

Transoniq Hacker

Life is short...

Sample Rates and You

Garth Hjelte



I just got done doing a live project where I only used the ASR-10 to do some pretty heavy layering stuff, along with many splits of the keyboard. Strings layered with choirs, tubular bells on the lower keys, velocity-layered tympani (there're as many tympanis in the world as there are sheeps), etc. Fun stuff.

But on returning home, my mind introspectively searched the real meaning of what I was doing. Oh yeah, I was the star of the show. Oh yeah, it sounded good. But really, I was just manipulating a glorified tape player — a Mellotron, if you will.

We forget this, but when playing a sampler like the EPS/ASR/ASR-X, all you are doing is playing recordings of something else — like tapes playing all over the place. That grand piano you think sounds so good — all you are doing is playing a recording of someone playing that key — it's very likely the person wasn't even being expressive while playing it.

What I believe gives the sampler its power is its ability to playback recordings at many

different pitches at the same time. Take a simple sample — it sounds perfect on C4, but play it higher or lower on the keyboard, and you can tell what's happening — the pitch goes up or down.

I'm going to talk about one of the major facets of this — sample rate. It's an easy concept — but watch out, this can get confusing.

What Is Sample Rate?

"Sample Rate" is the measure of how many amplitude (volume) measurements ("samples") occur every second. A 44.1k sample rate means the are 44,100 samples occurring every second. That's a lot — no wonder your ASR-10 gets so hot! There is recording sample rate, and playback sample rate — we'll explain both below. We perceive sample rate mainly as pitch differences. Take your tape recorder — let's say it runs a little fast, and you record your favorite Spice Girls tune for your best friend's birthday. He/she just got a new Nakamichi deck, so he/she decides to play the tape on that — and wonders why the tape sounds slower and lower than what was heard on the radio. It's because you recorded the song at a certain sample rate, and are playing it back using a different, lower sample rate. Now you are no longer his/her best friend — but no worry — you can get the latest Hanson CD or the *Titanic* soundtrack, and you'll be on top again.

Initial Sample Rate

Let's start easy. Let's take a sample of Fred

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This newsletter is stopping publication November, 1999 (Issue #173).

Issues remaining: 8

If your address label indicates more than 8 issues remaining, please let us know if we need to work something out with back issues or something.

If your label indicates less than 8 — not to worry: a partial-year renewal notice will be sent about the same time as your second-to-last issue.

Astaire saying "T'was the night before Christmas..." We'll sample this at a sample rate of approximately 22.3k, using a 16-Plus. The Original EPS and the EPS 16-Plus enable you to set the sample rate at 7 different settings — 44.6, 29.8, 22.3, 17.9, 14.8, 12.8, and 11.2. The ASR-10 only has 2 sample rates, 29.8k and 44.1k, while the ASR-X only samples at 44.1k.

When sampling Fred, the 16-Plus is recording approximately 22,300 amplitudes every second. When it is done, the sample rate that Fred was sampled with is stored in the Instrument parameters. The 16-Plus also asks you to "input" the Root Key by pressing a key on the keyboard. The Root Key is the key where the sample plays back at exactly the "sample rate" you sampled it at. So when you are done, when you press the Root Key, it's just like your recording.

Playing It Back The Hard Way

Let's take Fred and play him an octave higher than the Root Key — sounds like an elf, huh? The 16-Plus is playing the sample back "faster." And vice-versa — play Fred lower, and he sounds like the Abominable Snowman. This is what's happening, and this where it starts to get a little confusing.

To get a tape to sound higher in pitch, you simply play the tape faster, using a pitch control on the deck if it has one, or use a double-speed deck. That isn't what the EPS/ASR does. The EPS/ASR use fixed playback sample rates, and use sample-dropping or sample-interpolation to achieve pitch changes across the keyboard.

Dropping and Interpolating

Actually, when we sampled Fred at 22.3k and played him at the Root Key, the playback sample rate wasn't same speed, like a tape player does. Depending on what effect setting you are using, you have the choice between 3 playback sample rates — 30k (which gives you 20 voices), 44k (13 voices), and 78k (7 voices). How did the EPS/ASR make Fred sound like an elf — by not playing back every sample, and in the case of playing it an octave higher, it is playing back every other sample — thus making it sound higher in pitch. This is called sample-dropping.

