



Score FX

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<http://www.keyboardplayer.com/>

This review is all about sound, not music. If all you're interested in is notes on a page, then Ueberschall's ScoreFX is probably not for you. But if you're writing music which might make use of unusual sound textures, or if you're composing for films or theatre or have any other reason for wanting more unusual sonic textures in your music, then it's a rather fascinating package.

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When the entire content is intentionally abstract we're facing an uphill struggle. Suffice it to say though that Ueberschall's chosen method of categorising sounds is pretty effective. You can go for 'Concern', 'Mysterious', 'Pleasing' and many other categories, finding many variations upon each description.

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So what sort of sounds can you now access from your keyboard? 'Anticipation/Tension 03' sounds like a looping burst on a panpipe, given a metallic edge as if being banged against an oil drum. 'Not Safe 08' sounds like a tabla loop processed through a synthesizer filter, while 'Vocal Bits' is a bending male "aaah" with a long looping echo. 'Kaduk 01-25' are all wailing Eastern vocals, while 'Dark 04' from the 'Beds' category is a smooth, low drone which could easily find a place in any sci-fi or vampire movie.

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The Melodyne engine wasn't familiar to me, but couldn't be easier to use as it turns out. Switch to the Editor display and loops are divided into sections on a matrix, and any section can be pushed up and down the matrix to change its pitch. You can also change the length of sections, but they can't be overlapped since it's a monotimbral playback system. But taking a drum pattern already existing in ScoreFX, and turning it into a melodic tuned percussion loop more like a set of marimbas or steel pans (the soundtrack for Steven Soderbergh's recent re-make of Solaris starring George Clooney used the latter to great atmospheric effect()) is terrifically easy.

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For sounds with a rhythmic element, the Tempo can be quickly halved or doubled, or varied 1BPM at a time, and events can be Quantised to fall exactly on the beat from 0 to 100 per cent. It's also possible to Transpose the pitch of a sound completely, regardless of what MIDI key it's assigned to.

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ScoreFX then couldn't be easier to use on a basic level, and if you have more specific needs in terms of pushing the rhythmic elements of a sound to match a beat, or moving elements of a sound to meet a 'hit point' in an accompanying movie, is also terrifically straightforward.

The sonic content as mentioned before is massive: all sorts of atmospheric bloops and burbles, layered voices, percussive sounds and electronic textures, and the designers quite justifiably recommend the package for use in film scores, computer game audio, adverts, trailers, websites, business logos, training videos and more.

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Ten years ago, gaining access to sounds like these would mean buying a new module, or at the very least an expensive set of CD-ROMS to load into a large hardware sampler, Ueberschall's website includes several video demos of the package in action and, as these amply demonstrate, to be able to obtain this degree of power over a new means of composition, using a simple to operate software instrument which has no fear of key, pitch or tempo variations, is power indeed.

Read the whole article at: <http://www.keyboardplayer.com/earticle.php?type=ereview&article=r000624>

