MIX PUBLICATION

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REVIEWS First Take

You too can
crank out persuasive
percussive patterns
by the bucketful—
or rather, your
computer can.

DRUMBOX The CZ/ST Connection

BY DAVID SNOW

A vision of things to come:

It is morning, sweet and glorious, as sunlight filters through the pines and spreads across the rolling landscape of my estate. I am taking breakfast on the piazza, my only companions a copy of the Enquirer and a French poodle named Sasha. Perusing the "Arts and Leisure" section, I refrain from devouring my last bite of Twinkie long enough to scan the paper's review of my latest symphonic creation, "Poem of Near-Ecstacy, or At Least Feeling Real Good About Myself." The familiar hyperbole virtually leaps from the page: "...brilliant...magnificent...a work of profound, almost shocking originality and significance...worthy of Liberace."

Meanwhile, the PC in the music room is chugging out another masterpiece, running under my favorite algorithmic composer software, Opus 1 2 3.

I put down the paper and sigh. Ah, the good life...

While life may not be all poodles and Twinkies for most composers, the idea of

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cranking out chart busters by the bale is appealing, *especially* if it makes you rich. After all, music has as much to do with process as it does with sound, and any compositional process, even an automated one, is fine if it works for you.

The use of computers to generate musical material has been covered before in EM, usually with an apologetic note about randomness being no substitute for talent (sez who?). But I present you here with an unrepentant opportunity to explore the netherworld of creativity: Drumbox is a program written in ST BASIC that generates, plays, and sequences random rhythmic patterns on your CZ synthesizer, and—if you're not a purist—allows you to edit them to your heart's content. It owes a debt to Tim Ebling's Random Rhythms program (April '87 EM), and to Lucky Westfall's June '87 article on using the CZ-101 as a drum machine. Thanks, guys. This thing works! It's fun! It's musically useful...and it's free!

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Drumbox has three main modules:

✓ The *Randomizer* generates four-part polyphonic rhythmic patterns. Each pattern is divided into two to 16 pulses (a pulse is a beat or sub-beat, depending on how you hear it). Up to 20 different patterns can be generated and stored.

✓ The Editor allows alteration of the rhythmic or pitch content of each pattern.

✓ The Sequencer links patterns into sequences, and chains sequences into larger units; sequences can contain up to 16 patterns, and up to 20 sequences can be stored; chains can be up to 85 sequences long.

The degree of randomness for each of the four voices in each pattern is selectable and input as a percentage; only the rhythmic placement of notes or "hits" in each pattern is randomized. The default pitch for each hit is middle "C." Once a pattern is generated, it is displayed on the screen as a grid that can be edited and played back. Once modified to suit your taste, the pattern can be stored and incorporated into sequences.

BASIC isn't the language best suited to real-time tasks like MIDI sequencers since it can't deliver lightning speed. Even so, Drumbox performs quite well, since it limits its commands to note on/off commands on only four channels. Although unison hits won't be perfectly simultaneous, the effect is a natural one given the imprecision of live ensembles.

How It Works

Referring to the program listing in Fig. 1, here's the blow-by-blow description:

Lines 80 through 130 adjust the size of the output window, initialize variables, and set up arrays that store rhythmic patterns and sequences.

