

Tricks for kicks

Steven Helstrip stays on the beat with the second part of his drum workshop, examining the possibilities for kick drum patterns and providing advice on working with drum loops.

Following on from last month's Sound column, let's look further into the subject of drum production. Last month I focused on producing rhythm tracks, gave tips on how to make kick drums *really* kick, and ways to program interesting hi-hat patterns.

Following the pattern

Having looked at techniques for beefing-up kick drums, let's explore the possibilities for kick drum patterns.

The corresponding MIDI files have been provided on this month's cover-mounted CD-ROM in the sound\midi folder. The MIDI file for Fig 1 is named "fig1.mid" and so on.

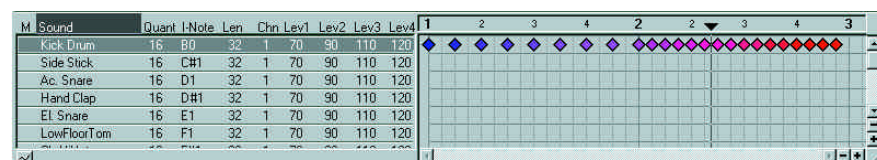
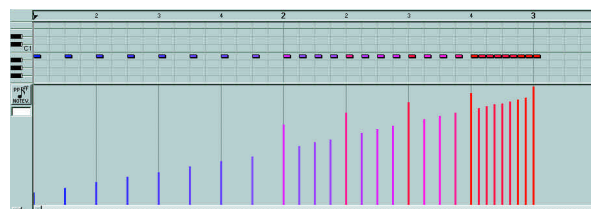


Fig 1 (above) Introduce semi-quavers in the penultimate bar

Fig 2 (right) Demi semi-quavers are introduced for greater intensity



The files can be imported, via the File menu, into any sequencer and edited further.

As a general rule, the kick drum's job is to establish the tempo of the track by

playing predominantly on the beat. Too much activity in the kick quarters can clutter up the bottom end, leaving little room for the bass to breathe. However, there are times when the kick can be used more creatively, most often to introduce a new musical phrase or section. Depending on the length and structure you are working to, this usually occurs at the end of an 8-, 16-, or 32-bar phrase.

It can also be effective to have an "event" to introduce the kick just before it comes in for the first time. For example, two bars before the kick comes in, try a pattern that fades in playing quavers, then introduce semi-quavers on the penultimate bar (Fig 1). This pattern is quite basic but, with a little imagination, can be developed. Depending on the style of track, you may want to use more, or fewer, notes.

Fig 2 shows a similar pattern, but this creates greater intensity because demi semi-quavers (or 32nd notes) are introduced on beat four of the second bar. There is also an accent on the beat throughout the second bar, which is shown more clearly in the piano role editor.

Experiment with these examples using a piano role-style editor by changing note velocities. For instance, try accenting the

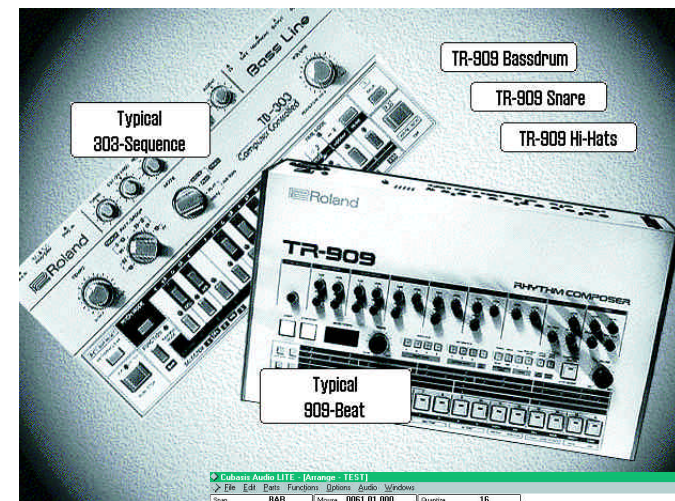


Fig 3 (left) Listen to the two most sought-after pieces of kit in the Dance Workshop: the TB303 and the TR909

Fig 4 (below) Cubasis Audio Lite's got 32 tracks and plenty of gizmos for easy sequencing

offbeat, moving or deleting notes. It is also worth experimenting with semi-quaver triplets, 16T.

The examples provided so far are only effective if used twice, or four times at the most, throughout the track. But variations can be used subtly at 16-bar intervals.

