all at 44.1k, but they sure don't sound it.

The dry kits are followed by a selection of "electronic kits." This is a *very* misleading name, as most of these sounds don't sound electronic, but are apparently from drum machines like the HR-16, D4, and others that are known more for their acoustic-sounding samples than for their weird electronic sounds. Why the developers would do this is beyond me, but you get still more nice

sounds, so I suppose I shouldn't complain. The only sounds that really jump out as being electronic were the Rap Kit, which features heavily compressed 808 style sounds that *really* punch through (again with the exception of the cymbals), and the Synth Kit, which has some nice classic Simmons-style syndrums. I would have really preferred that all the electronic kits were in this old beatbox style, but I guess I can let it slide. (*Next time* though, you guys are in big trouble...)

So what better to match with the thumping kicks and snappy snares than a whole variety of cymbals? You have your choice of 7 collections of rides and crashes. Again I noticed some of the sounds were a bit dull, but I discovered why. Instead of providing multiple samples, some of these sounds are simply shifted in pitch in an attempt to provide a wider variety of sounds. This is disappointing because in the correct range, the sounds are very nice and sparkly. Careful sampling could've fit multisamples in the same space and would've spared the trouble of trying to find the root key of the sample.

And no drum kit can be complete without some hihats to drive the beat along, so move on to the next directory which has 6 varieties of hi-hats for you to try out. These are nicely done, with the dynamics programmed just right, making it easy as pie to lay down a convincing hi-hat line. In addition to the regular open hat, an extended version of the

open hat is provided where you can actually hear the hats rattling together as the note fades out. It's nice little touches like this that will make your tracks sound more professional, and with some careful sequencing, might even fool a couple people into thinking you are one booty-kicking drummer.

In the unlikely event that all these sounds aren't enough for you, Ensoniq rounds out the collection with 16 additional instruments that cover the entire range of the keyboard with, variously, Assort Kicks, Assorted Snares, Drum Effects (special effects type dealies), lots more Assorted Cymbals, and finally, some Assort Hi-hats. This is a nice quick way to find that specific drum sound you are hearing in your head without having to load up kit after kit.

So there you go. Aside from a few minor sonic problems, mentioned above, the folks at Invision and Ensoniq have another winner on their hands. A mind-bending variety of sounds here ensures that you will probably find what it is you need here, and the logical set-up of kits and instruments means you won't have to spend 3 days looking for it. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to go figure out how to remove that drum stick from my disk drive... ■

Bio: Tom Shear just wants to bang on the drum all day, but the neighbors got a bit upset.



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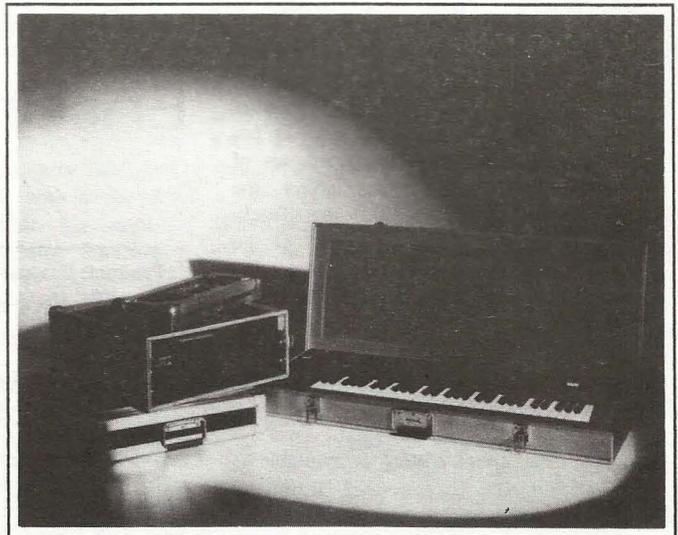
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The Interface

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 - Internet: interface@transoniq.com. In many cases a quick answer can be obtained by posting to our interactive, on-line Interface at our Web site (<http://www.transoniq.com/interface.html>) or calling Ensoniq CS at 610-647-3930.

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 Pat Finnigan (PF). Letter publication in the printed version of TH is subject to space considerations.

Hello staff!

I'm a Japanese user of ASR-10. This is my first mail for you. I have some questions about making drum sounds. I love the ASR-10.

On the web there are many MIDI files of various music. I try to convert these files into ASR-10. Most MIDI files are made by GM sounds and SMF. So I can convert sequence data into ASR-10 by MIDI interface and most GM sounds are chosen from many sample sounds CD-ROM for ASR-10. But I don't have the GM mapped drum sounds. Could you please tell me how to make GM mapped drum sounds?

There are three drum files. I would like to get the bass drum from the A file, the snare from the B file, hi-hat from C the file, etc. Then I make a new instrument for GM-mapped drums which consist of the selected sounds.

I think that it is impossible to resample or copy, because this function is not available in my instrument.

If possible, could you please send me information about ASR-10 tips, sample CD and Video? Especially I want to know how to make sequence data in detail.

Best regards,

Taro mori, taro_mori@pop06.odn.ne.jp

[PF - Taro: The easiest way to do this is to simply load a GM drumset into your ASR-10 and set it to respond to MIDI channel #10. You could sample a GM-compatible instrument and map drums across the keyboard, but that's a pretty laborious process. It'd be a lot simpler to just locate a GM drumset on the factory CD and load it.

Yes, there are 9 different drum kits in the GM spec, but selecting them is a GS command, i.e., changing from the "Standard" kit to the "Room" or "Power," "Brush," "Electronic," "TR-808," etc. I'd visit sites such as www.synthzone.com and www.soundcentral.com, etc., and download any of their drumkits that suit your fancy.

I sampled a D110 drumkit for my trusty old EPS Classic. It took 3 days to get all the drum samples to fit into a 4X expander. Ensure you have enough memory in your ASR to do all of these things.

For instructional materials as well as excellent sound samples, I highly recommend Rubber Chicken Software. Enjoy!

Hola! (My English will not be good, sorry...)

Hi, my name is Carlos Martinez from Argentina and I'm an ASR-10 owner. Great keyboard, sounds are clean, but it has some limitations: 8 tracks are insufficient.

To repair this limitation, I load an instrument into an unused track while another instrument/track is playing, simulating more than 8 instruments. I can only do this through an external sequencer: Cakewalk, Power Track... I need do it from the internal sequencer. How can I?

