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Composing Digital Music

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About the Author

Russell Dean Vines is a music industry veteran, with more than 40 years of experience as a bandleader, sideman, composer, arranger, clinician, lecturer, and consultant.

Russ started music lessons as soon as he entered elementary school, eventually studying violin, French horn, guitar, piano, tenor saxophone, and his primary instrument, bass. He decided to become a professional musician when he was in middle school. While attending a dinner show at John Ascuaga's Nugget in Sparks, Nevada, Russ realized that the tuxedo-clad musicians in the house orchestra dressed better and probably earned more than the hard-scrabble ranchers he'd grown up among throughout the West.

At age 13, he booked his first gig, in a biker roadhouse in Reno, playing bass alongside one of the rare female baritone vocalists who could also play barrelhouse piano, and a little person on drums. Russ's featured solo consisted of blowing bubbles with a straw in a glass of water, improvising on the theme from the TV show *Flipper*. The gig paid more than his paper route and made it possible for Russ to buy cutout records on sale at the local Western Auto store. There he discovered the music of multi-instrumentalist Roland Kirk (pre-Rahsaan) and bassist Charles Mingus. The adolescent Russ found their music weird but appealing.

Down Beat magazine awarded the young bassist/composer a Hall of Fame scholarship to Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he studied with Charlie Mariano, Major (Mule) Holley, Herb Pomeroy, John LaPorta, and others. Russ learned many valuable lessons, such as:

- * Don't accept a gig at a joint that has chicken-wire surrounding the bandstand.
- * Playing outside has nothing to do with the weather.
- * It's a mistake to leave your ax onstage between sets, because it could be in the pawnshop before you get back.

Having absorbed too much information in Boston, Russ returned to Reno, where he performed as a sideman in Reno nightspots, working with well-known entertainers including George Benson; John Denver; Sammy Davis, Jr.; and Dean Martin. For several years he played electric bass and was an orchestrator for *Hello, Hollywood, Hello*, at the MGM Grand.

Russ also worked in small towns throughout Nevada as an artist in residence for the National Endowment for the Arts. The "residence" part sometimes consisted of an elderly single-wide situated between a town's legal brothel and its liquor store.

He has composed and arranged hundreds of pieces of jazz and contemporary music that were recorded and performed by his own big band and others; founded and managed a scholastic music publishing company; and adjudicated performances at student festivals.

Always interested in digital music, Russ was able to put theory into practice when he taught himself to use a New England Digital Synclavier II, owned by Swami Kriyananda. His compositions on the Synclavier, as well as pieces written for more traditional instruments, are captured on the 1983 album *Gemini*, by Russ Vines and the Contemporary Music Ensemble. The recording was chosen as an Album of Exceptional Merit by *Billboard* magazine.

After moving to New York, Russ worked as a systems consultant for Sony BMG Music Entertainment, CBS/Fox Video, and others. He holds a gaggle of computer certifications and is now an internationally recognized authority on computer security. He is the author of ten best-selling information system security texts, including the top-selling *The CISSP Prep Guide: Mastering the Ten Domains of Computer Security* (Wiley), which reached #25 on Amazon.com and was on the site's Hot 100 list for four months.

Russ is now chief security advisor to Gotham Technology Group and writes frequently for online technical magazines, such as *The Wall Street Journal Online*, *TechTarget.com*, and *SearchSecurity.com*. He also writes on a variety of subjects, including fast cars and fun gadgets, for Jim Cramer's *TheStreet.com*.

Dedication

To Elzy. Forever.

Author's Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all the software, hardware, and music vendors that contributed to this book. Without their contributions, I would not have been able to provide as comprehensive a look at the current state of digital music.

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Contents at a Glance

.....

