

SERGE MODULAR MUSIC SYSTEMS

Musician's Tape Notes - Page #1

The original intention in presenting this cassette tape was to allow those who had no access to a Serge synthesizer the opportunity to hear its qualities -- qualities that just cannot be described by words in the Data Sheets. Since all of our sales are direct (we don't sell our instruments through local retail stores), it sometimes is difficult for a person to evaluate the merits of such a sophisticated musical instrument. Since 1974 the Serge Synthesizer System has presented a certain appeal to the artist and musician because it has features like no other electronic instrument. In the tradition of the classical studio synthesizer found in many electronic music studios, recording studios and universities, the Serge synthesizer uses patchcords to connect the various modules to produce the electronic sounds, but it uses many unique designs for signal processing and controlling patterns of sound (music, when the pattern's right).

Keyboard controlled synthesizers are now everywhere. These instruments borrowed a few standard "patches" from the modular synthesizer and built them around an organ-type keyboard. While the widespread use of these instruments has made the electronic synthesizer a little more familiar, there is still a vast range of possibilities that cannot be covered by these dedicated, though sophisticated, instruments. It is common to hear the words VCF, VCA, VCO in music stores, but the Wave Multiplier, the Analog Shift Register, and Dual Universal Slope Generator, after years of use, are still relatively unknown module concepts to the average synthesist. The demonstrations planned for this tape were to have made these functions more well known, and possibly, would have shown their usefulness to a group of musicians for the first time.

This tape was to have been in two sections. One section was to have employed the standard announcer proclaiming "...and this is the sound of the Wave Multiplier", then a short demonstration of some of the sounds available with the device. In conjunction with these short aural demonstrations of many of our unique modules, we requested short musical sections from those using our equipment. We ended up receiving so much music covering so many different styles, that it was quite difficult to select a few short examples from so much good music. It was finally realized that the entire point we were trying to get across was covered quite explicitly in the music submitted for this tape. After all, the synthesizer only generates sound, it does not (as some would have you believe) synthesize music. The musician is the one who best demonstrates the potential of the instrument, so we are quite excited to be able to present to you this incredible sampling of music by those who use the Serge Modular Synthesizer System. Here are the Musician's Tapes.

Darrel Johansen
Serge Modular
May 1983

* THE MUSICIAN'S TAPES *
* SIDE 1 (36:45) *

You want, maybe, something a little intense diatonic?
By Warren Burt.

(September 25, 1982), section from
"STUDIES (1982) for Synthesizer".
Scarlet Aardvark Tapes. (2:04)

"15 step sequence tuned to Ptolemy's Intense Diatonic -- a just intonation C Major scale. Changing rhythmic sampling routines result in harmonies. Timbre: traditional VCO-VCA-VCF patches.

"This piece is made up of 17 sections, each 2 minutes long. Each section was made on a combined Serge-Driscoll-Aardvark synthesizer, and each uses different tuning, timbral, and rhythmic ideas. Each section was made in real time, or some multiple of real time, and was made using various automated and interactively performed processes. No traditional keyboard was used in making the piece and often the only performing done was to start and stop the process in motion. The sections are formally more complex than the monolithic blocks of sound one usually associates with such processes, however, and it was one of the aims of the piece to give each section a fairly intricate formal structure while still using these processes. My prime aim in making the piece was to stretch my use of the synthesizer into areas I knew were possible, but which I had not yet explored. These explorations will hopefully serve as the basis for some future work.

"Technical concerns catapulted this piece into being, and if parts of it swing, that swing is probably a by-product of the intense delight I felt in exploring these materials for the first time.... (the) pieces can be listened to in many different ways, and the delights available in any one way of listening do not necessarily cancel out or make inferior the delights made available by listening in other ways. I simply ask you to listen, and if the piece makes you curious enough to start any exploration of your own, it will have been more than successful."

Esso Commercial by Broadscore. (c)
(1980) Jill Fraser and Elizabeth Myers
POB 2252
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

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#5 by Michael Elliot. (2:03)
15502 SE 25th
Bellevue, WA 98007

"A drum rhythm exercise, after attending a Blackfoot festival. When hearing the drums, my wife said all that was missing was the coyotes...."

"...Several of these pieces began as exercises.....I included them anyway, due to the pleasant surprise of discovering some musical value in what began as an exercise or improvisations, the latter being an area that is largely unexplored in 'studio' synthesizers, and an area in which the Serge system excels..."

Suburban Dream Music by Scot Gresham-Lancaster. (2:14)
Casio keyboard processed through Serge synthesizer.

"Did you ever dream you were in a shopping mall and didn't have your pants on?"

Scot is currently technical director at the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College, and actively composing and performing throughout the SF Bay Area.

Official Entry by David Stilley. (4:31)
Piece commissioned by Cabrillo College Music Festival.

Auroramor (excerpt) by Roger Powell.