I appreciate your help. Gracias!!!!

Carlos, carlosm@mbasystems.com.ar

[PF - Carlos: The sequencer in the ASR is 16-track - 8

sequence tracks and 8 song tracks. Unless you chain sequences together in song mode you cannot access the 8 song tracks...

But the issue here is what other tone modules you're using. If you're using an outboard tone module, you simply chain the sequences together, then you can assign the other 8 song tracks to MIDI status and play other instruments on your outboard modules.

If you're NOT using an outboard tone module, there are a number of ways to "fool" the ASR into more sounds. You can create multiple instruments that change under patch select control. Layer 1 of an instrument could be acoustic piano, layer 2 could be an electric piano, layer 3 could be a clavinet, layer 4 could be a rhodes. You create this kind of "multiple" instrument by copying other instrument samples into layers of the same instrument. See the Musician's Manual for the details...

And another trick is to split the keyboard into halves and assign one instrument to the upper half and another to the lower half. Example: the lower half of the keyboard could be assigned a bass sample while the upper half could be assigned a string sample. Utilizing this procedure with the multiple "patch select" instrument example above, you can get 64 instruments resident in your ASR (4 instruments per patch select times 8 tracks times 2 instruments per keyboard half). I did an article in the early years of the Hacker on how to do this on the EPS Classic: check the back issues for details. Enjoy!]

[VonKrogh@aol.com - There's even one more (but a little tricky) thing you can do - If you want to have as many sounds as possible at the same time (say an instrument that's 8 times multitimbral), you can split the layers with the different sounds (see above) via velocity range. Then you'll just have to fix the velocity of each track to the right range. (You can't do this in the ASR's internal sequencer, though.) This won't sound too good for dynamic sounds like a piano, but it's fine with any kind of synth sound!]

[PF - Gang: Yeah, and you could set keypad layers to trigger different samples, too, but let's be practical...]

Hi!

I know that the ASR-10 reads EPS stuff, but can an EPS/EPS-16/16+ read instruments created on an ASR-10? What about the KT/MR series? Do they read ASR-10 instruments?

Christian Welde
kjewel@robin.no

[PF - Christian: Yes and no. Some instruments are transportable if they're saved on low density (800k) floppies, but there are other parameters (e.g., Vol Boost, FX and stuff) that are not backwards-compatible with the original EPS. But given the above, most instruments ARE transportable given the memory limitations and architecture of the earlier samplers...

Alas, the KT and MR series instruments are synthesizers with no sample RAM, consequently you can't load any samples into them.]

[ANAYV@aol.com - I thought that the MR-Series

workstations CAN sample .wav and .aif sounds via an optional flash RAM soundboard (user installable and under \$300).]

[PF - ANAYV: Yes and No - the MR-Series can READ *.wav and *.aif files on floppy disk and load them into the optional Expansion Board. The MR-Series do NOT sample. But yes, the Expansion Board is user installable. Pricing is more an issue with your dealer...]

Hi, Transoniq Geniuses!

Conc: Relaunch of the Hacker

The recent relaunch of the Hacker made me very unlucky, because I cannot read 'em any more, i.e. only with big problems. Why?

You use now, maybe for reason of economy, such tiny letters that, having strong glasses, I nearly cannot read this source of information any more, and especially The Interface Section is out of my reach. So please think of all the millions of people having eye problems (in my country every third person has glasses or lens) and make the type bigger. Thank you very much!

Even what I could read didn't make me too enthusiastic: Tom Shear presents the CDR-8 Orchestral - well, this CDR was produced 1994, and even if he wants to focus again on this product, he should mention this. Are there no important new CDRs ?

Finally: A happy and peaceful 1998;
Herbert Lacina
Herbert.Lacina@Blackbox.at

[TH - Well, if we had "millions of people" reading our little mag, rest assured that the type would be bigger. The type is smaller than our tired ol' eyes would like as well, but we're in a situation where we have to cram a lot of info in a small space. The type is a *little* bigger in this month's Interface. One of the problems lately has been a flood of letters to the Interface from folks who visit Ensoniq's web site and get the mistaken impression that we're Customer Service. This has been fixed (finally...) and maybe things will settle down a little. If our letters get back to normal, the first thing on our list is to bump up the type size a bit. Meanwhile, all these letters are also available on our easy-to-read web site and our cheap-and-fast e-Hacker. And, yes, this is for reasons of economy - if Ensoniq starts shipping more instruments, we'll start adding pages.

Sorry about the date on the CDR - didn't notice and it was new to us! Wasn't Tom's fault. Sometimes it's a little while (or a big while) before we get a review disk and get it out to a reviewer - doesn't mean the sounds get all wrinkly and gnarly.]

TH -

I have a question I hope someone can help me with because I've been racking my brains on it.

I downloaded some files from Sound Central on line. Some I was able to convert to my TS-10 format using the EDE Conversion Program available on line also. But I'm not able to convert files like "The Three Stooges," "Flintstones," "Star Trek," or other files like these

which play, I guess, some sort of sampled or wav files. Also, I tried to convert other sounds from the same page like "M1 Angels" and "M1 Saxsec," which are said to be ESP files but in both cases I've had no success.

Any help from someone would make my day.

Thankx from Ohio.
RAZZMAN53@aol.com

[PF - Razzman: The 3 Stooges and Flintstone files were SD-1 sequences (at least that's what I thought) and won't load into a Malvern sampler. As far as the M1 files, I don't know what an ESP file is, so I'm no help here. Readers?]

[PF (followup) - Razzman: There's also another possibility - the sounds might be Mirage sounds, in which case you need an EPS/16+/ASR-10 to xlate them into their format. Spaced this on my previous reply...]

[RAZZMAN53@aol.com - In regards to my last letter about converting files, when I try to open them up it calls for program "2PAT.EXE" to play the files. But I've searched for this program with no luck. I tried in Windows 95 also but it's nowhere for me to find. Anyone familiar with this program? Thanks to my previous caller for your help and concern.]

[PF - Razzman: I might be full of methane on this one, but I'd bet 2Pat.exe is some kind of an unstuffer/decompression program like WinZip or the like. Might be you have to decompress them to be recognized.]

