OTTAWA PC NEWS

Vol. 10 No. 7 The Newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG) September 1993

Review of September 7 meeting

Play it again, Sam!

by Jackson Hibler

When Hugh Chatfield first opened our eyes to the power of computer-generated music five years ago,

digitally synthesized sound was at the core of the system. FM synthesized sound realism and quality was increasing as rapidly as its cost was decreasing. Then, two years ago, Hugh gave us our first taste of sampled sound. Early sound sampling was approached from a synthesizer perspective. The goal was to create new sound, but the results seemed derivative: morph a harpsichord into an "organ", falling water into "tympany", wind into "voice", voice into "brass". Somehow it wasn't very satisfying. And with the introduction of 'Band in a Box' software, it seemed even composition might fall to automation...at least in the home "studio".

All that has changed. Hugh brought Keith Richardson and Rob Mitchell from Campbell Douglas Keyboards to our last meeting to show us just how great the transformation has been.

Let's start with the synthesizers...they're gone! Somewhere along the line it was realized that sampling could bring the best instruments into everyone's hands. Why recreate a piano through synthesis, when you can play a Steinway...or a Kurtzman? The best instrument, the right instrument, is as near as a digital recording studio. As Keith Richardson explained, the trick is to loop the digitally sampled instrument sounds at the right place to allow sustained notes. The resulting repertoire of sounds can be stored efficiently and played, transformed or modified by the supporting cast of computerized musician's tools that continue to grow in versatility and power: musical notation converters, sequencers, and sound wave-form editors.

The musician and composer is back at the centre. The instrument-maker no longer holds the focus of the software designer's effort.

As Keith and Rob proceeded to explain by demonstration, the 'Musicator GS' sequencer software can be "played" as it is used to edit a performance. Now the composer/musician can adjust notation with the mouse—each new note plays as it is moved into place. Even the computer keyboard can be played to the chosen musical scale...no hunting for the sharps and flats while editing.

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INSIDE

Check the envelope in case it contains other material such as a new membership card.

NEXT MEETING : TUESDAY, September 28, 1993 details on p. 3

Microsoft Mouse Version 2.0

by Harald Freise

They all do exactly the same thing. The difference between various mice are about the same as the difference between pencil erasers, right? Point, click, and drag. Some have one button and some have more. Not so; there are substantial differences. We are spending more and more time rolling these pointing devices around our desks and I think Microsoft acknowledges that good ergonomic design can make our computing less painful.

6-year old white mouse

It has been six years since Microsoft designed the original "white mouse" or "dove bar" the Original Microsoft mouse. Back then "windows 286" was a curiosity that only a few courageous people attempted to run. It has been conservatively estimated that there are over 65 million mice in existence today. A lot of people will be using their mice a more than at any time previously.

Feels good

I must admit that I have always enjoyed using a Microsoft mouse because of its weight and feel and the accuracy provided by the drivers that ran it. I didn't like Version 2.0 of the mouse at first. It seemed too large and clumsy. It filled the entire palm of the hand and looked kind of "organic" (their words). I wondered if smaller hands might be unnaturally elevated from the surface of the desk. The key, as with any other mouse, is to place the heel of your hand on the desk for stability and allow your hand and fingers to naturally relax and flop over the mouse, then use your whole arm to move the mouse. The more I used the new mouse the more I liked it. There is a more balanced and supportive feel to the new mouse. It can be used in a wider variety of positions than the "dove bar" can and still feel correct.

Improvements

The new Version 9 mouse drivers are a distinct move in the right direction, as several nagging problems in earlier releases have been solved. You can finally change the size of the pointer as well as invert or render the cursor transparent in colour. This has an additional benefit of increasing the size and rendering the "I-beam" insertion pointer highly visible in any program.

Down is up

The new drivers can reverse mouse buttons, for south paws, and change the speed required to execute a double click.
Changing the orientation of what the mouse considers normally as up will allow the mouse can be held in any position and used as normal. It also enables one to set down as up. This renders the mouse dyslexic and will thoroughly confuse any mouse user (stupid mouse tricks).

Screen wrap

A "screen wrap" option is useful on slower machines. With this feature, when you move the cursor off one side of the screen, it is automatically reenters on the opposite side. I find that on a fast 486 this feature is more confusing than useful.