Sample-Interpolating is the same concept

the other way around. Fred was sampled at 22.3, but is always being played back at 30k, so how does the 16-Plus make Fred sound like the Snowman? It uses the existing sample information, but interpolates new samples based on the existing material.

Not only that (and I'll skim this to avoid more complication), the EPS/ASR is always interpolating; some of you might have noticed an "oversampling" note in your sampler spec ["64x oversampling using Sigma-Delta (one-bit) technology"]. Whatever the case, your sampler is always doing two things — playing back your sample *regardless* of the initial sample rate at the pitch you desire (key pressed, programmed pitch table, Root Key, etc), while interpolating it up to get the maximum fidelity of playback. Whew! Now you must admire how hard your sampler is working — every note you play has to go through this process.

So What?

What does this mean to you? How do you use this information? We can establish some principles. First, the higher the sampling rate, the better the fidelity. One may make the argument — if I'm always playing back the samples at 30k (which is your most likely option), why waste space having a sound sampled at 44.1k, for example? A good reason — having more sample information helps the EPS/ASR do a better job of all this dropping and interpolating it's doing — yielding a more accurate result. Sure, it's still 30k — but it's a better 30k.

Changing the Sample Rate

You probably know that you can save memory that a sound occupies by using the CONVERT SAMPLE RATE function. When you use this to lower the sample rate of a sound, it essentially sample-drops the appropriate amount of samples in the wavedata, giving you the result of the sample had you sampled it at that rate. Note that converting the sample rate upwards does not necessarily a more accurate representation of the source, since the EPS/ASR can only be so good at guessing what these interpolated samples might be. But remember, using the CONVERT SAMPLE RATE function, you are truthfully changing the sample rate — "that was the rate at which the wavedata was sampled."

There's another way to "change" the sample rate — go to WAVESAMPLE INFORMATION under EDIT-WAVE, and go to SAMPLE RATE=. We forget that we can change these parameters — you can lower the sample rate, which lowers the pitch, or raise it — up to 312k! This doesn't save you any memory — in fact, it's pretty identical to changing the ROOT KEY setting; for Fred, the sample rate of 22.3k and a Root Key of D4 was equivalent to a sample rate of 312k and a Root Key of B7.

Aside for Modern Technology

We can be amazed at the power of the EPS/ASR processor, but remember — the processor is quite slow — very slow, compared with the powerhouse CPUs being produced today. One way of exploiting that power is to use a different method than just dropping/interpolating samples to achieve pitch differences.

One of these methods is called Formant Shifting; without going into specifics, this method uses pretty clever analysis to compute what the wavedata would sound like in real life at the higher pitch. This can do away with many cases of elf-like or snowman-like differences. ACID, a PC program by Sonic Foundry, does this particularly well. It has its limits, to be sure — Beverly Sills will still have a hard time being a contra-bass — but it is quite appealing. I hope to see this in samplers in a very short time. ■

Bio: Garth Hjelte runs Rubber Chicken Software Co., a multi-national organization which exclusively supports Ensoniq samplers. It is no way affiliated with the UN.

Call For Writers!

In spite of their current god-like status, writers for the *Hacker* were once mere mortals — just like you! If you're noodling around with Ensoniq gear, you too can join their elite ranks. We're always looking for new writers, and yes, there is actual payment involved. If you're toying with an idea for an article, how about giving Editrix Jane a call at 1-503-227-6848 and listening to her soothing words of encouragement?

We haven't seen a new patch in a long while so...

In order to support the discontinued keyboards, I'm offering up this patch: "Ba-Dass B-3."

This sound is my version of a distorted B-3 with rotary speaker, chorus and reverb. The mod wheel controls the Leslie and the CV pedal controls the volume.

The normal effect choices do not allow these effects at the same time — but it can be done! The highlight of this sound is courtesy of the article by Clark Salisbury in Issue #148. Thanks to Clark's wizardry, this allows us to have distortion and quasi Leslie effects in the same sound!

