

The key to good editing

Editing is *such* a chore. Never mind: Steven Helstrip has some tips to lighten the load. He's also been wiling away the hours discovering shortcuts in Cubase — cue Christmas!

E editing MIDI events has never been my favourite hobby, and neither is it ever likely to be. There are, however, a few tricks to make editing easier. The ones I'll describe here are demonstrated using the Key Editor in Cubase, but the same principles can be applied to any piano role-style editor. Also, I'll be counting down the Christmas Tips Chart, looking back at significant software developments in 1996, and writing out my wish-list for someone I stopped believing in when I heard Take That weren't getting back together: Santa Claus.

Easy editing

It's fair to say that piano role editors are mainly used for correcting start points and note lengths. When working with more than one track based on a similar idea, multiple tracks can be viewed simultaneously by highlighting them and opening the editor with Control-E. Clicking

on a note will make the part it belongs to active in the editor. Notes which do not belong to the same part are still visible, but are reduced in size. This method of editing makes it much easier to correct note lengths in relation to other parts, and is ideal for creating perfect velocity crossfades between two tracks.

The Key Editor in Cubase is also ideal for drawing and re-shaping volume and CC

curves. When it is necessary to, say, create a pattern of Continuous Controllers to effect the filter of an instrument, the bottom portion of the screen can be expanded and used to display CCs graphically. To enter CCs with the mouse, simply hold Alt while scribbling in the lower division of the screen.

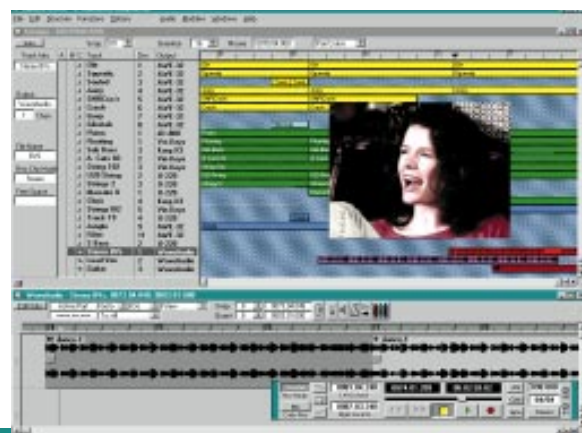
Entering semi-quavers, or other note lengths, on a single note can be achieved quickly using the brush tool. Select this from the toolbox, following a right click of the mouse button — particularly useful when building "cannon-fire" snare fills. The velocities of the part can then be faded using the gradient tool in the lower half of the screen.

Sequencers of note

Towards the end of 1995, Steinberg released Cubasis Audio, which created a new breed of application on the PC: the affordable audio

sequencer. Little over £250 bought you a miniature version of the industry standard sequencer, Cubase, and the ability to record up to four stereo tracks of digital audio sampled at CD-quality. What made this even more appealing was that no specialised hardware was required, just a plain and simple sound card. Within six months, practically every known sequencer was updated to support audio tracks.

Before Cubasis Audio arrived, a similar application would have set you back around £800. Of course, this left other sequencer developers no choice but to reduce their prices, which was good news for all of us. Earlier this year, Steinberg surprised us all



Above Version 3 of Cubase came as a pleasant surprise in 1996



Left Drawing and re-shaping volume and CC curves using Cubase's Key Editor

Cubase shortcuts chart

I've been having fun discovering new shortcuts in Cubase. And rather than just keep them to myself, I thought I would compile a Christmas 96 Top Ten Short Cuts Chart. You could have some fun over the festive season just trying to say it.

10. And straight in at ten this month, it's that old favourite, Control-Alt-P. This will swiftly position the left and right locators around a selected part, or parts, in the arrange or edit windows.
9. Climbing seven places, the asterisk key secures number nine. In a moment of inspiration, asterisk will kick Cubase straight into record mode.
8. At eight, it's Shift and PgUp/PgDn for the quickest way to fast forward and rewind through your tunes.
7. Down four places to seven is double click in the arrange window while holding shift. This will select every part on a given track.
6. A non-mover at six is Control-K, to copy parts.
5. At five, Control-Alt-Z will take you to the last part within an arrangement.
4. At four it's another Control-Alt key combination, this time with the letter I. This will hide/display the track info column, which is useful when you need to free up space on your screen.
3. A new entry at three is Alt and the Scissors Tool. When you need to splice a 16-bar part into, say, one-bar sections, hold down Alt while cutting within the first bar of the part. If you need to join the parts together again, this can be done while holding Alt and clicking with the glue tool.
2. Holding at number two this month, it's plain and simple G and H. These two keys enable you to zoom in and out of your arrangement on the horizontal axis. With Shift held down, you can zoom in and out on the vertical axis.
1. And finally, at the top of the Christmas Top Ten Short Cuts Chart, it's shift and function keys 2-12, which allows you to store current left and right locator positions. To recall the locators, simply recall the function key where it was stored.



Logic Audio for Windows 95 is a powerful application on high-end PC hardware

again when it released version 3 of Cubase. Not only was this the first major upgrade in what seemed an age, it came complete with a full-blown audio engine and 32-bit wave editing, all at no extra cost. Consequently, sequencing software fell in price again.

Another major event of the year was the release of Logic Audio for Windows 95. Logic hasn't been too successful on the PC, since it has always been a demanding application that only comes into its own when placed in complex MIDI setups and alongside pro audio hardware. As the Mac seems to have been graced with better audio hardware, it has attracted many Logic users. Now that more high-end hardware has become available, however, PCs that are equipped with Logic are better suited to power users.

Dear Santa...



Firstly, Santa, can you explain why Cubase now requires 12Mb of disc space just to install? Less than three years ago, I ran Cubase from a low-density floppy and still had enough space to save a handful of tunes. What's going on?

One of my least favourite pastimes is spending hours sifting through sampling CDs to find the right sounds or textures for the tracks I produce, so what I'd really like to find beneath the tree this year is the definitive sample collection. It should contain 30 or so snares, kicks and hats to match with warm pads and deep, fat basses that'll make any track rock. How about a belltree sample? They're nice this time of year. The CD should have no vocal hooks — they are *always* dreadful. After all, if somebody comes up with a half decent tune, why would they give it away for somebody else to exploit?

A 21in monitor would be nice, too. And a cordless mouse and keyboard. If the mouse never needed to be cleaned, that would be much appreciated.

And finally, Christmas wouldn't be the same without a Terry's Chocolate Orange. So if you don't mind. Cheers!

PCW Contacts

If you have any hints or tips, MIDI-related items or general comments, send them to the usual PCW address, or to steven_helstrip@pcw.ccmil.compuserve.com