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Electronic
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SEPTEMBER 1986

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Do it Yourself

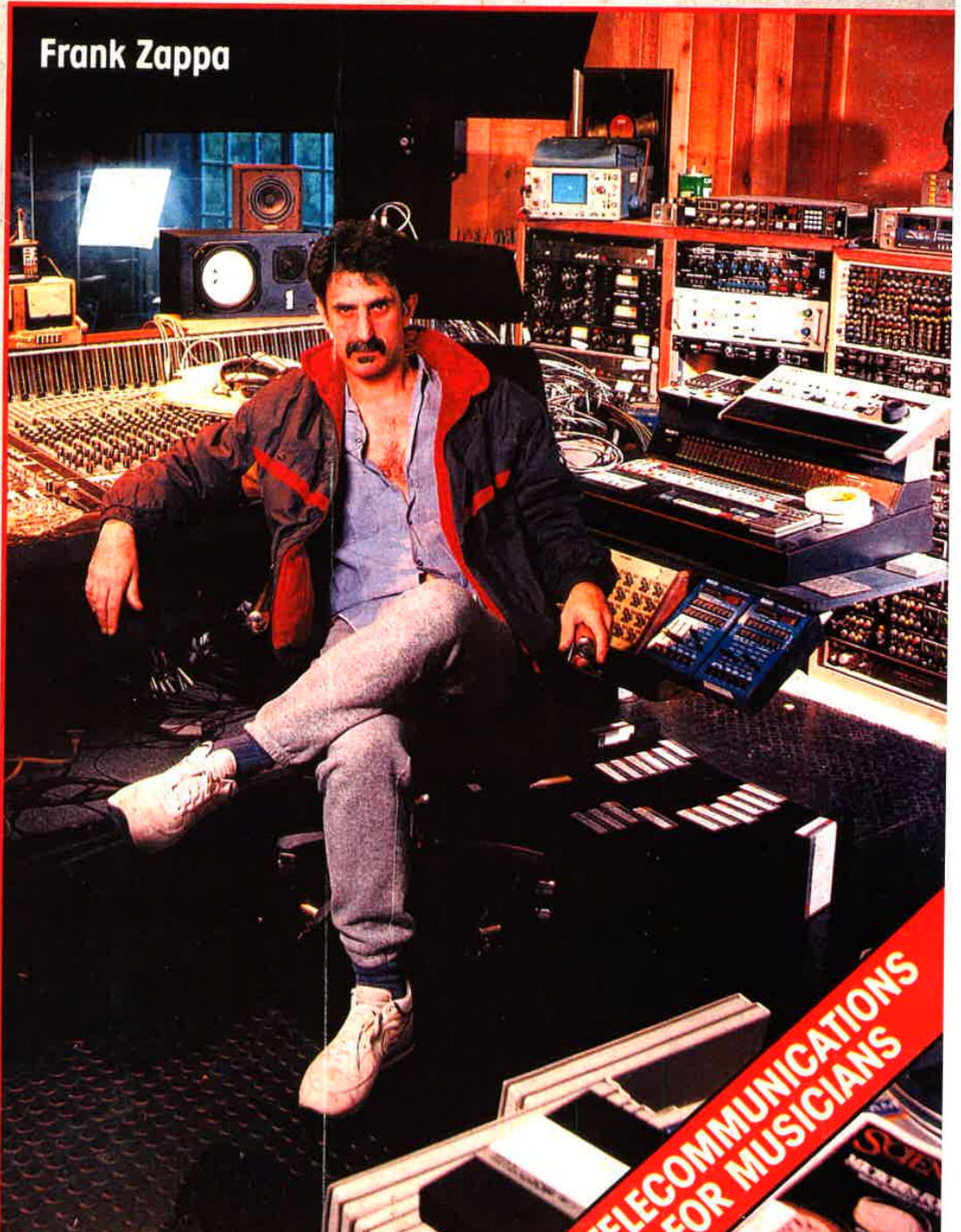MIDI Data Display Software, SCI DrumTraks Mods, Program Stepper

Basics:
Music Software

Discover the different types of programs that make music with personal computers.

Reviews:
Yamaha DX100, Roland MKS20, Performer Software

Frank Zappa

TELECOMMUNICATIONS FOR MUSICIANS

themselves in an enviable position, for by making suggestions and discussing issues directly with the very people responsible for much of what is currently on the market, PAN users are able to directly make an impact on the future of MIDI technology. On-line beta-testing and de-bugging of new products is common-place, as are advisories and file exchanges of new software revisions.

With over 150 of its 1,000 plus mem-bers calling in every day from Japan alone, combined with a multi-megabyte data-base, PAN has taken a big step towards centralizing the international synth and MIDI community into an "electronic city," accessible from anywhere in the world, and at any time of the day or night.