Snap to default

The cursor can be made to jump to the nearest default button with a handy "snap to" feature. This unfortunately must be used cautiously as you can, for example, accidentally abort an install program instead of continuing.
I found that using a "magnify" option handy; it provides a quick way of seeing a small section of the screen or image in greater detail.

Longer tails for laptops

For LCD laptoppers there are some advantages as well. The mouse trails are now variable as to their length and the right mouse button can be programmed to locate the cursor at the centre of the screen, which is useful when you've "lost" the cursor when using an overhead projection screen.

Smaller paws

Aside from all the new hardware features such as the new Opto-mechanical encoder, 25% fewer parts, the redesigned keys, and a redesigned ball retainer, Mi-

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Have you ever missed a deadline?

by Julie Dustin

"There is no project software package available today that manages projects well—only people can truly manage a project," says David Curling of LODAY Systems Ltd., one of the presenters at the next OPCUG meeting on Tuesday, September 28th.

But I guess you knew that...just like you already knew that using a word processor does not make you a writer nor does having computers in school improve the national literacy level. At the next general meeting you will have a

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Calendar *(subject to change)*

General Meeting Location: Sir Robert Borden HS
131 Greenbank Road

General Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Date and Time	Topic and Location
Tuesday, 28 September	See this page
Tuesday, 26 October	Microsoft
Tuesday, 30 November	Swap meet, Cafeteria. Please note that there are SIG meetings on this night.

FOX SIG: The next FOX SIG meeting is on Thursday 20 September at 7:00 pm. It is held at Statistics Canada, Tunney's Pasture in the JeanTalon conference room.

Specialty disks are back

by Norm Dafoe

The Software Library is again offering specialty disks after the brief summer hiatus. This is in addition to the regular Disk of the month which as usual contains lots of great new shareware programs. Each disk is sold to members at the monthly meetings at a modest price—$3 for 360 Kb size; $5 for 1.2 Mb—to cover our local media and copying costs. Note that none of this money gets back to the software authors. Shareware authors generally ask for a fee, usually from $10 to $35, to be remitted directly to them. If you like and use the shareware software you buy at the club or download from BBS's, we encourage you to send in your shareware fees. This will help ensure the continued supply of good shareware in the future.

Specialty disks

Six specialty disks were presented at the September 7 meeting.

- **BIG GAME PACK (#9):** For lots of good fun, this disk contains a new Apogee action game, 'BIO MENACE #1', as well as 'SPACE CHASE #1' from Safari, starring Jason Storm.

- **CIRCUMSPACE v1.0:** For winter star-gazers, this package simulates travel through the

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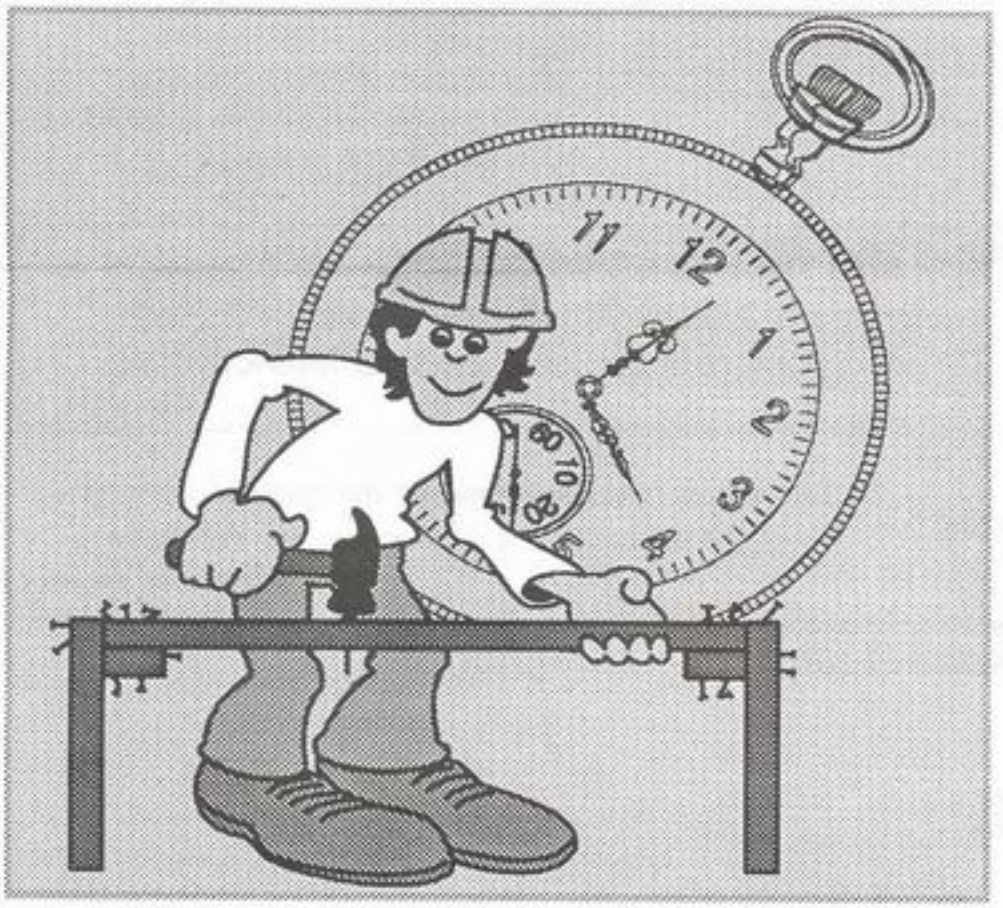
chance to learn more about project management concepts and software. Maybe you can learn to how to meet those important deadlines.