Lines 160 through 290 set up the

```
List of DRUMBOX. BAS
          *** ST DRUMBOX by David Snow ***
   20
   30
               THIS PROGRAM GENERATES AND EDITS
            SEQUENCES OF RANDOM RHYTHMIC PATTERNS,
   50
            AND PLAYS THEM ON MIDI CHANNELS 1 TO 4
   60
   70
          *** INITIALIZE VARIABLES ***
          option base 1: randomize (0)
   90
          dim array(20,4,16): dim seq(20,16)
   100
          a#=qb: qintin=peek(a#+8): qintout=peek(a#+12)
   110
          addrin=peek(a#+16): b#=addrin: c#=gintin+4
          tempo=150
   120
          width(80): fullw 2
   140
          *** MAIN MENU ***
   150
          title#=" ST DRUMBOX ": gosub 2100
   160
          clearw 2: gotoxy 0,3
          ? tab(34); "1. RANDOMIZE"
?: ? tab(34); "2. EDIT
?: ? tab(34); "3. SEQUENCE"
   180
   190
   200
          ?: ? tab(34); "4. SET TEMPO:"
?: ? tab(38); "(1-50)"
   210
   220
          ?: ? tab(38); "[";int(50-(tempo-50)/10);"]"
   230
          gotoxy 17,16: input "OPTION: ",option$
   240
          if option$="1" then 380
    250
          if option$="2" then 1540
          if option$="3" then 710
          if option$="4" then 310
   290
          goto 170
    290
   300
          *** SET TEMPO ***
   310
          gotoxy 18,13: ? "
   320
          gotoxy 17,13: input tempo$
    330
          if len(tempo$)=0 then 170
    350
          if val(tempo$)>50 then 170
    360
          tempo=10*(50-(val(tempo$)))+50: goto 170
    370
          *** RANDOMIZE RHYTHMIC PATTERN ***
    380
          title$="RANDOMIZER": gosub 2100
          clearw 2: gotoxy 8,8 input "STARTING AT WHICH PATTERN NUMBER (1-20)? ",pattern
    400
    410
          if pattern<1 or pattern>20 then 400
    420
          for pattern=pattern to 20
          titles="RANDOMIZER": gosub 2100
clearw 2:gotoxy 15,1: ? "PATTERN NUMBER";pattern
?:? " NUMBER OF PULSES (2-16) ";
    440
    450
    460
           input "[HIT 'RETURN' FOR MENU]: ",n$
          if len(n$)=0 then 150
    480
          n=val(n$): if n<2 or n>16 then 450
    490
               " FROBABILITY OF HIT (1-100):"
          ?: for track=1 to 4
? tab(32); "TRACK";track;
    510
    520
          input "= ",prob
    530
           if prob>100 then 520
    540
           if n(16 then array(pattern,1,n+1)=129
           for pulse=1 to n
    540
           rand=int(rnd*100)+1
    570
           if rand<=prob then array(pattern, track, pulse)=60
    580
    590
           if rand>prob then array(pattern, track, pulse)=128
    ADD
          next pulse
    610
          next track
    620
          gosub 1720
    630
    640
           **** EDIT/SAVE DIALOG BOX ***
           poke gintin,1: option$="[2]K;Edit pattern?;]KEDIT;SAVE;RETRY]
    650
           poke b#, varptr(option$): gemsys(52): p=peek(gintout)
    660
           if p=1 then gosub 1970: goto 640
    670
           if p=3 then 440
    680
    690
           next pattern
    700
           *** SEQUENCER ***
    710
           on error goto 2150
    730
           title$="SEQUENCER": gosub 2100
           clearw 2: gotoxy 0,0
    740
    750
           *** SEQUENCER DIALOG BOX 1 ***
    760
           poke gintin, 3
           option$="[2][ A: CREATE SEQUENCES:B: CREATE SEQUENCE CHAINS
    780
           option$=option$ + ":C: QUIT TO MENU: IE A ! B ! C ]"
    790
           poke b#, varptr(option$): gemsys(52): p=peek(gintout)
    800
           if p=2 then 1190
           if \rho=3 then 150
           clearw 2: gotoxy 8,8
```

FIG. 1: Program listing for "Drumbox."

menu from which all program functions are accessible.

The tempo-setting routine in lines 320 through 360 calculates a variable which is used in a delay loop in the playback routine.