[Michael Hyman (mikeh@op.net) - 2PAT was an Audio and Wavetable Instrument File Format Converter, Editor and Player for Windows. In 1996, it was renamed to AWAVE. The latest version of Awave is available for download on the internet @URL: "http://hem.pas-sagen.se/fmj/fmjsoft.html." Close the door and light a match, Pat.]

[PF - Mike: BOOM! "Aaaaaiieeee!" Thankx for the heads up. Duly noted...]

TH -

Fritz Uhle asked, in the January issue, if the 4x expanders were still available for the EPS sampler, and Pat responded that they have been unavailable for some time. Syntaur does indeed have these expanders, for \$299.95. They are usually - but not always - in stock. We also sell the EPS-16 Plus 2x expander for \$189.95.

With 30-pin SIMMs getting harder and harder to find, we are now also offering our ASR/TS 8-Meg Expander Kit, containing two 4-Meg SIMMs and complete installation instructions, for \$74.95. You can get more details on these products at our web site (www.fatsnake.com/syntaur), or call (800) 334-1288.

Sam Mims
Syntaur Productions
syntaur@juno.com

[PF - Sam: Duly noted. (A) Are these new Ensoniq ME4X's and (B) do they sport the connector for the SCSI expander, and finally (C) if (B) is true, which SCSI adapters are compatible?]

[Sam Mims, Syntaur Productions - These are the official Ensoniq expanders. (Syntaur is working with Ensoniq to take over distribution of the accessories for all out-of-production keyboards.) The EPS 4x expander is the ME-2, and the EPS-16 Plus 2x expander is called the ME-16 PLUS. These accept the SP-1 (EPS) or SP-2 (EPS-16) SCSI Port Kit, though the connector is not built in already.]

[PF - Sam: Thankx for the heads up and correction on

those pesky model #s. I should clarify what I meant by "connector" as some EPS Classic expanders didn't have the 9-pin (actually "wire") connector that the SP-1 "snapped" on to. Obviously since these are the genuine articles they have it...]

[James Hanching (rawdawg@cyberpcs.com) - Hey guys, my EPS has a Maartist 4x expander. It doesn't look like it has a SCSI connector on it. Is my expander unscuzzable?]

[PF - James: The DB-25 (SCSI) connector is part of the SCSI interface, NOT the memory expansion. You'll see what I mean if you order a SCSI interface kit, as it includes the SCSI connector to replace the blanking plate that sticks out of the back of your memory expander...]

TH -

Subject: General info

SINGAPORE, Jan. 9 Newswire - Creative Technology Ltd (Nasdaq: CREAM), the world's leading provider of multimedia technology for the personal computer, today announced that it has completed its acquisition of Ensoniq Corp.

"We believe Creative is now in our best position ever to significantly grow our OEM business. This acquisition was a key step in Creative's comprehensive strategy to expand our presence into each segment of the OEM market, including the fastest growing sub-US\$1,000 PC segment," said Sim Wong Hoo, chairman and chief executive officer of Creative. "We are very excited about the inclusion of Ensoniq's PCI audio solution in the just-announced sub-US\$1,000 Hewlett Packard Pavilion. We expect ongoing design wins in the OEM market and we expect to leave our competition in the dust!"

In its acquisition of privately-held Ensoniq, Creative paid approximately US\$77 million in cash which came out of Creative's existing cash resources.

Creative Technology Ltd develops, manufactures and markets a wide array of advanced multimedia solutions for the PC, entertainment, education, music and productivity tools markets. Creative's corporate headquarters and primary manufacturing are based in Singapore, with sales, distribution and development being carried out through an extensive, global network of subsidiaries.

equitybuilders@equitybuilders.com

[PF - ...yada-yada-yada: what about the keyboard division?]

[Eric Montgomery (Ensoniq Technical Support) - I have said and will say again, I am very positive about the acquisition of Ensoniq to Creative. It is a wonderful move!]

Dear TH people,

A few comments and a few questions.

In TH #151, I was glad to see others wish for the return of the TS-10/12 synths. As a TS owner I think it'd be great that others may have the opportunity to acquire a brand new workstation such as these. It'd also be good news for those of us who'd like to be able to buy replacements should our current models be irreparably damaged somehow (horror!).

A few things I think would be neat if Ensoniq DID choose to re-release the TS series:

1. Effects LFO and Envelope modulation. I know I've used a lot of sequencer memory changing the VCF Env amount with the mod wheel!

2. A rackmount TS. I'm not talking about just a sound module, but also the sequencer, disk drive, and all the front panel buttons on the regular TSs. It could be handy for those who already have a controller keyboard, or for those like me who would like more of a smaller sequence playback module.

And my questions:

1. What exactly is the function of the step-entry recorder? I've had my TS for almost two years, and I don't find the manual explains it clearly enough.

2. There seems to be a bug that occurs when I'm programming patches in the user banks. occasionally, voice five of whatever sound in bank U0-1 will change to *UNKNOWN*. This renders the wave unchangeable to my knowledge. Why does this happen, and is there any way to reverse the damage, aside from being fortunate enough to have an uncorrupted copy of the sounds handy?

Sincerely,
C.S. Graves
creon@sfn.nb.ca

[PF - CS: Answers, in order:

(1) That's the nature of continuous controller messages (CC#xx)...

(2) Thought of that myself. Ensoniq won't get any closer to doing that than the ASR-X.

(2a) Step entry is a concept that allows people to insert notes into a timeline in an offline nonlinear fashion (kinda like PARIS audio editing) without recording them in real time. Useful for humanly impossible keyboard chords and passages...

(2b) Never seen this one before. I'd call Ensoniq directly and report a bug. If they send Tommy Lee Jones or Will Smith knocking on your door, reinitialize your TS and see if you can reproduce the problem before looking into the neuralizer...]

[Eric Montgomery (Ensoniq Technical Support) - All good answers. Also be sure that you have the most current OS for your TS. The current OS is 3.10.

TS-10 / TS-12

1. While holding the (PRESETS) button,
2. Press the (SYSTEM) button
3. Display = SOFTWARE - ROM=X.XX KPC=X.XX
4. Release both buttons.]