A trio of speakers

The evening's presentation will consist of three speakers. David Curling of LODAY Systems Ltd. will introduce the session by explaining general project management concepts. Following this, Keith Wilson, Director of Project Management Centre will demonstrate 'Time Line' from Symantec. To close the session, Steve Rice from Micro*Frame Technologies in California, will discuss work scope-based project management applications (also known as the Work Breakdown Structure method, (WBS)) and demonstrate his company's product, 'CONTROL', where the work document is the focal point.



"Today, the critical issue is not the cost of the software but the logistical impact on the organization in terms of training, documentation, electronic data interchange, and the cultural change...," writes Curling. LODAY uses a pragmatic approach, called the Task Definition Model, for project work planning and control. The company offers service bureau support and workshops in project planning including a government-oriented seminar on the Cost/Schedule Performance Management Standard (C/SPMS).

Abilities vary

"I would say that most companies are using some form of a desktop project management software," ventured Curling. "In fact, there are at least 6 desktop GUIs to choose from and over 300 in general. But before you buy, you should know what you want it to do. I always ask my clients what their corporate information strategy is. If your company requires a more robust product, check on the software's ability to interface with your existing databases and if its code can be customized."

Time Line

Wilson notes, "The changes occurring today in business such as re-engineering, reorganizing, and restructuring have forced managers to become more efficient project managers in less time. 'Time Line 5.0 for DOS' is superior product to use in these cases, however, 'Time Line for Windows' needs work. It is actually based on another product, 'On Target', which Symantec bought but I have heard great things about the next release of 'Time Line for Windows'."

Groupware

Project management software is a "groupware" application that is available today. Most of the Windows-based products include DLL and OLE capabilities especially for spreadsheets and word processors. Users are now demanding integrated scheduling, access to individual calendars, networked resource pools and links between multiple users and multiple projects. Let's hope the existing networks have the capacity to handle this traffic! Wilson cites an example of a project containing 5,000 tasks taking up to 20 minutes to update itself.

Data models

"There are really only a couple of data models, CPM and Integrated WBS, both of which have been around for 20 years. The newer GUI interfaces of the PC desktop products shows better graphics faster but the underlying concepts are the same. A strategic planning staff would need a higher-end product for more complex, integrated projects where a desktop product would suffice for simple projects or a small company or department." advises Curling. "Unlike other groupware, this software is not built to exist as a real-time application but more as a structured, fixed decision management tool."