(c) 1983 Cybersound Music
(2:07) Rhinebeat Research
POB 328
Rhinebeck, NY 12572

Personnel:

Piano and Serge Synthesizer - Roger Powell
Guitar - Andrea Cairo
Engineer - Paul Antonell

"Except for Piano and Electronic Guitar, all sounds were created on the Serge Modular Synthesizer, and recorded at 30 ips without noise reduction on an AMPEX 16-track deck. Outboard processing included a LEXICON Prime Time, AKG BX-10 Reverberator, and (very little) equalization provided within the APSI mixing board modules. No other equipment was used to make this recording - a testimonial to the versatility of the Serge System. Several tracks were synchronized during overdubbing by using basic modules in the Serge to first generate a clock signal of periodic, tempo-multiple tone bursts which were then read back off the tape by the Slope Generator module and converted to clock pulses used to drive the sequencer and envelope generators. The Touch Keyboard Sequencer was used to trigger other non-automated sounds. The Wave Multiplier module and the unique Serge filters were used often and impart, I believe, audio characteristics that are unachievable on other systems, especially in the area of non-linear waveshaping techniques.

"Although no computers were used in the taped excerpt, I frequently use an APPLE II with my own composition language, TEXTURE, to control multiple synthesizer voices during the development and realization of synthesizer-based pieces."

Roger Powell's solo recordings include two albums of synthesizer music: COSMIC FURNACE, Atlantic Records (1973 release), and AIR POCKET, Bearsville Records (1980 release). He has recorded and toured with the band UTOPIA for the past nine years and worked with David Bowie during his 1978 world tour.

Untitled (excerpt) by Earl Howard. (6:00)

Big Mama by Rick Blanchard. Rubber Logic Sampler
(2:44) POB 205 (c) 1982
Volcano, CA 95689.

Killer Didjeridoo by Todd Barton.
(1:25) (c) (TP) Todd Barton 1982
c/o Oregon Shakespearean Festival Association
POB 158
Ashland, OR 97520

"All of the sounds were created on a small 'standard' system... (this cut was) produced without multi-tracking, i.e. these are all pure, single-event Serge sounds... Many of these pieces appear in the upcoming pilot of the National Science Fiction Radio Theater out of Los Angeles."

Todd Barton is an active Composer and is the Music Director of the Oregon Shakespearean Festival Association.

He is Come by Planetary Peace. (1:15)
POB 1573
Taos, NM 87571

"When we do our recordings, our approach is to blend together electronic, acoustic, and vocals... We went back to our original tapes and extracted those instrumental backups and accompaniments to songs which were done exclusively with the Serge. Many of these songs used acoustic instruments as well in the creation of the instrumental aspect of a song, and these too were eliminated. So, the sounds... are completely Serge system created.

"All the rhythms in the songs are seven beats per measure and are made automatically in realtime (not multi-tracked) by DSG (Dual Slope Generator) clicks thru keyboard voltage controlled VCF's (Variable 'Q' VC Filters)."

Sequence '82 by David Vosh with Jack Deckard. (4:08)
6300 Goldenrod Court
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

"On this piece we used objects sonore generated by both Serge's with the addition of a few twittering background notes done with a Casio M-10."

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Santur Opera (excerpt from live performance) by Ivan Tcherepnin. (74:12)

"Santur Opera is without text, without singers and played entirely on the Santur (a Persian zither) and realized with the aid of an electronic synthesizer built by Mr. Tcherepnin's brother, Serge, and associated electronic instruments built by David Wilson. The word "opera" is used to suggest the presence of an unfolding drama during the improvised performance.

"Depiction of the topsy-turvy world of SANTUR OPERA is facilitated by Serge Synthesizer Modules: sequenced oscillators keeping the world a-ticking; and the slews: 'Running Slew', 'Rising Slew', 'Slow Slew', 'Hand Slew', and 'Wandering Slew'; all basically functioning as subharmonic generators from an independently controlled Master Oscillator (the New Timbral Oscillator, naturally!).

"'The Army and the Chase' (the section from Santur Opera on this tape) makes use of voltage controlled Wilson Analog Delay, along with a tabla patch on the synthesizer which is directly dependent on each nuance of the performer's play. There are two envelope followers for the Santur: one for the voltage controlled filter, and one for the Negative Slew which controls the rate of the Negative Slew driving the Gate."

Ivan Tcherepnin was born in 1943. He studied with his father Alexander Tcherepnin, and with Leon Kirchner. He presently teaches music at Harvard University, where he also supervises the operations of the Electronic Music Studio.

Papoon for President by Kevin Braheny.
(72:04)
Heartcall Music
POB 3565
Santa Monica, CA 90403

All sounds done in real time with the mighty Serge.

THE MUSICIAN'S TAPES
SIDE 2 (37:07)

Toto, I've a Feeling We're Not in Kansas Anymore
by Michael Stearns. (73:24)

(c) Phonogram Tapes available through:
Continuum Montage
3107-B Pico Blvd.
Santa Monica, CA 90405
(213) 828-0830

All instrumentation done with the Serge. Cassette tapes of Michael's recordings, as well as other artists are available from the above address.