[L.Van den Berg, ljbv3@ucr.campus.mci.net - As an owner of every high-end workstation keyboard Ensoniq has ever produced, from the ESQ, to the MR-76, I'd like to comment on the numerous calls for a TS re-issue I have seen in these pages. The TS was the last iteration of the classic Ensoniq interface, which was the best in the industry. The large display, providing much information simultaneously, with selector buttons, a real usable sequencer, the many excellent and usable factory presets, as well as an extensive synthesis potential with great effects. The real plus with the instrument in the integration into the platform of sample playback. I still use my TS-12 nearly every day.

Despite all of this, I cannot support the re-introduction of the instrument. It would be unwise and uncompetitive in the current marketplace. In a critical studio recording context, the TS is no longer on par with industry standards. Its sound lacks the frequency response and dynamic range which are expected of modern instruments. The sample playback is limited to 32 kHz, usable, but not great. The ROM waveforms are similarly limited. They lack "air" - a sense of realism, with

natural harmonics and dynamic range. The quality of "air" can be heard in the MR series, in Kurzweil, in Korg, and in other high-end products by quality manufacturers. This can clearly be heard in a direct comparison of the TS and MR within a studio context. I'm not saying that the TS is obsolete, or unusable - far from it. I still use it and the ESQ and SD-1. They're all very musical, with some great sounds. They just don't represent the state of the art technically.

What would be desirable: update the TS concept with a modern platform. This already exists somewhat in the ASR-X. A workstation based on this platform could offer the MR synthesis engine (with a large ROM memory complement), with the sampling of the ASR. Improvements in RAM capacity, operational interface, display, and sequencer would be wise, if not obligatory.

This is a do-able natural evolution of the Ensoniq product line that would be very competitive at the right price point.]

[John Seboldt, rohrwerk@newton.pconline.com - Long time since I've been here, and lo and behold someone agrees with me on the power of that TS interface! I would add the many, very smooth and slick ways you can split/layer. And the smooth way you can have one half of a split constant, while merrily clicking between several other patches in the other half (in sequencer mode). AFAIK, in the current Ensoniq line, only the E-Prime will operate in this manner. Yes, Ensoniq, a natural evolution of this slick interface!]

[PF - John: Megadittos on the double-click...]

[Eric Montgomery (Ensoniq Technical Support) - I would like to be one of the people who jumps on the TS band wagon also with its wonderfully easy to understand interface. I also agree with the comments about air, which the TS lacks. I have mentioned for a long time that if you own a TS and like the TS user interface and need to upgrade, then go to the MR Rack. Now you have the killer sounds from the TS and MR and you have the interface you like. Also keep in mind that though the MR cannot do all that the TS can do, the MR does what it does well. Sounds, sounds, sounds! Also take a look at the article on the TS versus the MR. It will give you some more insight on the why they are great alone and great together.]

TH -

I own both an SD-1 and a TS-10 which came as part of a studio "package deal" with some recording gear, etc. The TS-10 died with a nasty buzz and wouldn't resuscitate at all (no sign of life at powerup). It's in the shop. The tech has tested the power supply and other usual suspects but can't find the problem. Presently waiting for a new battery - thinking that maybe the current one is so dead that it can't supply enough power to initialize a hard reset. Maybe you've seen such a problem?

I am somewhat comfortable with sequencing/MIDI and a complete novice to interfacing the keyboards with my computer (new). I've gigged a few years off and on with a guy who sequenced all our rhythmic tracks on a VFX-SD (worked well except for the occasional freeze-up/meltdown/whatever - "we'll take a short break..."). I have a Creative Labs Soundblaster AWE32, Pentium 200MMX, and QuickScore Elite II, v7.0. My intent is to improve compositional skill and scoring, etc. I could use advice on essential software. It appears I need standard MIDI to/from Ensoniq MIDI, aka Giebler or what?

Thanks,
Mark Beaulieu
mjblue@micron.net

[PF - Mark: If you've got access to all the sequences done on the VFXsd, yes, you DEFINITELY want the

Giebler VFX-SMF conversion utility. This'll allow you to make SMFs out of all those VFXsd sequences and edit them on any PC-compatible sequencing/scoring application. The most popular apps (IMHO) are Cakewalk (for sequencing) and Encore and Finale (for notation). All are pretty stiff in the learning curve department, but you'll find that's pretty much the case with all the premiere apps out there.

I don't think a new battery is going to fix the TS. It's there to preserve volatile EEPROM data when the instrument is unplugged. If you wanna do a hard reset, clip one of the leads of the battery while the instrument isn't plugged in - that'll force your TS into amnesia. While it's disconnected in this manner, load test the battery to ensure it really IS dead. After around a half an hour, your TS will have forgotten its own name; then you can resolder the clipped battery lead, plug it into the wall and reinitialize. If that doesn't do it, time to swap the logic board out. I remember switching the power on and off 7 times in rapid succession to hard reset the VFXsd but I don't know if that's the procedure for the TS. It's a relatively new board, and I really doubt the battery has gone south this soon...

But I would still defer to your tech, as he gets privy info from Malvern that we mere mortals do not...]

[Eric Montgomery (Ensoniq Technical Support) - These are all good suggestions. I hope you are not attempting to work on this unit on your own. I always suggest that a qualified Ensoniq service center works on the unit. In some cases there may be tricky situations to avoid and the qualified tech has the extra info needed to avoid the falls. If you and/or your tech are in the dark on this repair then please call Ensoniq at 610-647-3930 and ask for customer service so they can set up a situation for repair back at the factory.]

Hey Gals and Guys,

I bet if you have an EPS with a 4X expander and you open the expander up you'll find a 3.3 16-volt capacitor labeled C9 burned up. Don't know why yet but I would suspect without getting out the meter the voltage rating on these babies was set too low and they burn up.

It surprised me but by chance I opened up my 4X expander a few months ago. Lo and behold I found the capacitor mentioned burned up. Now I just purchased a used EPS and was checking out the SCSI interface in it and again I noticed the same component burned up in this unit. I bet they all do it. It seems to function okay but it bothers me enough to fix it. Another tell-tale sign I noticed was that the plastic case on the enclosed 4X had a sort of a heat deformed spot on the top, near the edge connector. The unit with the SCSI has the cover removed to allow the SCSI board to plug in.

I bet a 25-volt cap would be more ideal. Maybe Ensoniq has addressed this maybe not. But it's not coincidence. What do you think?