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: So You Want to Compose Digital Music</i>	9
Chapter 1: Introducing Digital Music	11
Chapter 2: The Digital Music Revolution.....	23
Chapter 3: Music Notation Basics	47
<i>Part II: Gearing Up</i>	63
Chapter 4: Digital Composing Hardware	65
Chapter 5: Getting Cool Gear	79
Chapter 6: The World of Music Software.....	89
<i>Part III: The Basics: Building Your First Tune</i>	113
Chapter 7: Instant Music: Using the Templates.....	115
Chapter 8: To Live and Burn in L.A.: Output 101	137
Chapter 9: Sharing the Love: Internet Publishing	155
<i>Part IV: Getting Fancy: Building Your Tune from Scratch</i>	163
Chapter 10: What's the Score? Creating Your Score Paper	165
Chapter 11: No-Frills Notes: Basic Note Entry	193
Chapter 12: Composing with Your Instrument	211
Chapter 13: Keep the Beat: Adding the Drum Part	231
<i>Part V: Beyond the Basics: Advanced Composing Tips and Tricks</i>	245
Chapter 14: Spice Is Nice: Marking Up Your Score.....	247
Chapter 15: You're a Real Composer Now.....	269
Chapter 16: Fine-Tuning the Mix: Playback Options	281
<i>Part VI: The Part of Tens</i>	293
Chapter 17: Ten Digital Music Terms You Should Know	295
Chapter 18: Ten (Or So) Composers You Should Know	303
Chapter 19: Ten (Or So) Sibelius Tips and Tricks	311

<i>Part VII: Appendixes</i>	321
Appendix A: Common Instrument Ranges	323
Appendix B: About the CD	335
<i>Index</i>	341

Table of Contents

.....

***Introduction*..... 1**

About This Book.....	1
Conventions Used in This Book.....	2
What You're Not to Read.....	2
Foolish Assumptions.....	3
How This Book Is Organized.....	3
Part I: So You Want to Compose Digital Music.....	4
Part II: Gearing Up.....	4
Part III: The Basics: Building Your First Tune.....	4
Part IV: Getting Fancy: Building Your Tune from Scratch.....	5
Part V: Beyond the Basics: Advanced Composing Tips and Tricks.....	5
Part VI: The Part of Tens.....	5
Part VII: Appendixes.....	6
The CD-ROM.....	6
Icons Used in This Book.....	6
Where to Go from Here.....	7

***Part I: So You Want to Compose Digital Music*..... 9**

Chapter 1: Introducing Digital Music..... 11

What Is Digital Music Anyway?.....	12
Knowing What Equipment to Get.....	13
What you need.....	14
What you'll want.....	16
Getting Started with a Composition.....	16
Burning your tunes.....	17
Publishing your stuff.....	17
Look, Ma — No Hands! Composing from Scratch.....	18
Taking Your Music to the Next Level.....	19

Chapter 2: The Digital Music Revolution..... 23

Music Goes Digital.....	23
How the bits become notes.....	24
It's all software all the time.....	25
Who Does What in the Music Biz.....	27
The creators.....	27
The performers.....	28
The producers and engineers.....	30
The suits: Business and management roles.....	31

Your Role as a Digital Musician	32
The art of the record deal	32
Promoting your tunes on the Web	36
Working in the digital music business	39
At the Barricades: Talking to Some of the People at the Forefront of the Revolution	39
Morton Subotnick	39
James Bernard	41
Meshell Ndegeocello	42
Tom Salta	43
Howard Johnson	44
Chapter 3: Music Notation Basics	47
The Four Main Elements of Musical Notation	47
Pitch	48
Duration	48
Expression	49
Articulation	50
The Parts of a Music Score	51
The staff	51
Ledger lines	52
Clef	53
Tablature	55
The key signature	55
The time signature	57
Bar lines	58
Other elements	58
Part II: Gearing Up	63
Chapter 4: Digital Composing Hardware	65
Getting Your Computer Ready	65
What you need: The minimum setup	66
What you'll want	67
Composing with MIDI Instruments	71
Playing with keyboard controllers	72
Composing with guitar	75
Composing with bass	76
Chapter 5: Getting Cool Gear	79
Using All-in-One Music Centers	80
Ready-built music computers	80
Stand-alone music workstations	81
Computer recording systems	84

Super MIDI Modules.....	85
Sound modules and modular synths	85
Drum machines and weird controllers	86
Chapter 6: The World of Music Software89
Identifying the Main Types of Digital Music Software	89
Composing with Musical Notation Software.....	90
Finally Finale	91
Sibelius: It's not just a Finnish composer.....	92
Digital Audio Workstations	93
Cross-platform software: Windows or Mac	94
Windows-only software	94
Mac-only software	98
Other Great Software.....	100
Reason	100
Ableton Live	102
Sound Forge	102
Software Samplers.....	104
GigaStudio	105
KONTAKT	105
HALion	105
REAKTOR.....	106
SampleTank	107
Playing with Plug-ins.....	107
ABSYNTH.....	108
BATTERY.....	109
FM8	110
Kinetic	111
 Part III: The Basics: Building Your First Tune	 113
Chapter 7: Instant Music: Using the Templates115
Setting Up Your Composing Software.....	115
Installing the demo software.....	115
Starting Sibelius.....	116
Setting your playback	117
Using the music templates	118
Opening My New Tune	118
Building Your Tune	121
Adding the rhythm guitar part	124
Adding the lead guitar part.....	127
Thumpin' the drums	130
Changing the notes	134