"Neither a 'pop' musician nor a member of the Terry Riley/Philip Glass minimalist school, Michael Stearns - composer, performer, producer and recording artist - is one of the creators of a new genre of music that has been flowering in all corners of the globe since the early '70s.

"'People use all kinds of names for this music,' Stearns says. 'Some call it meditative, transformational, or cosmic music. Others call it New Age or Space music. What we are talking about here is a world music. The music emerges from all cultures of the world and uses all of the instruments - acoustic and electronic - as well as newly innovated instruments and tuning systems. It includes sounds both human and mechanical and, of course, the sounds of nature - ocean, wind, rain, animals, etc.'"

"Since 1977, he has recorded four major compositions: Planetary Unfolding (1981), Morning Jewel (1979), Sustaining Cylinders (with Gary David), Sleeping Conches (1978), and Ancient Leaves (1977). On the basis of these albums alone, Michael Stearns has established himself as one of the foremost creators of visionary synthesizer music in the world today.

"'The intent of my music is quite different from the intent of commercial music', said Stearns. 'I don't perform, not in the usual sense of the word. In fact, I remove myself as the focal point of the audience's energy. I don't write attention-grabbing hooks, nor do I write music that promulgates or reacts against established forms and cultural values. Instead I create a sustained, alternative context, a life-affirming texture in which there are many melodies. In that context, which is totally open, listeners can hear whatever they want to hear, dream whatever they want to dream. They can guide themselves, using their own power to create their own visions and personal inner musics.'"

Notes by Lee Underwood.

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Butch the Dog by Eric Drew Feldman. (6:24)

"Many Serge modules were used in, on and through this composition. The percussion track was generated by rhythmic subdivision using a Dual Slope Generator and a Dual Transient Generator with Extended ADSR's. A MiniMoog was used for the 'bass' and it as well as a Casio M-10 and MT-30 were processed through various Serge signal processing modules, including Variable 'Q' and Variable Slope Filters, Wave Multipliers, and Resonant EQ's. Also used were Precision VCO's and New Timbral Oscillators, a Noise Source, and a Touch Activated Keyboard Sequencer."

Eric Feldman has played keyboards, synthesizers and bass with Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band since 1976, appearing on the albums 'Shiny Beast (Bat Chain Puller)', 'Doc at the Radar Station', and 'Ice Cream for Crow'. He has played with Snakefinger and co-produced the album 'Manual of Errors' on Ralph Records.

He can be reached c/o Serge Modular
572 Haight Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Untitled by Tom Dill. (3:42)

Back Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 - Third Movement
excerpt from "Sonic Sensations II"
(5:22) by Brad Slocum.
810 Ladis Ct.
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

Serge System with Casio 202 and Serge Modular N-Voice Controller (Casio Keyboard Interface).

Moto Perpetuo by Darrel Johansen. (1:42)

"This piece is a realization of a short piece written by Elliot Carter for four tympani. Each instrument is of fixed pitch, and the regular meter was an ideal test of a computer rhythm controller I developed. The triggers were used to initiate the percussive 'voices' patched on the Serge synthesizer. The entire score was loaded into computer memory, and then 'played' without human intervention. In addition, various timbral and spatial parameters were controlled manually and automatically. The piece is performed live."

Darrel Johansen is the manager of a firm specializing in electronic musical instruments and other diversions.

The Works (excerpt) by Alvin Curran. (3:00)

Anagenic (excerpt) by John Wiggins. (5:30)
J.S. Wiggins Productions
15 Reservoir Avenue
Northport, L.I., NY 11768

"...a section from my second cassette 'Anagenic' which will be available in the summer ('83). My first cassette 'Tuned Space' is doing very well, thanks in large part to you, my instrument builder. Although the piece uses other sounds, the base of all my work is my Serge (6 panel) with my studio built around it and one of my computers dedicated to controlling. All the sounds were either totally created or processed through my system..."

Her Blade by Easy Teeth. (c) Dental Records 1980
(7:21) 11340 W. Olympic Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Personnel: Serge Synthesizer - Paul Young
and Steiner E.V.I.
Drums and Synares - Robert Williams

Paul Young is known affectionately among his friends as 'X!&-/(!'. When not at the ballpark, racetrack or sushi bar, Mr. Young spends much of his time creating electronic masterpieces at his luxurious, private 8-track recording studio and attending to his trilobites. He has scored pieces for the Mary Jane Eisenburg Dance Company in Los Angeles and for other dance companies in Los Angeles and New York.

In his spare time, Mr. Young lifts equipment for himself and others.

Meerstille by John Adams. (4:00)
(c) 1983 by Associated Music Publisher

Music from the film "Matter of Heart", a documentary about C.G. Jung.
Serge Synthesizer with orchestra.