Robert G.Kachur
jingle1@voyager.net

[PF - Bob: Been there, done that, burned the T-shirt: that 6V cap burned up on mine too when it was connected to a hard drive that supplied termination power back to the expander. I think they give their life so that the SCSI expander may live when incorrectly connected to non-approved SCSI devices...]

[Robert G.Kachur - I checked on the 4X I repaired some time ago and the 3.3mf rated at 25 volts is hanging tough. I originally found one on a 4X without the SCSI option. Should you encounter this, up it to 25 volts minimum and do watch polarity.]

[PF - Bob: Been so long I opened up an old EPS that

had been giving me fits when polling SCSI devices erratically. Sometimes it would boot from a SCSI drive fine, other times it would "nack" and the drive light would stay lit and just hang. Replaced the cap with a 25V, .33 ufd electrolytic and bingo: mounis every time... Mine was labeled C1. Be VERY sure you observe polarity when replacing ANY electrolytic cap - they WILL explode if wired backwards.

Excellent tip from Robert! I now have another fully operational EPS.]

[Eric Montgomery (Ensoniq Technical Support) - You boys are good! All I do is make music and think Ensoniq.]

YEEEEHAAAA!,

Never thought I'd get so excited over paper, but I like the new heavy paper you guys are printing on. As a new subscriber, but old Ensoniq fan (bought an ESQ-1 waaay back when they first hit the streets, '86 I think it was), I had received a few copies of the Hacker on that old newsprint style paper and I must say that the new stuff is a pleasure to hold in my hands and flip the pages. Hope you keep with the new paper. I noticed that most of the sounds available for Ensoniq are for various samplers...any idea where I can get my hands on some patch sheets for SQ/KS/KT/E-Prime? I just bought an E-Prime and I'd like to mess around with making sounds, it would be helpful to get some examples (other than the few you provide in Hacker).

Thanks a Bunch,
David LaPorte
thedoor@pcisys.net

[PF - David: The best way to get up to speed on the SQ/KS/KT/E series is to poke around at parameters: point your browser to <http://www.synthzone.com/en-soniq.htm> and siphon off some of the patches for inspection. Trust me: Ensoniq Musician's Manuals are the friendliest books out there.]

[TH - And thanks for the YEEEEHAAAA!]

TH -

Is it possible to create a multiple disk instrument? I am using the EPS-M as my sampler. I am having difficulty locating or understanding the procedure necessary to create a multiple disk instrument.

I am using the EPSDISK program to load a single EFE file, on a single DD disk, onto my EPS module. I am having no problems doing this procedure.

Can you give me any assistance or suggestions?

Thank you,
Dan
destes@remc8.k12.mi.us

[PF - Dan: As I understand it, the EPS looks at a disk when you save an instrument to floppy. If there's not enough room it returns a "Not Enough Disk Space" prompt. If it senses a blank disk and there's not enough room to store the instrument and all the samples it's composed of, the EPS returns the "Use Multiple Disks?" prompt...]

The issue here isn't how to create a multiple disk instrument; it's more a question of WHY the EPS does this. EPSDISK is an image program: it takes a PC image of an Ensoniq file and makes an Ensoniq-readable disk out of it.

As far as creating a multiple disk instrument, you just need to make an instrument larger than 1585 blocks (the

capacity of a DSDD floppy).

*.efe is a Giebler format written by our old friend Dr. Gary Giebler to take an Ensoniq file format and convert it into a PC-storable file. *.efe files can be multiple disk instruments, but one *.efe file equals one disk. For a two-disk instrument you should have two *.efe files, for a 4-disk instrument you should have four *.efe files, and so forth.

Again, the "Multiple Disk" issue is an Ensoniq-native OS call that simply allows you to store Ensoniq-native format files (or "instruments") that exceed a blank DSDD formatted floppy's block count of 1585. If you sampled a sound that occupied the entire 4096-block memory pool of the EPS you'd have to feed it 3 blank floppies to save it...]

[Garth Hjelte (RCS) - Some clarification is needed here. First, for a full explanation of File Images and Disk Images, .EFE, .EDE, .GKH, etc. go to this link at our RCS Tips page:

http://www.soundcentral.com/~chickeneps/rcs_tips#EnsoniqPCFileTypes

More specifically, although it is possible to have a .efe (which is a File Image) which is any Part of a Multiple Disk File, it really isn't a good idea. Both programs that support multi-part Files (Giebler's EDM and our Tools programs) usually (not all the time) merge the multi-part onto an already existing .efe file, so a lone .efe file that represents one part of a multi-part instrument usually shouldn't exist.

If you want to save individual parts of a multi-part instrument, save them in separate Disk Images (.EDE or .EDA). That way you preserve the multi-part contents more accurately without confusing .efe that have the same name.

Regarding reading multi-part files into the the Original EPS, it reads them differently than the 16-Plus/ASR. With the 16-Plus/ASR, they are smart enough to prompt you for Part 2 (or other). The Original EPS simply loads the first file (let's say named BRASS .1), and stops. If you play that sound on the keyboard, you are likely to crash. To load the entire instrument, insert the disk that contains BRASS .2, and load it into the same slot that BRASS .1 is in. Then you'll have it. Confusing? Sure is. That's why Ensoniq changed it.]

[PF - While we're splitting red hairs the issue still remains that Dan's got a problem with EPSPDISK (not Disk Tools or EDM) copying multi-disk files. This is a known bug that the program's author (Michael Chen) mentions he's had some reports on, and is noted in the Read Me file. Does anyone out there have Michael Chen's current eMail address? The address noted in EPSPDISK's ReadMe file is invalid (it's a 1994 URL)...

Readers can also find info on the various file formats in Issue #144.]

[Garth Hjelte (RCS) - I wouldn't expect EPSPDisk to be supported anymore - the last revision was four years ago, and it's simply DOS command line. How many DOS-only users are out there? I was surprised that it even supported multi-disk reading or writing.]

[PF - Garth: Everybody using Gary Giebler's Utilities is working in a DOS window...]

TH -

I'm having a problem that's driving me crazy. My MR-76 will not play my sequences all the way through. Sometimes after playing 2 or 3 bars, the play light turns off by itself and the sequence restarts again without any input to me. Sometimes it does not start immediately,

but several minutes later without any input from me, the sequence suddenly starts playing again.