The randomizer starting at line 410 initially asks for an identifier number from 1 to 20 to give the first pattern to be generated. As each pattern is produced, edited, and stored, the number increments automatically, up to 20. Lines 460 to 470 ask for the number of pulses the pattern will have, then lines 510 to 610 ask for the probability (0 to 100%) of a hit for each of the four parts. A random number from 1 to 100 is generated for each pulse of each track, and if that number is less than or equal to the probability entered for that track, the pulse is recorded as a hit, and given the default pitch value of 60 (middle "C"). If the random number is greater than the probability, it is given the value of 128, which the playback routine interprets as a rest. These values are used so that you can edit the pitch to any valid MIDI note from 0 to 127.

Starting at 840, the sequencer asks for an initial sequence number (1-20) which is incremented as each sequence is stored. In line 950 you input a string containing the numbers of the patterns you want in your sequence. To make the string simple for the program to interpret and to keep it legible, each number is entered as two digits separated by a space or any other character (e.g., 02 04 04 11 12...). Each sequence string can contain up to 16 patterns and can either be stored or written over, but not edited.

At line 1270 you enter a string containing the numbers of the sequences that you wish to chain together. The sequence chain can consist of up to 85 sequences, since a string has a maximum length of 255 characters.

Lines 1430 to 1520 comprise the play-back routine. For each pulse in the pattern to be played, the array element corresponding to that pulse in each track is examined. If the value of that element is less than 128, it is valid MIDI pitch data and is output to the synthesizer in line 1460. If it equals 128, then it is a rest; if it equals 129, it is an end-of-line marker indicating that the pattern has fewer than 16 pulses and is finished. After the pulse data is examined, a delay loop in line 1500 creates a pause dependent upon the value of the tempo variable. After the

pause, the next pulse is examined and so on, until the end of the pattern.

Line 1470 is an optional note-off command for each hit. Percussive synthesizer patches with no sustain don't require it, and since we want to speed things up as much as possible, it's desirable to omit it.

The commands in lines 980, 1300, and 1920 turn off the ST's GEM interface. This is done to speed up data output during playback, and to enable the keyboard buffer-checking routine in lines 1020, 1350, and 1940. As the program is configured, if a key is pressed during playback, playback will be terminated at the end of the current pattern. If GEM were left on while the program was running, it would "steal" the data in the buffer before the program could get to it, and the program would never know that a key had been pressed. GEM must be turned on again in lines 1050, 1380, and 1950 to resume normal operation.

A grid display of each rhythmic pattern is constructed in lines 1760 to 1900, showing the position and pitch value of each hit. Rests are depicted as blank

Lines 2110 to 2130 identify the current program function in the output window's title bar so you know what's going

Lines 2160 to 2180 catch sequencerstring entry errors so that the program doesn't come to a grinding halt if you mis-type.

TYPING IT IN

This is a long program, and the possibility of entering a typo is great. Save the program to disk before you run it. The worst that can happen with an ordinary BASIC program with a bug is that it just stops or won't run if you attempt to run it. Unfortunately, Drumbox uses AES (Applications Environment Services) routines to draw dialog boxes which, if mis-typed, can cause crashes and force you to reset the machine.

The following comments should clarify most typing questions:

