

Intelligent Music Upbeat 2.0

BILLED AS "The Real-Time Rhythm Sequencer," UpBeat essentially offers the drum machine programmer a Macintosh-based visual editor that can be applied directly to any MIDI-compatible drum machine. UpBeat takes over the sequencing duties while firing internal sounds from your machine. Rev. 2.0 offers interesting additions to this useful program.

Computer-Aided Drumming.

Like most drum machines, UpBeat works with patterns and songs. Performance events can be programmed into patterns by

The screenshot displays the Yamaha Disklavier software interface. At the top, there are control buttons for 'PLAY', 'CONT', 'REC', and a 'SP-12' button. Below these, the 'First Verse B' piano roll is visible, showing a sequence of notes and rests for various instruments including kick, snare, closed hat, mid hat, open hat, tom 1, tom 2, tom 3, tom 4, ride, perc 1, crash, and claps. The piano roll has a time axis from 0 to 16 bars. To the right of the piano roll is a track list titled 'EQ Blues'. The track list includes tracks for 'First Verse C', 'Second Verse A', 'Second Verse B', 'Second Verse C', 'Second Verse D', 'Bridge 1', 'Bridge 2', 'Chorus A', 'Intro B', 'First Verse A', 'First Verse B' (highlighted), 'Bridge 1', 'Chorus D', and 'Chorus A'. Each track has a 'Ptn' (Pattern) and a 'Repeat' count. The 'First Verse B' track is currently selected, and its pattern is 'Ptn x 2'.

MIDI messages or by "painting" the attacks into a grid. After a series of patterns are created, they can be dragged into a song window for continuous play. In this respect, the program is like a "remote control" programmer.

UpBeat provides several powerful tools that can be called into play to alter, adjust, or enhance your creative output. Any individual event or group of events can be edited with respect to their position in the measure, attack velocity, and duration. In addition, events can be cut, copied, and pasted with a flexible variety of approaches.

If you think this is a neat idea, wait until you hear what happens when you start using

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the “intelligent” goodies included in the program. For instance, UpBeat can generate its own random fills with the option of constraining or controlling parameters such as instrument, velocity, rhythm, and frequency.

New Features. The COUNTER window now contains two memory marker locations, a pre-count button, and a provision for tapping in a tempo. The TOOL palette contains new tools that let you paint in rests, loops, or even program change messages (very cool). The new audible WRENCH lets you hear single events while grabbing them for editing, and the MIDI-TO-MOUSE step-time recording tool lets you play MIDI events and place them graphically with a single mouse click.

Rev. 2 has significant enhancements over the original. The most important is the increase, within each pattern, from 32 monophonic tracks to 128 polyphonic tracks. This creates one *monster* rhythm computer, making it easy to arrange drum sounds spanning your studio's multiple instruments—including drum machines, synths, and samplers—into a single pattern. The maximum number of measures available in a pattern also has increased from 75 to 999.

Each UpBeat track is typically assigned a

Description: Computer-assisted drum scoring software for Macintosh.

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MIDI channel and note number. Another new feature gives you the ability to overcome the 128 track/note limit by defining several MIDI note numbers to be available within a single track. This way, you might name a track something like “All D-110 Toms.” Abbreviated indicators (S:1, S:2, S:3, etc.) show which sound corresponds to a given event. Each track will hold 128 different sounds. If there are more than 16,384 drum sounds in your life, see a therapist.

Without a doubt, the hippest new toy is the FOLLOW feature. When UpBeat creates fills on a track with FOLLOW enabled, the program “looks backward” up to eight events, and generates fills with notes that occurred in the recent past. Since UpBeat works equally well with synthesizers (firing pitches instead of drum sounds), this little trick can transform a fairly basic melody or bass line into something interesting and unique.

External Communications. UpBeat 2.0 is not an island. It can act as the master clock or slave to MIDI (MIDI Time Code isn't sup-

ported). It also has a very flexible MIDI File implementation. Patterns, songs, and performances with their accompanying variations can be exported to a MIDI File. While UpBeat can't read Format I MIDI Files (multiple channels, multiple tracks), the program does import Format 0 files (multiple channels, single track) into patterns. UpBeat had no trouble importing a 12-track MIDI File from Mark of the Unicorn's Performer; once imported and massaged, a full performance was captured and exported back into the original program. UpBeat is now compatible with Apple Computer's MIDI Manager.

Documentation. The manual is a pleasure and is thoroughly indexed. Even though some features are a bit tough to grasp at first, the tutorials and usage hints provide for a pleasant learning experience.

Conclusions. If you like drum machine programming, UpBeat will increase your enjoyment. If you hate to program, UpBeat may be your salvation. If you don't own a drum machine, UpBeat will transform your Mac and a multi-timbral sound module into one of the hippest machines on the block. When you consider all this program can do for the price, it's a good deal.

—Norm Weinberg