I've called Ensoniq Tech Support, and they suggested that I call my dealer. My dealer has never heard of this problem. I live in Mississippi but ordered the MR in April from a store in Virginia. My local dealer is trying to help. They hope that by replacing the main board my problem will be solved. However, their problem is that they cannot get the board from Ensoniq.

I have several keyboards - Yamaha, Roland, and I've never had any problem with service. This was my first Ensoniq purchase and most probably will be my last.

I need help. If anyone has ever had this problem, I need to know how to solve it. Call me collect.

MIDI0001@aol.com
Glenn Carlisle
601-653-3673

[PF - Glenn: Ensure you're using O.S. V. 2.1 which is the most recent OS from Ensoniq. You may have an older version causing the problem, so before you convict Ensoniq and your local dealer of some diabolical plot to steam you (you ARE yelling at us in capital letters). [TH - The original letter was ALL CAPS. We always change that before posting as a special service to newbies...] check a few things first. It's possible that the logic board may need replacement, but check your OS version to see if it's 2.1 (the most recent version), check the librarian to ensure you've allocated more than 0k to the sequencer, and reinitialize the unit.

These things are more computer than piano and are VERY sensitive to line voltage fluctuations as well. Ensure all of the above before picking up the red phone and going nonlinear...

This is one of the primary reasons you should buy from a local dealer: support. Not that your local dealer can't help you, but you don't have the luxury of returning the keyboard to Virginia for an exchange or other satisfaction. A mail order company will always match or beat your local dealer's price, but there's NO way they're gonna even come close to matching (or beating) your local dealer's SERVICE...

I don't know what problems your local dealer has in obtaining a replacement logic board from Ensoniq. My local dealer has been very good and Ensoniq has been very prompt in service through them (IRC Music). So before you flame Ensoniq and vow never to do business with them again just because of your unique situation, consider their unique situation: They've just been purchased by Creative Labs, they're certainly going through some reorganizational growth pains while delineating keyboard and soundcard lines, they're trying to develop new product while balancing service and support of other products in their line. Remember, they're not some global giant like Yamaha that grows their own trees for their pianos - they're a small dedicated group of guys (and gals) who offer us the best technology at the best price.

And I'm sure your MR-76 will be just fine after this visit with your local doctor...]

[Eric Montgomery (Ensoniq Technical Support) - Good answer. Here is how you check the OS on the MRs:

1. While holding the (SAVE) button in the Soundfinder section,
2. Press the (SYSTEM) button in the Disk/Global section.
3. Release both buttons.

Also, the service center should check for a stuck play button.]

Hello everyone.

I'm a current Hacker subscriber, MR-76 and PARIS owner, so the "On-Line Interface" seemed like the logical place to post this.

I and two other PARIS owners are trying to establish a PARIS user's group for Connecticut. We're currently meeting in the Danbury/Waterbury area, but are flexible. If any fellow Nutmeg state PARIS owners are interested in joining us, please e-mail me at: jhaynes3@snet.net

We'd also like to establish a mailing list for everyone's daily PARIS questions, but haven't done it yet...I'd be interested in e-mail about that as well.

Best to all,
Jamie Haynes
jhaynes3@snet.net

[PF - Jamie: Excellent. I don't own a PARIS but I have a number of questions to address your group concerning this product. If you don't mind, I'd like to ping in on the discussions and report your findings to the Hacker. eMail anytime.]

[TH - And... Craig Anderton had the first installment of what will likely be an ongoing series on his adventures in PARIS in the February TH.]

Hi.

I am an ASR-10 owner and am thinking of purchasing the new ASR-X.

However, I would like to be sure that the ASR-X does not suffer from the following idiosyncrasies of my ASR-10, namely:

- * Extreme overheating (I can easily cook breakfast on my ASR-10).
- * Overdriven processor (that cursed "Shuffling Data" message and the associated delays).

Furthermore, can the ASR-X read ASR-10 files from SCSI storage devices (the Ensoniq web-site brochure is unclear)?

I would greatly appreciate any info you may have.

Regards,
Robert F. Pisano
rfp@bigpond.com

[PF - Robert: The overtaxed CPU on the ASR-10 and 88 was probably one of the reasons they were discontinued. You'd get a 180bpm sequence going with ATRKs spooling and there weren't enough CPU cycles left over to scan the keyboard and follow playback key events timely enough. You'd think upping the CPU from a 16-MHz 68000 to a 16-MHz '30 or '40 would be a bolt-up swap, but as a Mac hardware guy, trust me, it just ain't so.

The ASR-X reads and writes its files in PC-formatted SCSI devices. As the ASR-10 writes its own file system, an ASR-10 drive cannot be read if connected to an ASR-X. You've got to format the drive from the ASR-X, load ASR floppies and save to the ASR-X's connected SCSI device(s). Bummer...]

[Garth Hjelte (RCS) - Nope. The ASR-X can read the EPS/ASR disk format and import EPS/ASR files from any/most SCSI devices. (I thought this was really obvious in the ASR-X manual..)]

[PF - Gang: I was not aware the ASR-X could read Mac-formatted, PC-formatted, and ASR-10 formatted SCSI disks. An earlier thread in last month's column threw me off. (Actually, one of yours, Garth - could have been read two different ways...) My apologies.]

TH -

Subject: MR-76

Just a few questions/comments about my 'board:

1. Any 3rd party/user sounds yet?
2. When "erase outside region" (set to 3.384) sometimes leaves 4.1 on! (I have latest ver2.1.)
3. "Final Mix" mode should work for a song.
4. Can't get my Roland VS-880x to Song position point my MR-76.
5. When load "all-songs," can't view song titles (appear as "song001, ..002" etc.) until "load song"!?
6. Can't insert/delete sequences into "play list" (can only change). So, I have to start from scratch if I make any additions/deletions. Also, can't make sequences repeat, transpose, etc. at a given step.
7. Can't "Event Edit" (I miss my EPS) to change/delete individual notes, velocity, durations, etc.

If anyone out there can answer/help/point I'd appreciate it. Please contact me, all you "extensive MR-76 users."

Thanks for a great mag/forum!
Keith
KMULLIN@maila.harris.com

[PF - Keith: Answers, in order:

(1) Point your browser to <http://www.rain.org/~msavard>. You'll find a lotta sounds AND sequences there. Check out "MIB" while you're there...