- ✓ Line 320: The characters between the quote marks are a space, two underlines (shifted dash), and two spaces.
- ✓ Line 650: The characters between the quotes must be typed in exactly as written. Note the use of square brackets. The vertical lines around the words (solid

```
input "STARTING AT WHICH SEQUENCE NUMBER? (1-20) ", m
850
      if m<1 or m>20 then 830
      ?: ? " EACH SEQUENCE MAY CONTAIN NO MORE THAN 16 PATTERNS."
?: ? " ENTER PATTERNS BY NUMBER (1-20)";
870
880
       ? " [HIT 'RETURN' FOR MENU]:"
      ?: ? " (Use 2-digit format with spaces between ";
      ? "numbers [e.g. 02 02 11 08...])"
n=77: border$=string$(n,"_"): ? border$
920
930
      for m=m to 20
?: ? " SEQUENCE NUMBER";m
950
       ?: input sequence$
      if len(sequence$)=0 then 150
940
970
       if len(sequence$)>48 then sequence$=left$(sequence$,48)
       poke systab+24,1
990
       for e=1 to len(sequence$) step 3
      pattern=val(mid$(sequence$,e,2))
1000
1010
      gosub 1430
       if inp(-2)<>0 then 1040
1020
      next e: goto 1050
1040
       j=inp(2): if inp(-2)<>0 then 1040
       poke systab+24,0
1050
1050
1070
      *** SEQUENCER DIALOG BOX 2 ***
      poke gintin, 1
1090
       option#="[211:Save sequence?:ICSAVE:RETRY]"
1100
       poke b#,varptr(option$): gemsys(52): p=peek(gintout)
      if p=2 them 950
1110
1130
       for f=1 to len(sequence$) step 3
1140
       seq(m,e)=val(mid$(sequence$,f,2))
1150
      e=e+1: next f
      if e<17 then seq(m,e)=0
1160
1170
      next m
1180
      *** CHAIN SEQUENCES ***
1200 clearw 2: gotoxy 0.0
1210 ?: ? " ENTER SEQUENCES BY NUMBER (1-20) ";
1220 ? "CHIT 'RETURN' FOR MENU]: "
               (Use 2-digit format with spaces between ";
1230
      ? "numbers [e.g. 02 02 11 08...])"
?: ? " (Enter '*' to repeat previous chain of sequences.)
1250
      n=77: border$=string$(n,"_"): ? border$
?: input chain$: if len(chain$)=0 then 150
1260
1270
1280
      if chain$="*" then chain$=old$
1290
1300
      old$=chain$
      poke systab+24,1
1310 for g=1 to len(chain$) step 3
1320 for e=1 to 16
1330
      pattern=seq(val(mid$(chain$,g,2)),e)
1340
      if pattern>0 then gosub 1420 else goto 1370
1350
      if inp(-2)<>0 them 1380
1360
      next e
1370
      next g: goto 1390
      j=inp(2): if inp(-2)<>0 then 1380
1380
1390
       poke systab+24,0
1400
      goto 1270
1410
       *** PLAY RHYTHMIC PATTERN ***
1430
      for pulse=1 to 16
      for track=1 to 4
1440
      if array(pattern, track, pulse)>127 then 1480
       out(3), track+143: out(3), array(pattern, track, pulse): out(3),64
1470
       '(OPTIONAL NOTE OFF)out(3), array(pattern, track, pulse): out(3), O
1480
      if array(pattern, track, pulse)=129 then 1520
1490
      next track
      for delay=1 to tempo: next delay
1510
      next pulse
1520
       return
1530
       '*** EDIT ***
1550 title#="EDITOR": gosub 2100
1560 clearw 2: gotoxy 0,8
1570 ? * ENTER PATTERN NUMBER TO EDIT (1-20) *;
1580
      input "[HIT 'RETURN' FOR MENU]: ",pattern$
1590
      if len(pattern$)=0 then 150
1600
       if val(pattern$)>20 then 1560 else pattern=val(pattern$)
1610
      for n=1 to 16
      if array(pattern,1,n)=129 then 1640
1620
1630 next n
1640
       n=n-1: gosub 1720
1650
1640
       *** EDITOR DIALOG BOX ***
1670 poke gintin,1: option$="[2][ {Edit pattern?} ][EDIT; SAVE]
```

```
1680 poke b#, varptr(option$): gemsys(52): p=peek(gintout)
1690 if p=1 then gosub 1970: goto 1660
1700 goto 1560
1710
1720 '*** DISPLAY RHYTHM GRID ***
1730 title$="EDITOR": gosub 2100
1740 clearw 2: gotoxy 17,1: ? "PATTERN"; pattern
1750 ?:? "
               PULSE:";tab(14);
1760
      for pulse=1 to n
1770
     hit$=right$(str$(pulse),2)
? hit$;" ";: next pulse
1780
      border$=string$(13+n*4,"_")
1790
1800
       ?: ? border$
       for track=1 to 4
1810
1820
            TRACK"; track; tab(13); "; ";
       for pulse=1 to n
1830
      hits=rights(strs(array(pattern, track, pulse)),3)
      if val(hit$)>127 then hit$=" "
if len(hit$)<3 then hit$=" "+hit$
1850
1860
       ? hit$;: ?"!";
1870
1880
      next pulse
       ?: next track
1900
       ? border$
      gotoxy 0,11: ? * [HIT 'RETURN' TO STOP PLAY]"
1910
1920 poke systab+24.1
1930
      gosub 1420
1940
      if inp(-2)<>-1 then 1930
1950
       j=inp(2): if inp(-2) \Leftrightarrow 0 then 1950
1960
     poke systab+24,0: return
  gotoxy 0,11: ? " TRACK TO EDIT (1-4) ";
       portoxy 0,11: ? " TRACK TO EDIT (1-4) ";
input "[HIT 'RETURN' TO START/STOP PLAY]: ",track$
if track$<>"" then 2010
1970
1980
1990
2000 goto 1920
      if val(track$)>4 or val(track$)<1 then 1920
?:?" PULSE TO EDIT ( 1 -";n;")"; :input pulse
2010
2030 if pulse>n or pulse<1 then 2020
2040 ?: input " ENTER PITCH NUMBER (0-127) OR REST (*): ",pitch$
2050 if pitch$="*" then pitch$="128"
2060
       if val(pitch$)>128 then 2040
2070
      array(pattern, val(track$), pulse)=val(pitch$)
2080
       goto 1730
2090
       **** OUTPUT-WINDOW TITLE ***
2100
2110 title$~title$+chr$(0)
2120
       poke gintin, peek (systab+8): poke gintin+2,2
2130
       poke c#, varptr(title$): gemsys(105): return
2140
2150
      *** ERROR TRAP ***
2160 poke systab+24,0
2170 ? " >>>ERROR IN SEQUENCER ENTRY<<<*
2180 resume 950
```