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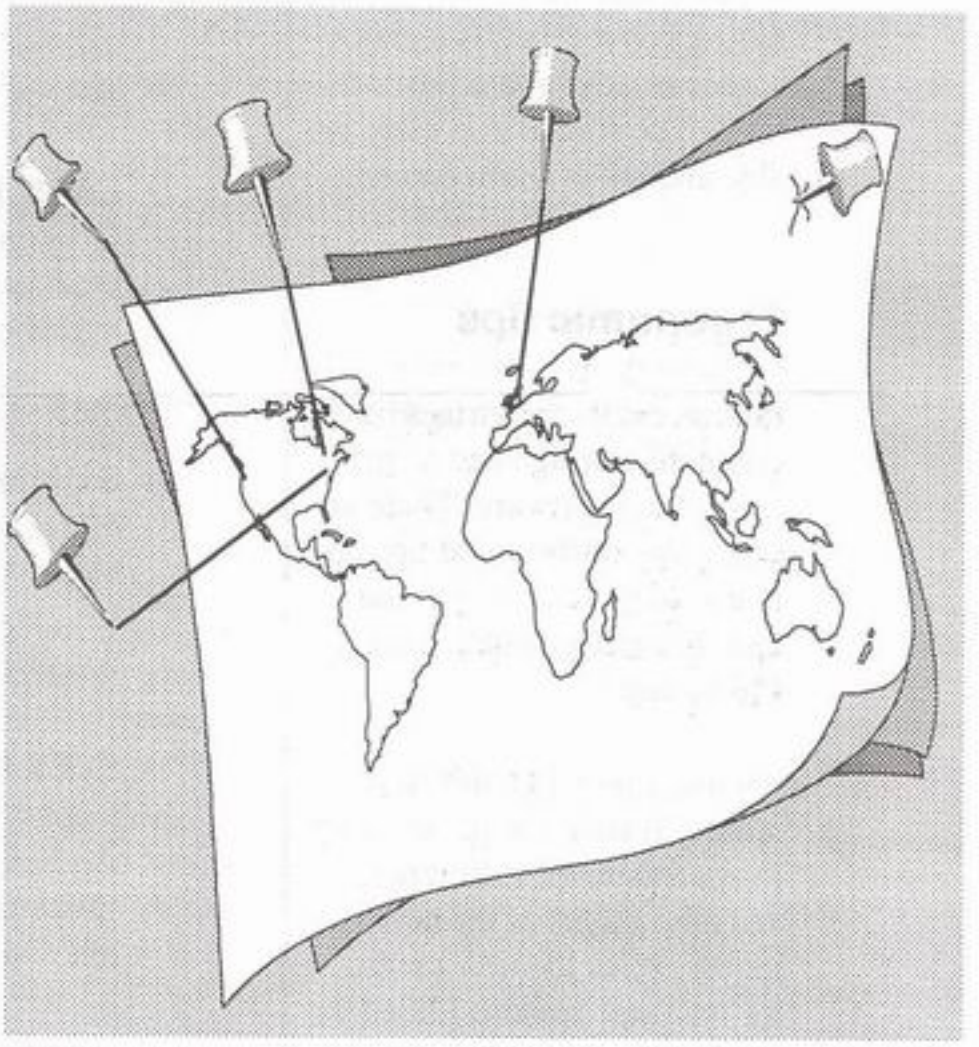
Who are members of the Ottawa PC User's Group?

by Mark Cayer

It seems like a simple question and one I've heard numerous times at monthly meetings, computer fairs, and special interest group (SIG) meetings. The answer most often given is that club members share a common interest and curiosity in personal computers through the clubs bulletin board (the PUB), newsletter, and monthly meetings. While this is true, let's look at what they do and where they come from.

As of August 1 1993 the OPCUG had 713 active members. While 87% of the membership come from what I'll call "the Greater Ottawa area" (Ottawa, Nepean, Gloucester, Kanata, Orleans, Hull, Manotick, and Aylmer), the club's membership is far reaching. Members list 63 cities and towns as home. They reside in out-of-town places such as Hawkesbury, Mountain, Oxford Mills, Smith Falls, Arnprior and Almonte in Ontario, Wakefield, Poltimore, and Pine Hill in Quebec. There is also one member each in British Columbia, Alberta (who regularly logs onto the PUB), Virginia USA, and England (the long distance prize winner who also calls the PUB occasionally).



Our members come from many walks of life, for example, doctors, truck drivers, students, civil servants, private computer consultants, lawyers, housewives, retirees, grocery store managers, computer retailers, and cabbies.

Club members use hardware and software that runs the complete pc spectrum—XT's to 486/66's, DOS 3 to Windows NT, Easy Writer to WordPerfect 6. All members have access to the PUB, and the majority own a modem.

Come on out to the monthly meetings and see for yourself who the members are.