Chapter 8: To Live and Burn in L.A.: Output 101137

Outputting Your Audio	137
Burning CDs	140
Podcasting.....	141
Making your own ringtones	142
Outputting Your Music to Other Formats	144
ASCII TAB	144
Graphics	145
MIDI	146
Manuscript paper	149
Printing Your Music	150
Printing the score.....	150
Extracting the parts for others to play.....	151

Chapter 9: Sharing the Love: Internet Publishing155

Weighing Your Publishing Options	155
Scorch	156
Indie publishing.....	157
Looking at Copyright Issues	158
Registering your music with the U.S Copyright Office	159
Communing with Creative Commons	160
Making sure you don't infringe on someone else's copyright.....	160

Part IV: Getting Fancy: Building Your Tune from Scratch* 163*Chapter 10: What's the Score? Creating Your Score Paper165**

Choosing the Manuscript Paper.....	166
Picking your score paper.....	166
Working with ready-made formats	172
Changing Your Score.....	178
Changing the tempo	178
Adding or deleting instruments.....	180

Chapter 11: No-Frills Notes: Basic Note Entry193

Entering Notes with the Mouse.....	194
Adding Text and Lines	199
Getting fancy with bar lines	199
Hairpins	203
Entering Other Types of Text	204
Free text.....	204
Tempo text	204
Editing text	205

Chapter 12: Composing with Your Instrument 211

Entering Notes with a MIDI Keyboard Controller	211
Attaching the controller	212
Step-time input: Inputting notes and chords into your score one at a time	213
Flexi-time input	216
Entering Notes with a Guitar	218
Connecting your guitar	219
Recording your part	220
Scanning Music Using PhotoScore	225

Chapter 13: Keep the Beat: Adding the Drum Part 231

Looking At the Four Ways to Write a Drum Part	231
Writing a New Drum Part	235
Changing the basic beat	236
Adding a drum fill	238
Adding a Drum Pattern	241
Getting a Drum Sample	243

***Part V: Beyond the Basics: Advanced Composing
Tips and Tricks* 245****Chapter 14: Spice Is Nice: Marking Up Your Score 247**

Writing Chord Symbols and Tablature	247
The rhythm section likes changes	248
All guitarists read tab	253
Adding Expression to Your Score	257
Using Articulations	259
Spicing up the horn parts	260
Slurring your notes	261
Adding Lyrics	262
Making Your Score Pretty	264
Adding a title page	264
Getting fancy with colors	265
Inserting symbols and pictures	266

Chapter 15: You're a Real Composer Now 269

Composing Background Melodies	269
Adding Intros and Outros	272
In the beginning . . . : Adding an intro	272
The big finish: Adding an outro	274
Adding Video to Your Score	278
Inserting a video	278
Using hit points	280

Chapter 16: Fine-Tuning the Mix: Playback Options 281

Changing the Playback Device	282
Sibelius playback options	283
Activating your virtual instruments.....	284
Changing the audio engine properties	286
Changing the Playback Feel	289
Mixing It Up.....	290
Saving and Burning Your Opus.....	291

Part VI: The Part of Tens 293**Chapter 17: Ten Digital Music Terms You Should Know 295**

Beats	295
Digital Audio	295
Latency	296
MIDI.....	297
Multitimbral	297
Polyphony	298
Sampler.....	298
Sampling Rate and Bit Depth.....	299
Sequencer.....	300
Software Synthesizer	300

Chapter 18: Ten (Or So) Composers You Should Know 303

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)	303
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)	304
George Gershwin (1898–1937).....	304
Duke Ellington (1899–1974).....	305
Aaron Copland (1900–1990).....	305
Alfred Newman (1900–1970)	306
Willie Dixon (1915–1992)	306
Thelonious Monk (1917–1982)	307
John Williams (1932–).....	308
John Lennon (1940–1980) and Paul McCartney (1942–)	308
(More Than) A Few More	309