A special membership sign-up (which costs $150) is required to access this system, plus fees for connect time rang-ing from $24/hour during business hours to $12/hour for evenings, weekends and holidays. For further information, please contact PAN at 215/489-4640, or write to: The PAN Network, P.O. Box 162, Skip-pack, PA 19474.

Perry Leopold spent several years as a touring singer/songwriter. He started PAN in 1981 and, despite having no previous -experience in computers, computerized the network in 1983.

Synth-Bank: The Ultimate Patch Library

BY BRYAN BELL

Synth-Bank is a software database that includes a public domain library featur-ing the latest sound files from major key-board manufacturers, an on-line shop-ping service where users can purchase specific sound files created by popular artists and programmers, and a third area dedicated to sampling keyboards. This area consists of sounds and sound effects oriented toward production houses and film scoring applications. Although Synth-Bank is designed to be portable to more than one host system, the initial offering will be configured as a complete SIG (spe-cial interest group) on the musical net-work PAN.

Being part of PAN allows for electron-ic mail between members, conferencing, databases, and the shopping area (to pur-chase sound patches). For a limited time only, Synth-Bank membership will be available for $50. This includes a PAN membership (a $150 value) to qualified

professionals. There will be no Synth-Bank charges (other than normal PAN connect charges) for the downloading of the public domain sound files.

The sound files for the non-sampling keyboards will be stored in Opcode's Patch Librarian format and will be priced roughly at a dollar per sound (i.e. 32 DX7 sounds for $30). The sampling keyboard files will be stored in Sound Designer format and will be based on a sliding scale from $15 to $30. High end synths such as the Fairlight and Synclavier will have sounds stored in their own format and cost anywhere from $30 to $150 (for lenghthier samples.)

I started Synth-Bank to provide a serv-ice, and a common meeting ground, to all sides of the music industry. I wanted to help musicians organize and standardize their methods for trading and selling their sounds. I have seen the frustration of many major artists pouring hours and hours into programming a synth when all they needed was a sound slightly better than stock; now they can dial up Synth-Bank and download an acceptable sound within minutes. Another end user will be small production studios that cannot af-ford to maintain a sound effects library. If they need something specific (even 24 hours a day)—a car crash or a helicopter, they can dial up and download into, say, a stock Mirage. Amateurs who are out of touch with the entertainment industry, and hungry for the latest sounds, are also potential users—as are pro players who are too busy recording and touring to learn how to program different synths from scratch. And of course, manufac-turers can use Synth-Bank to distribute their latest sound files and software up-dates to qualified users.

To join up, contact Bill Hartman in the Los Angeles office (7731 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90046; tel. 213/876-8609) or Bryan Bell on-line (PAN: SYNTH-BANK, IMC: BELL-US, CIS: 76327.3041, The Well: BBELL, MCI: SYNTH-BANK). We will mail you a signup package along with a PAN membership access code. Then simply log onto PAN and send a mail message to the Synth-Bank ID and say "I want to join." We then flag your ID for immediate access into Synth-Bank.

Concerning the future, I believe the real value of telecommunications to the artist is as an archive of important data. It is a hassle to bring all of your backup files on the road with you at all times; it's easier to download your backup files from a host system anywhere in the world—24 hours a day.

However, the single most exciting as-

pect to me is that telcom opens up the entire global community as a single re-source—crossing economic, political, and racial barriers. Before you had to know someone in order to hear their work. Now, via telcom, you can get the best from Australia, Europe, Japan, and North America—all with a local phone call!

Bryan Bell is an engineer/producer/pro-grammer who specializes in live sound mixing and high-tech instrument design. Over the last 11 years he has worked with Herbie Hancock, Santana, John McLaugh-lin, Al DiMeola, and many others.

Synth-Net and MIDI-Connection: Tech Support for the Working Musician

BY GARY ROTTGER

As someone who has been involved in computers and electronic music since 1980, I've always felt a need for like-minded musicians in this field to ex-change information and ideas in this ever-growing MIDI wonderland. This led to my starting Synth-Net, a telecommuni-cations network geared specifically to-wards electronic musicians.

Synth-Net offers a wealth of informa-tion ranging from DX7 patches and Emu-lator II samples to direct correspondance with Fairlight Instruments in Australia. The sign-up fee is $200, and total connect time costs $16.50 per hour; there are no surcharges for downloading synth patch-es, samples, or any other type of data.

Synth-Net caters to a clientele of working musicians who use this type of new technology in the recording indus-try. Anyone using the system with a par-ticular technical problem or question can usually find another Synth-Net member who has had a similar problem and can recommend a solution. However, on-line is not the only place Synth-Net provides technical help to its subscribers. A unique attribute of Synth-Net compared to simi-lar networks is that almost all of the equip-ment discussed on-line is in use on a daily basis in Synth-Net's own pre-pro-duction room; a Synth-Net staff member is literally able to walk into the next room to research a detailed question about a certain keyboard or computer.

The ability to answer technical ques-