
About This Issue

It was inevitable. Moore's Law, which describes an exponential increase in computer processing power, has turned the commodity computer into a digital audio workstation. The contemporaneous boom of the World Wide Web and computer games has made the multimedia-equipped personal computer something of an essential appliance for many consumers. As a result, a sizable portion of the general population now owns potential electronic music studios. Moreover, software tools that were once unknown outside research centers—"Music N" languages, additive and granular synthesis, the phase vocoder, and physical models, to name but a few—are now embedded in commercial or widely distributed shareware packages.

This ubiquity of digital audio technology is not without aesthetic outcomes. Practitioners of the art documented in *Computer Music Journal* could once rely on the technology's obscurity to circumscribe our field as an esoteric, scholarly pursuit. Computer music was generally considered a branch of "serious" 20th-century music, and it took some effort to explain our endeavors to the layperson. These days, the general populace has more than an inkling of what the term "computer music" might mean, but academia and high art are largely absent from that picture. Popular music—today's embodiment of a vernacular tradition undoubtedly as old as civilization—has spawned its

own genres of electronic and computer music, most of them falling under the umbrella term "electronica."

The editors of this journal have no intention of changing the publication's artistic focus, but we do deem it useful for academic electroacoustic composers to keep abreast of trends with technology in popular music, not only to foster communication in the classroom, but also to be cognizant of a larger societal context in which one's music might be apprehended. Three articles in this issue of the *Journal* offer glimpses of that context. Joel Chadabe's opening essay examines relationships between the elite and popular traditions in music, and points to interactive performance software as a tool for the democratization of high art. Kim Cascone discusses the "glitch" or "noise" movement in avant-garde popular music, outlining some of its historical precursors in serious music. Mr. Cascone interprets the glitch movement's focus on acoustic detritus in terms reminiscent of Gestalt psychology. Finally, Emmanuelle Loubet delineates recent trends in Japan, where Western art forms seem to tumble, fragment, and recombine in a cultural kaleidoscope, with little concern for any dichotomy between popular and serious music.

Kim Cascone also served as curator for the annual audio compact disc that accompanies this issue. Thirty-five composers, including well-known names like DJ Spooky, contributed one-minute examples of

the musical style described in Mr. Cascone's article. The CD also contains unrelated excerpts that illustrate articles from recent issues, including music by Trevor Wishart and Horacio Vaggione.

Also included in this issue are two articles on other topics. David Evan Jones describes his Counterpoint Assistant (CPA) software, a composer's tool that computes all possible combinations of contrapuntal lines given one or more initial lines and various constraints. CPA is not an implementation of textbook species counterpoint; rather, it is well suited to atonal music. The article by Roberto Bresin and Anders Friberg continues a theme from recent issues of the *Journal*: the use, in performance, of expressive deviations from the nominal values prescribed by the score. The authors have derived rules by which such deviations tend to evoke discrete emotions. These rules can, of course, be applied to automated performances of scores and to algorithmic composition.

Supplementing his roles as an author and curator for this issue, Kim Cascone dons his reviewer's hat to critique a book on techno music. This issue also includes no less than ten reviews of compact discs (most of which bear little audible relation to this issue's theme), as well as three conference reviews and a report on the Finale 2000 notation software. In a final nod toward the topic of electronica, the Products of Interest section starts with an item on Sonic Foundry's Acid Pro software.

Front cover: Techno composer Nobukazu Takemura at work in his Kyoto studio. (Photo by Tsuyuko Aki.)

Back cover: Part of a screen image from the Products of Interest section of this issue.