The "Fig3.mid" file (not shown here) because our pages aren't wide enough) plays a 32-bar pattern, with a two-bar lead-in. At the end of each 16-bar section there is an event, or fill. Additionally, each eight-bar section is introduced with an extra note on the offbeat of beat four. This MIDI file could be used as a rough template for the kick track when starting a new song.

Getting your kicks

■ When using a kick drum on its own MIDI channel, it is possible to use pitch bend to create a glissando effect when knocking out 16- or 32-note rhythms. Experiment with different pitch bend ranges to achieve various effects.

■ If you have an effects unit, try recording a single kick (at original pitch) with a heavy reverb. This can be used on beat number one of a 16- or 32-bar section in order to add impact.

If you do not have an effects unit, don't worry. There is a sample of a verbed-out kick in the samples folder of our CD-ROM, called verbkick.wav (a mono sample). There

are also two other kick drums to add to your collection.

Hit me with your rhythm tricks

When you are limited by equipment, it can be difficult to achieve professional-sounding rhythm tracks, so you should opt to use drum loops. When working with loops, however, you are restricted to the groove determined by the sample.

Cutting a one-bar loop into eight segments can provide more flexibility because you can play in your own groove. If the drum loop is sparse, it may be possible to chop out individual hits, like snare and hi-hats. This can be achieved using any wave editor, such as Wave Studio. Simply mark the section you would like as a new sample, press Control C and paste into a new file. With up to eight samples on different keys, you have the freedom to sequence new grooves, and even leave out instruments.

If you have an Akai sampler, an even easier way to do this is to get hold of Recycle (see "PCW Contacts", page 314). This program analyses drum loops, works out where the individual hits are and cuts them out (Fig 7). It then creates new key

Creative Essentials — House & Garage Construction

You rarely get change from £60 for a sampling CD, and not even at this high price can you guarantee high standards. So I was more than surprised when I listened to this new, budget, mixed-mode CD and found it to be right up there with the best as far as quality and consistency are concerned.



There are over 200 solid breaks, synth loops, stabs and basses in audio, .aif and .wav format, grouped by tempo from 120-160bpm. This CD is well-suited to those who work with audio-equipped sequencers, as many drum loops have been recorded in stages. For example: part one of a loop might consist of kick, closed hats and tambourine; part two introduces open hat, then snare.

The bass loops and arpeggios are well-produced and wouldn't sound out of place on today's dance floors. You also get multi-sampled pianos, organs and strings thrown in, plus 14 vocal samples.

For £20, this is truly one of the best value-for-money CDs I have come across. You can find seven samples from House & Garage Construction on this month's cover-mounted CD, in our Sound\samples folder.

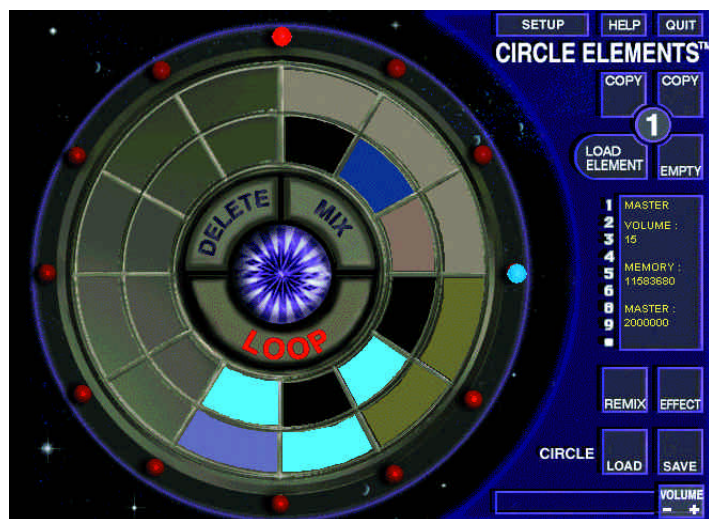


Fig 5 (left)

Arrange full-on dance tunes by loading musical phrases into the segments

Fig 6 (below)

I'm not sure about the name, but some of the effects are pretty good

track two for more musical elements.

Sound Lab Fun Tool enables you to add effects to wave files. These include sweeping filters, flanging, bass boosting and primitive time-stretching. Once you have achieved the desired effect, you can export the new file to, say, Circle Elements or Cubasis.