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Don't leave home without it

by Chris Taylor

I recently received a letter from a non-member at the Users' Group address from R.W.B. White of Westmount, Quebec. In his letter, Mr. White explained that he had found someone's wallet while out on a golf course. The only identification in the wallet with an address or phone number on it was a membership card for the Ottawa PC Users' Group. A photocopy of the card was included in the letter. He said that, if we put the member in contact with him, he would happily return the wallet to him.

My understanding is that our member and his wallet have been reunited. Kudos to Mr. White.

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Mouse *continued from page 2*

crosoft has added more and smaller feet to ensure better performance with or without a mouse pad. A strain relief grommet has finally been added where the cord meets the mouse body: this was a major source of dead and erratic MS mice. The cord is also more pliable and about a foot shorter.

Ergonomic tips

A "meet the mouse" animated tutorial extols the virtues of its ergonomic design and of the controlling software. There are also some fairly sound tips on minimising hand, wrist, and arm discomfort when using the MS mouse.

All told I now like this new mouse. It took a while to come to appreciate the differences and advantages of the new mouse. I like the new mouse for the same reasons I liked the original "dove bar", only more so. Hopefully the new Microsoft Mouse Version 2.0 will be as reliable as its predecessor.

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Software library *continued from page 3*

stars. From the author of Sky-Globe.

- **FONT MONSTER v3.1:** Windows users were in luck with this powerful utility which allows preview, editing, printing etc. of TrueType and Type 1 fonts.

- **LASR-MAN v5.00:** For you DOS users with LaserJet or DeskJet printers, this package makes excellent use of your printer in a variety of ways.

- **SUMMER UTILITIES 93:**.Several utilities published by PC Magazine over the past few months were included on this disk.

- **SOLEAU GAMES #1:**.For those who enjoy logic games, Alphaman, 'BoloBox', and 'Miceman' were included on this disk.

As always, I welcome your suggestions for new software for our library. Call me at 723-1909, or meet me at the meeting.

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Computerese games, part 2

The following emoticons were published in the May *Ottawa PC News*, and you were asked to guess what they meant? (You have to tilt your head 90º to the left to see their shape). The answers are shown below, together with the corrected version of emoticons 2 and 8.

1.	*<:o)	clown
2.	*<:-)	Santa Claus
3.	+-(:-)	the Pope
4.	0-)	scuba diver
5.	0:-)	angel
6.	8-o	Mr. Bill
7.	8:-)	young girl
8.	<:-(	dunce

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Coming up *continued from page 4*

What is a project

As a computer instructor of project management software, I have found it necessary to teach both the process and the use of the software tool in the same class. That can be a challenge especially if the student has no experience with managing a project. It is also a challenge to show how the software fits within each organization's procedures.

"Despite the user's lack of project management knowledge, these products do help by forcing the user to think of tasks, show variances in advance of actual crises and show on paper what each person has to do to go from here to there," Wilson points out. "Showing a project outlined on paper complete with PERT and GANTT charts can also be a great selling tool."

One of my students, new to project management, noted, "With this kind of software, you have to be really organized!". Another student sitting beside her, who was experienced in project management, looked at me. We both smiled and said "That's what project management is all about."

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Understanding your system: part 1

by Eric Clyde

The advertisement for a computer may look like the following: 486DX-50MHz computer with 16MB RAM, 256K cache, a 500MB 11ms SCSI hard disk drive, with a 32bit EISA SCSI Controller, with SVGA non-interlaced video monitor and VL local bus video card with 1MB RAM.

What on earth does the alphabet soup mean and how is it important to you and what you want to do with your computer? The initial articles in this series will outline in brief the hardware; later articles will discuss software (programs, etc.) emphasizing the practical considerations.

Computer series

The IBM series of personal computers is based on a series of computer chips manufactured by the Intel Comporation. In order of power, and in historical order of introduction, these chips were designated the 8088, the 80286, the 80386DX (and the somewhat more limited 80386SX), the 80486DX (and the somwhat less powerful 80486SX and the more powerful 80486DX2), and, just coming out, the Pentium (80586). The most important difference between these chips is the width of the "bus path", the channel by means of which information is processed, expressed in "bits" (to be explained later). Up to and including the 80486 chip, each family member doubled the bus width of the preceding member. The 8088 chip can process 8 bits at once, the 80286 chip can handle 16 bits, the 80386 can handle 32 bits, and the 80486 can handle 64 bits at once. In principle, the 80286 is twice as fast as the 8088, the 80386 is four times as fast as the 8088, and the 80486 eight times as fast as the 8088. But in reality, they are much faster, because the computer chip speeds were increased as well.