lines on the screen, broken when printed) "|Edit Pattern?|," and between the words "EDIT|SAVE|RETRY" are typed by shifting the back slash key, which is to the right of the RETURN key.

✓ Lines 780 to 790 and line 1090: See the comments for line 650 above.

✓ Line 1470: This line is printed as a REMark statement, and will not be executed when the program is run unless the apostrophe and the characters "(OPTIONAL NOTE OFF)" are deleted. Type it in as written for now.

✓ Line 1670: See the comment for line 650 above.

✓ Line 1750: There are three spaces before the word "PULSE."

✓ Line 1780: There are two spaces between quotes.

✓ Line 1820: There are two spaces before the word "TRACK." The vertical line

in quotes at the end of the line is a shifted back slash.

✓ Line 1850: There are three spaces between quotes.

✓ Line 1870: The vertical line in quotes is a shifted back slash.

USING DRUMBOX

Typing the listing is the hard part, but the program is simple to use. It was written on a 1040ST monochrome system, though there shouldn't be any resolution problems running it in color. I don't know whether it is necessary to turn off buffered graphics on a 520ST with 512K of RAM in order to conserve memory.

The first thing to do is to set your synthesizer to Mono mode on channels 1 to 4 (refer to your owner's manual, or re-read "Casio's New Drum Machine—

The CZ-101?" in June's **EM**). Assign patches with contrasting timbres and no sustain to the four channels. **Fig. 2** includes a good selection of patches by a variety of authors to get you started.

Load BASIC from your language disk and run Drumbox. You first need to generate some patterns, so enter option 1, Randomize. You will be asked to enter a number from 1 to 20 to assign the first pattern. If you're starting a session, enter 1. If you have already generated a few patterns and then quit to the main menu in order to edit, enter the number where you left off. You will then be asked to enter the number of pulses you want for the pattern, and the probability of a hit for each of the four tracks. The pattern is then generated and the screen displays a grid that shows the relative position of each hit with its MIDI pitch value. The synth will play the pattern over and over until you hit a key, and a dialog box asks if you wish to edit, save, or re-try. If you click the mouse pointer on SAVE, the pattern is stored and the entry process repeats for the next pattern. If you click on RE-TRY, a new pattern will be written over the current one.