Chapter 19: Ten (Or So) Sibelius Tips and Tricks 311

Undoing Your Mistakes.....	311
Changing the Way Your Score Looks	312
Using Keyboard Shortcuts	313
Getting to Know the Keypad.....	315
Deselecting to Start Off	317
Exporting Your Score to Other Programs	317
Working on Your Playback Devices	318
Creating Text to Help the Musicians.....	318
Fiddling with the Tempo	319

<i>Part VII: Appendixes</i>	321
Appendix A: Common Instrument Ranges	323
The String Family	325
Bowed strings	326
Non-bowed strings	327
The Woodwinds.....	328
The Brass Family.....	330
Keyboards	330
Percussion Instruments	331
Voices and Choirs.....	333
Appendix B: About the CD	335
System Requirements.....	335
Using the CD	337
What You'll Find on the CD.....	337
Author-created material	338
Sibelius 5.....	338
Troubleshooting.....	339
<i>Index</i>	341

Introduction

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The world of desktop publishing has expanded to include music: Anyone with a PC or Mac at home already has the basics for a music creation studio. *Composing Digital Music For Dummies*, along with your home computer, is the fundamental toolkit you need to write music using the latest digital software.

Don't be nervous about trying your hand at writing your own digital music. If you've always loved music, but you've never thought that you could be a composer, this book is for you. If you heard about the digital music revolution, and wondered how the music you hear on the radio, the TV, the Internet, and even on your cellphone is made, this book is also for you.

About This Book

Composing Digital Music For Dummies delivers everything you need to get started making your own tunes. If you have a computer and this book, you have all the tools and information you need to build a piece of music, play it back, burn it on a CD, or print it out for others.

Composing Digital Music For Dummies simplifies the basics of composing music. In this book, I show you:

- ✓ How to use software to compose music
- ✓ The fundamentals of digital composition
- ✓ The role of MIDI and other digital tools
- ✓ How music is written and produced

I avoid advanced musical or computer techno jargon and, in a clear, friendly manner, demystify the essential steps to making your own music and making music your own.

But the big deal is: You don't have to read music or have music theory training to get started. You can begin making music *today* — and you can have fun while doing it!

The CD that comes with this book has everything you need: a demo version of Sibelius 5 (the most popular music notation software), templates to get you started, and audio files of all the examples I provide in the book.

Conventions Used in This Book

Because *Composing Digital Music For Dummies* is a reference book that you can use over and over again, I use some conventions to make things consistent and easy to understand:

- ✔ I provide keyboard shortcuts for both PC users and Mac users — music doesn't discriminate and neither do I. I list the PC shortcut first, followed by the Mac shortcut in parentheses.
- ✔ When I give you a list of steps to follow, the action part of the step is in **boldface**.
- ✔ When I define a new term, I put it in *italics*, and provide the definition nearby (often in parentheses).
- ✔ I list all Web addresses and e-mail addresses in `monofont`, so you can tell the address apart from the surrounding text. **Note:** When this book was printed, some Web addresses may have needed to break across two lines of text. If that happened, rest assured that I haven't put in any extra characters (such as hyphens) to indicate the break. So, when using one of these Web addresses, just type in exactly what you see in this book, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist.

One more thing: In the *For Dummies* series, acronyms are typically spelled out on their first use in a chapter, but the acronym *MIDI* is one I use so often in this book that I don't always spell it out. I talk about MIDI in depth in Chapter 4, but for now, know that it stands for *Musical Instrument Digital Interface*, and it's a way for electronic instruments made by different manufacturers to work and play together.

What You're Not to Read

I think every pearl of wisdom in *Composing Digital Music For Dummies* is cool, interesting, and useful, but I have included some stuff that you really don't need to know.

The Technical Stuff icon points out information that's fascinating for geeks like me, but that you may or may not be interested in. If you're in a hurry, you can safely skip these paragraphs without missing anything critical.

- [**Alpine Giggle Week: How Dorothy Parker Set Out to Write the Great American Novel and Ended Up in a TB Colony Atop an Alpine Peak \(A Penguin Classics Special\) book**](#)
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