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and arranger



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# *Composing Digital Music*

FOR

**DUMMIES®**

**by Russell Dean Vines**



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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.

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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*.



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# *Dedication*

To Elzy. Forever.



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## *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.

I would also like to thank my associates at Wiley: acquisitions editor Mike Baker, media development associate project manager Laura Atkinson, and especially my project editor and copy editor, Elizabeth Kuball.

And a big thank-you to the musicians and friends who contributed ideas and helped me throughout the sometimes arduous writing process. A special shout-out to percussionist extraordinaire Dom Moio, guitarist and educator Tomas Cataldo, and multi-instrumentalist Howard Johnson.

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# Introduction

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**T**he 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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