To edit, click on the EDIT box, or hit the RETURN or ENTER keys. You will be asked for the track and pulse you wish to change, and the new pitch value. Enter a value from 0 to 127 for a hit, or "*" for a rest. The grid will be redrawn and the pattern played until a key is hit, and the dialog box again asks for your next move.

Once you have saved some patterns to your liking, return to the main menu and select option 3: SEQUENCER. Click the mouse on box "A," type the numbers of the patterns you wish to link together in the format indicated, and hit ENTER or RETURN. The sequence will play and you will be given the option to save it or try again.

When you have assembled some sequences, return to the menu and select option 3 again, but click on box "B" to create chains of sequences. Type the numbers of the sequences you wish to chain and hit ENTER or RETURN.

Don't move the mouse while patterns are playing, since the mouse interface generates interrupts that slow down the program.

Playback can be interrupted at any time by hitting a key. It will terminate at the end of the current pattern.

To set your tempo, select option 4

from the menu and enter any value from 1 (slow) to 50 (fast).

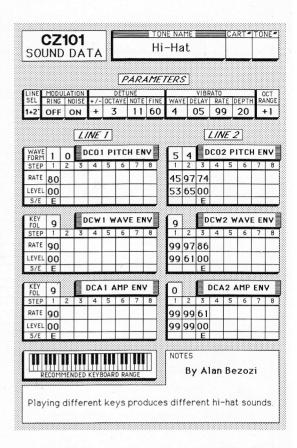
FINAL MUSINGS

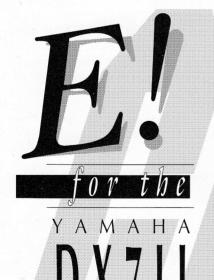
You may find that in order to get the most satisfying results, the more pulses you assign to a pattern, the lower the overall range of hit probability should be. A 16pulse pattern seems to work best with probabilities in the range of 15 to 45, while an eight-pulse pattern works better in a 35 to 65 range. You can assign 100% probability to a track in order to get hits on every pulse, or 0 to leave a track blank. Patterns longer than 16 pulses can be made by sequencing two or more shorter patterns together. Changing the patches assigned to each voice can alter the character of a rhythm radically. There are more possibilities than you've got days to live. Experiment!

The implications of randomness are fascinating. If you put 100 monkeys on 100 STs, the chances are that one of them would come up with Varese's "Ionization." I wonder how Edgar would have felt about that?

Note:

The following pages contain patch sheets of some tested and recommended drum sounds for the Casio CZ-101. These can be used as they are, or can provide excellent starting points for developing distinctive drum sounds for your own CZ percussion library. Blank, fullsized versions of these patch sheets were provided in the November, 1987 issue of Electronic Musician. While the author designed the Drumbox program with the CZ-101 in mind, any synthesizer with multi-timbral capability and at least four voices could be used in place of the Casio, offering an endless number of musical variations.





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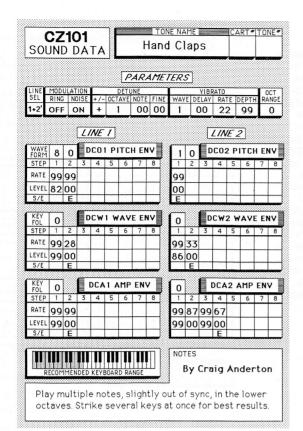
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		LI	NE	1						Ī.	<u> </u>	<u>IE 2</u>	2		
WAVE FORM 5	2	D	COI	PI	TC	H EN	v	1	0	D	co:	2 P	ITC	H E	٩V
STEP 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
RATE 9	40	100						99	40						
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