

TRANSONIQ HACKER

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SCSI Arrives for the EPS

by Craig Anderton

Recently a friend of mine from Ensoniq, who knows that I've been using the EPS heavily the past few months, asked if I wanted to get a look at their OEX-8 output expander (which had just been released) and SCSI hard disk (which is not yet available as of this writing). Of course I said yes, and figured that dedicated Hacker readers would probably be interested too, so here's the scoop so far.

The OEX-8 output expander adds eight individual outputs to the EPS. (Of course, the two existing outputs can also be used as solo outs by panning signals full left or right.) Each output can carry as little as a single note from a single Wavesample, to polyphony from a complete Instrument. If you think about it (and remember you have 20 voices to spread among those eight outputs), the possibilities are really pretty staggering. (Next stop: more mixer inputs and patch cords - there's no use having eight separate outputs unless you can use them.)

The SCSI port, with its implication of adding a hard disk for ultra-fast data transfer to and from non-volatile storage, is probably the item of greatest interest if for no other reason than for its inherent tech-appeal. Although hard disks are not exactly trouble-free, there is a precedent for using them with music gear; E-mu put a lot of effort into integrating hard disks with their samplers, and the results have been amazingly reliable.

What a hard disk delivers is speed, storage, and convenience. You can store almost 90,000 blocks in a 44 megabyte drive (and over a *quarter million* blocks in a 140 MB drive), and thanks to SCSI (a high-speed computer interface used in the Macintosh and other computers), the load and save times are exceptionally fast. It takes but a few seconds to load an entire disk into memory; with shorter sounds, the data is loaded before you know it.

The basic organizational unit is the *directory*, which can hold up to 38 files. However, any of these files can be a sub-directory, which holds another 38 files, of which any one can be a sub-directory...you get the idea. Suffice it to say you'll run out of memory before you run out of files; basically, any and all files can be directories or sub-directories. This works very much like the way "folders" do on a Macintosh.

Ensoniq has tested the following drives and found them to work with the EPS: Jasmine DirectDrive 45/70, Rodime 60plus and 140plus, General Computer Hyperdrive FX/20, Mass Micro 30, and Microtech 90. If you already have a hard drive for your Mac, don't expect to be able to use it with the EPS as is. The formatting for an EPS and Macintosh drive is completely different, so you can't share a hard drive between an EPS and Mac. You really need to dedicate a drive to the EPS.

Another problem is that no "E-Z-backup" software is complete yet; you'll have to scrupulously back up your floppies. As the manual points out, the hard disk *will* fail and you *will* lose all your work - this is guaranteed. The only question is when the inevitable crash will occur (hopefully later rather than sooner, but flukes can and do

In This Issue...

MIRAGE:

- Yamaha WX7 and the Mirage
Philip Rosine.....15
- Review: The Lush Disk
Steven Fox.....17
- The Mirage Sequencer
Ernie Mansfield.....18

ESQ-1/ SQ-80:

- ESQ Practice Hints
Chris Barth.....7
- Review: SQ-80 Essential 1 (VSD-2)
Jim Lammers.....9
- Review: Valhala's ES1 Librarian
Wayne Dooley.....10
- All About Modulation
Jim Johnson.....11

- Hackerpatch
Sam Mims & Contributors.....20

EPS:

- SCSI Arrives for the EPS
Craig Anderton.....Cover
- Of Instruments and Layers
Clark Salisbury.....6
- The EPS as a Drum Machine
Garth Hjelte.....13
- Yet More EPS as a Drum Machine
Steven Fox.....14

GENERAL:

- Random Notes.....3
- Hypersoniq.....3
- Classifieds.....22
- The Interface.....23