The music workshop begins to explain the basics of piecing together a dance track. There is a glossary of terms and nice photographs of the TB303 and TR909, as can be seen in Fig 3.

groups, assigns the new samples to them and sends them back to the sampler via SCSI. At the same time, a MIDI file is created to play the loop back in its original form. From then on, you can remove notes or create new grooves. It provides a lot of flexibility and is particularly useful for drum and bass tracks.

Big bundle for a thin wedge

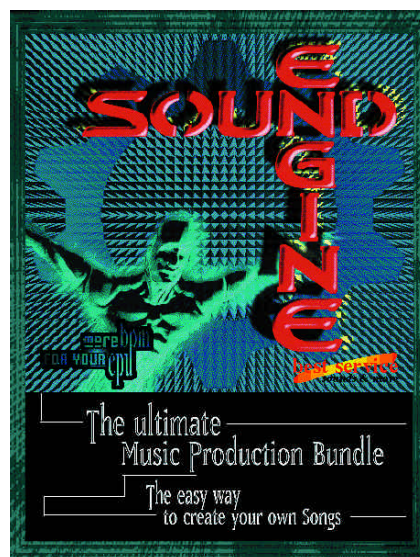
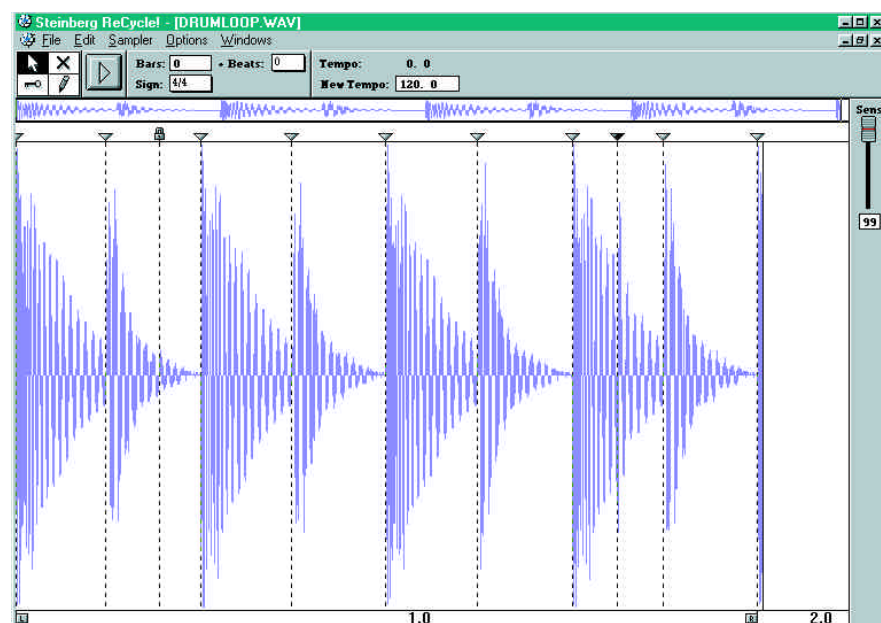
Sound Engine is a new, low-cost, software and sample bundle from Time + Space. A shade under 40 notes buys you a copy of Steinberg's Cubasis Audio Lite, Circle Elements, Sound Lab and a multimedia dance music workshop. You can choose any CD from the 30-strong Creative Essentials library — they normally sell at £19.95 each.

Although Cubasis Lite is a stripped-

down version of Cubase, it nevertheless has 32 tracks for sequencing MIDI and wave files and has grid and notation editors for fine-tuning your performances. Circle Elements is a sample-based sequencer which comes fully-armed with hundreds of pre-recorded musical phrases and drum loops. You need no musical knowledge to achieve results, as the phrases are grouped by tempo and work together in almost any combination. You only have two tracks to play with, but once you have a tune on the go you can mix them down onto one track, freeing up



Fig 7 Recycle analyses drum loops, finds the individual hits and cuts them out



PCW Contacts

If you have any hints or tips, MIDI-related items or general comments, contact **Steven Helstrip** at the usual PCW address or email him at sound@pcw.vnu.co.uk

Recycle is available from Harman Audio 0181 207 5050
Sound Engine £39.95 (incl. VAT), House & Garage Construction CD £19.95 (incl. VAT), both from Time + Space 01442 870681, fax 01442 877266, email sales@timespace.com; web www.timespace.com