(2) Sounds like bug alert; have you spoken with Ensoniq about this?

(3) Perhaps in a future O.S...

(4) Ensure SPP is enabled on the MR. You might ensure the VS-880 is sending SPP (my only experience is on the earlier version Roland box).

(5) See (3) above.

(6) See (5) above.

(7) See (6) above.]

[KMULLIN@maila.harris.com - One more question...

Does anyone else have trouble opening .mid files on the MR? When I open xxx.mid, align midi tracks, then assign sounds, the new sound switches back to "stereo piano" after the first bar! This happens with any sound on any track. Thanks again, Keith]

[PF - Keith: What you want to do is to open the SMF file, massage the sounds you want on each track, and THEN save in MR-format. Remember, the MR-series keyboards ONLY READS SMF's - it won't let you make direct changes to them or edit them in SMF format. This was included as a convenience feature but it does not let the MR-series directly edit SMF's...]

[ANAYV@aol.com - Keith, been there, done that!... got frustrated!... called Ensoniq... got help. There IS a way to change sounds after a SMF has been loaded (and MIDI tracks have been aligned). Here's how you do it:

1. Select track
2. Press "erase" (in 16-track recorder section)
3. Turn "value" knob until display reads "Scope=Trk Data Only"
4. Press "enter/yes" button
5. Turn "value" knob until display reads "Event=Bank&Program"

6. Press "enter/yes" button
Mission Accomplished!...almost.

To change sounds in a specific track, you should send it from "Soundfinder" "select sound" button. Select the sound, then send it to the specific track. Press the "send" button (red arrow). Hope this helps!

P.S. When you send sounds from the "Soundfinder," you also have the choice to send the effect (or not). Some sounds are in part made with the insert effects.]

[PF - Although this isn't the same thing as being able to do it via MIDI, it looks like it's as close as you can get. The only issue to address here is to ensure any other sounds that are using the insert FX bus sound okay with the new effect, because they'll be routed through the newly selected insert effect. A "Transporter" acoustic piano sounds pretty foolish...]

Hi,

I am a subscriber of *Transoniq Hacker* and an ASR-10 owner. I have quite a number of synthesis suggestions for future Ensoniq products or future synthesis products in general. Does Transoniq have links with Ensoniq and Rubber Chicken where feedback notes automatically get sent to those above mentioned companies?

Anyway I will start here:

- Is it likely that in the future that Ensoniq samplers and Ensoniq related computer programs will involve output waveform alteration (like that of Roland JX3P and other analogs) or waveform redrawing (like many new sample-edit programs and the Fairlights of course)?

- I also own a JX3P which uses parameters utilizing DCOs, Ring Modulation, ENV/GATE signal-VCA, VCF, Resonant Filter, etc. I don't know if these would be possible in samplers or maybe it's my ignorance on synthesis technology - excuse me! Could these parameters be used on a sampled sound?

- Would it be likely that sampling devices be able to obtain optional realtime Analogue Control/Analogue synth parameters/filters to be used on a sampled sound? Could they reintroduce external signal-ins for synth treatments and gating external sounds onto samplers/computers similar to Korg MS20s and the like?

- Similar to Roland VG-8 Guitar synths I gather it would be unthought-of to have special optional guitar/instrument in-jacks in samplers. The triggered guitar sound (live not recorded) could be transformed into a sampled sound of your choice rather than a midi guitar synth controlling a midi device like another keyboard. More like a new effect or synth treatment.

- Looping on a sampler that can be played without holding the key.

- Possible Looping/sequencing of input/audio sequencing as opposed to Delay effects and more advanced. I guess similar to Robert Fripp's modern Soundscapes material. Could work well in hard disk recording.

- Possible upgrade in future samplers to have more than 16 sequencer tracks. More audio recording tracks.

- One thing I have noticed about sampling is after choosing the root key for your sampler if you play a higher key it plays faster and if you play lower key it plays slower. It has its place but can be difficult if you want to create a new synthesizer sound. It's a wonder how all notes on a synth sound the same. Logic and, I think, Cubase have the Time Machine in Audio versions to make other keys the same character as root key sample when transposing. Perhaps this problem should be looked at in creation of new sampling devices.

- Possible higher sampling rates than 44.1 kHz to choose from. Choice of 16 bit, 32 bit and 8 bit (if people are searching for the classic Fairlight sound).

- ASR-10s currently in Australia cost about \$5000. I was lucky to have got mine half priced, brand new and with warranty.

Well, I could go on and on until I collapse into oblivion but there're the suggestions you may want to consider in order to keep running in the big technological change. I don't know if I'm speaking too futuristically or there are similar things being incorporated into various new and developing machines and programs, but could you keep me posted on Ensoniq's new arrivals and Rubber Chicken as well? Would Synthzone and company have suitable programs similar to what I've mentioned?

Thanks,
Alex
SOLANDRA@bigpond.com

[PF - Alex: Answers, in order:

(1) Most waveform editors currently available (*Alchemy*, *Sound Forge*, etc.) allow waveform manipulation as you describe.

(2) Your ASR-10 will invoke many of these operations on a sample right out of the box: check the edit pages. *Waveboy Industries* sells a number of specialty FX disks (like their *Resonant Filter Disk*, for example) that allow the FX processor of your ASR-10 to do MUCH more.

(3) Your ASR-10 already has this type of an input jack. Just connect a MIDI guitar controller to the MIDI in of your ASR-10 and the guitar will play any sample you load in and select.

Classifieds

HARDWARE/SOFTWARE

2-year-old TS-12. (No upgrades other than O.S. Ver 2.x.) Gladstone Wade. 901-375-6749 (days) or 901-327-7787 (evenings and night).

EPS-16+ Turbo keyboard. 2 Meg RAM, 1 Meg ROM, SCSI, and sound disks. Asking \$900. Phone: 330-928-5711, ext. 507, 330-699-0368 after 7 pm EST. Ask for Rocky Lowther or leave message.

MR Rack. Home use only, \$800. Contact Jonathan. Daytime: 208-962-3271, Eve:208-983-2876.

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(4) Depress the Sustain pedal that came with your ASR-10 after you press a note: it'll play until you lift the pedal. You can edit the sample to continuously play after the key is depressed, but how would you stop it?

(5) Precisely why Audio Tracks (ATRS) was introduced to the ASR in O.S. 3.0 (current is 3.5.3).