Computing power

Computer chips are designed to run at a specific "clock speed", based on the number of vibrations per second of a quartz crystal (just as in a digital watch). The 8088 chip ran at 4.77 MHz (Megahertz = millions of cycles per second); the 80286 ran at 6 MHz (although it is possible to get higher speeds), and the more powerful chips can be obtained at various much higher speeds. Based on clock speed alone, the 80286 is about 1.25 times as fast as the 8088 chip (6/4.77). The increased bus width (16 bit as against 8) doubles the theoretical effective speed difference to 2.5 times. But beware, there are many other factors involved, some of which will be discussed in later articles.

The IBM PC and XT were based on the 8088 chip; the AT on the 80286 chip. More recently, computer designations have been made by dropping the "80" of the chip used, e.g. 486DX2 uses the 80486DX2 chip, etc.

Memory

The next parameter to be discussed is memory, also known as Random Access Memory or RAM. This is where computer does all of the work—the calculations for a spreadsheet, the sorting of a database, the spell checking of a document, etc. The different types of memory will be discussed in a later article. Suffice it to say at this point that, if you have a 386 computer or better, the more RAM you have, the faster your computer will operate. BUT this is only true if the program(s) you are using can make use of all of the available memory; many (usually older) programs can only make use of what is called "conventional" memory, i.e. 640K. If programs cannot make use of "expanded" or "extended" memory, they won't work any faster.

"Cache memory" is a buffer used to temporarily store data being read from or written to disk. This enables the computer to perform more efficiently, again speeding up operations.

To be continued next month. In the meantime, if you have any questions, bring them to the next Beginners' Group meeting or phone me at 749-2387.

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Ottawa PC News

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Deadline
Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month prior to publication.

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Group Meetings
OPCUG meets monthly except in June and July. Check the answering machine, the PUB and the newsletter for the date and place of each meeting. Meeting times are 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Membership fees
$25 per year

Disk-of-the-Month
$25 for 5.25 ins. diskettes and $35 per year for 3.5 ins. (for 10 diskettes)

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Play it again *continued from front page*

You can still let 'Band in a Box' perform the background instrumentation if you wish, but take the lead, Mr. keyboardist! Take the drums, too. Take it all!

Did you bobble a few notes? Go back in with 'Musicator' and fix it. You can use a wonderful reborn "piano roll" (with adjustable slots) to set the attack of any note! Use 'MusicTime' for scoring, 'Software Audio Workshop' for wave-form work. Awesome tools. Tools so powerful, in fact, that even the communications protocol that ties it all together--MIDI—is undergoing its first real upgrade in 10 years to expand and standardize its sound definition tables and double its channels to support 32 simultaneous instruments.

I suspect Keith was only half joking when he touted this system as "high-tech karaoke". Desktop publishing has given tyros the opportunity to flood our printing presses with an excrescence of jumbled fonts and bad art. So too can any powerful tool be misused. But powerful and useful tools also support those with talent and learning...and they enhance the learning process. With the tools available now, the home studio can be the wellspring of serious music, and can nurture serious musicians.

I wonder how many Glen Goulds there are at work right now in their basements? I'll bet you Glen would be one of them, had he lived to try this!

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Membership # *(if you are renewing)*

First name *Last name (please use caps.)*

Address *Apt. #*

City *Province* *Postal Code* *Country*

( ) *Home phone #* ( ) *Business phone #* ( ) *Fax #*

I use the following hardware: ☐ XT ☐ AT-286 ☐ 386 ☐ 486
(Check those that apply.) ☐ 300 baud modem ☐ 1200 baud modem
☐ VGA ☐ EGA ☐ Herc. ☐ 2400 baud modem ☐ 9600 baud modem

I use the following software:

I would like to help in the following club activities:
(Check those that apply.)

☐ Programming Instruction
☐ Hardware techniques
☐ Newsletter Input
☐ Software library
☐ Promotion/Publicity
☐ Bulletin Board
☐ Other .....

MEMBERSHIP FEE $ 25.00

Disk of the month subscription _____
($25/yr. for 5.25" or $35/yr for 3.5" 10 disks per year) _____

Cheque ☐ *Cash* ☐ TOTAL $ _____

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