(6) Possible: Ensoniq's unbelievably innovative...

(7) Sample the instrument in more than one range: the ASR-10 allows 128 multisamples per instrument.

(8) Just convert the sample rate down on any sample. Also, Waveboy's Sonic Demolition granulizer will do this as well.

(9) Sorry about the different economies involved between us, mate, but sounds like you got a killer deal, anyway...

(10) Always use your web browser: there's a LOT out there. As a Hacker subscriber, you know this already...]

[Eric Montgomery (Ensoniq Technical Support) - Keep in mind that the ASR-X has resonant filters built in. As technology changes there are more chances for some of the features you like or didn't know were possible to happen in a reasonable price range. The ASR-10, TS-10 and ASR-X are examples of that technology here today.]

[TH - And, yes - lots of folks at Ensoniq and all the 3rd party people read what shows up here in the Hacker.]

TH -

I've answered many questions here on this site and now I would like to ask one myself.

A friend is using a Mirage to score music into a notation program on his Mac. Whenever he plays back his score, there are random weird notes that play. This doesn't even happen at the same location in the score. The glitched notes are very annoying. He can play some scores with no random twangs and yet others are more prone to playing the random notes.

I ran into this same problem with my SDP-1 piano. It got fixed by upgrading the ROM chip in the keyboard.

Any suggestions or solutions?
James Rosand
jrosand@olympus.net

[PF - Jim: Difficult to say. Ensure the Mirage is set to Omni Off (Param #81) and no MIDI loops exists b/w the computer and the Mirage. Busy passages that approach the 8-voice limit of the Mirage will choke it and sporadic notes WILL ensure, but you can usually tell when this is happening as the display will blank out momentarily. Another trick I'd recommend is to bag a copy of SoundProcess: this OS decouples each of the sample oscillators from its loop oscillator, allowing twice the polyphony. The Visual Editor for Soundprocess is available from <http://www.voicenet.com/~bkirsch/SPVE.html>; check it out just to get a feel of what it does. If this looks interesting enough to pursue, the SoundProcess OS Disk for the Mirage is available from Syntaur Productions at <http://www.fatsnake.com/syntaur/>. I even think it allows the Mirage to become multitimbral...

The Mirage, as a sample-based instrument, loads its entire OS via disk on bootup, where the SDP-1, being a ROM-based instrument with no disk drive, boots from ROM. Ensure the Mirage is running OS V. 3.2; if so, you're running the most current version for it.]

Hi, can anyone help?

Whenever I save my MR sequences as midifiles to trans-

fer into Cubase every instrument part contains a large system exclusive message. I can delete all these messages from all sequences in Cubase and it seems to make no difference.

If I DON'T delete them they cause timing problems - particularly if a lot of instruments are playing at the same time. The performance "chokes" at the point all these messages hit the midi network.

My question is: can I prevent the MR-61 saving these messages in the midi files?

Thanks and regards,
Martin Long
martin.long@virgin.net

[PF - Martin: As well it should. That sysex message at the head of every SMF tells the sound module:

- (a) What sound (or program #) goes on which track,
- (b) Which effect algorithm is selected,
- (c) What tracks are routed through what effects,
- (d) What volume each track is to be set to,
- (e) What each track effect send/return level is,
- (f) If the SMF is a Type 1 or a Type 2,

(g) other pertinent tempo/timing/song position pointer data,

(h) other system common, system exclusive, active sensing, GM reset messages,

(i) in short, a ton of messages we Ensoniq users take for granted...

And yes, you can delete them, but if the next SMF you load happens to have the bass track assigned to the MIDI channel the previous string pad was assigned to, your bass sound will be so thick with chorus and reverb as to be unlistenable. I see way too much of this stuff using computer sequencers and modules, as whatever state you leave a tone module in is the state it will return to - including (a) thru (h) above. THAT'S why SMF's have that heady sysex header at the start of playback.

On a computer sequencer, you want to insert some space between the sysex message and the first note data, as this allows some time for the tone module to spin up to those settings without trying to play at the same time. These things aren't 266 MMX tone modules yet...]

Hi people,

My problem is simple, but the solution is beyond my grasp. I have had an MR-61 for about 5 months and it

has been great. I bought an Alesis QSR two weeks ago and have had only one problem: the MR won't change the QSR's banks.

When the QSR is set to accept program changes, I know it is hearing something. It always goes back "user" if I manually change the bank from the QSR panel and then change the program number on the MR. I know bank changes use "controller 0" and I tried to use that. No luck. I have tried several other adjustments but have found no leads to the problem. I've been using them independently (sound changes) 'til I can fix this problem. All the other communications and changes work fine. I did read in the Ensoniq manual, on page 133, that it transmits/receives program and bank changes. I also read, page 474 (Midi Controllers Reception Behavior), that bank changes are controlled by "controller 0" and that it is remarked as "always 0." Is this a contradiction? Any leads to a solution would be great.

Also, what about more expansion boards? I have the World Card and Urban Dance. As Tony would say, "They're Great!"

Thanks,
Mark Becker
spgf@ix.netcom.com

[PF - Mark: Bank select is CC#00, not CC#0 - this explains why the QSR jumps back to its user bank upon reception of CC#0. The confusing thing about bank select messages is the procedure. First, you have to send the bank select message (CC#00 or CC#32, although only a few keyboards/modules comprehend CC#32), confirm that with a button press, THEN select the patch #. It's exactly backwards from what you'd expect; then again, it's a GS General MIDI command, so what'd ya expect?

You'd think you send a program change, followed by the "bank" or "variation" program change to select the sound. No, that's too logical. Ya gotta send the "bank" select command followed by the "program" change #. I pulled my hair out over it this past week. My wife got me a Roland PMA-5 little battery-powered sound thingee, and I just discovered how to do this after three days of @#%&^&-ing and &^%\$#@(-ing...]

[Jamie Haynes butting in here - I have an MR-76 and an Alesis QSR and also cannot change QSR patches from the MR-76. Several letters back and forth over at the MR mailing list with higher programming authorities than my own self concluded it was faulty MIDI spec implementation on the part of the QSR. Several folks suggested buying one of those pocket MIDI switchers. If sending #00 works, by all means please let me know...]

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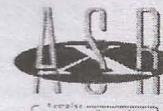
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