I have also used the many tips given in

SQ, KS, KT Family Hackerpatch

Prog: Ba-Dass B-3

By: Jack Carder

WAVE	1	2	3
Select Voice	On	On	On
Wave Class	Waveform	Waveform	Waveform
Wave	OrganV4	OrganV4	Sine
Delay Time	035	070	000
Wave Direction	-	-	-
Start Index	-	-	-
MODSRC	-	-	-
MODAMT	-	-	-
Restrk Decay	00	00	00

PITCH	1	2	3
Octave	0	+1	+1
Semitone	00	00	+07
Fine	-01	+07	-01
ENV1	00	00	00
LFO	00	+01	00
MODSRC	Off	Off	Off
MODAMT	00	00	00
KBD Pch Track	On	On	On
Glide	Off	Off	Off
Glide Time	00	00	00

ENV1	1	2	3
Initial	Full on	Full on	Full on
Peak	"	"	"
Break	"	"	"
Sustain	"	"	"
Attack	"	"	"
Decay 1	"	"	"
Decay 2	"	"	"
Release	"	"	"
Vel-Level	"	"	"
Vel-Attack	"	"	"
Vel Curve	Convex	Convex	Convex
Mode	Nor	Nor	Nor
KBD Track	00	00	00

LFO	1	2	3
LFO Speed	17	15	27
Noise Rate	00	00	00
Level	31	28	08
Delay	26	13	00
MODSRC	Wheel	Wheel	Wheel
Wave	Tri	Tri	Tri
Restart	Off	Off	Off

FILTER	1	2	3
Filter 1	3Lo	3Lo	3Lo
Filter 2	1Lo	1Lo	1Lo
FC1 Cutoff	000	000	+068
ENV 2	+90	+99	+41
FC1 KBD	+81	+81	+81
MODSRC	Pff	Off	Off
MODAMT	00	00	00
FC2 Cutoff	078	127	077
ENV2	+48	+48	+46
FC2 KBD	+64	+64	+66
FC1MOD-FC2	On	On	On

ENV2	1	2	3
Initial	Full on	Full on	01
Peak	"	"	39
Break	"	"	00
Sustain	"	"	00
Attack	"	"	01
Decay 1	"	"	41
Decay 2	"	"	41
Release	"	"	07
Vel-Level	"	"	00
Vel-Attack	"	"	00
Vel Curve	Quik	Quik	Quik
Mode	Nor	Nor	Nor
KBD Track	-98	+98	00

AMP	1	2	3
Initial	Full on	Full on	98
Peak	"	"	01
Break	"	"	00
Sustain	"	"	00
Attack	"	"	40
Decay 1	"	"	21
Decay 2	"	"	21
Release	"	"	00
Vel-Level	"	"	00
Vel-Attack	"	"	00
Vel Curve	Convex	Convex	Convex
Mode	Nor	Nor	Nor
KBD Track	+98	+98	00

OUTPUT	1	2	3
VOL	92	92	80
Boost	Off	Off	Off
MODSRC	Pedal	Pedal	Off
MODAMT	+14	+14	00
KBD Scale	+21	-11	00
Key Range	C2-C7	C2-C7	C2-C7
Output Bus	FX1	Dry	FX2
Priority	Med	Med	Med
Pan	-98	+98	00
Vel window	000	000	000

EFFECTS — DIST & CHORUS & VERB

FX-1	15	FX-2	30
Decay Time	31	Dist Level	26
Chorus Rate	20	Chorus Depth	03
Chorus Center	15	Feedback	+50
Chorus Level	53		
MOD (Dest)	Rate		
BY (MODSRC)	Wheel		
MODAMT	36		

many previous articles in the Hacker for B-3 sounds.

You may be able to make use of this sound — but don't try to clean it up! It's nasty, outrageous! Wail! ■

Creating a Drum Loop on the ASR-10

John Heath

Let's start out by loading your favorite drum kit into instrument location #1. Then sequence a four-measure bar using your drum kit sample. Also, put the sequencer in loop mode. Don't forget to quantize your new four-bar sequence.

Now we are going to re-sample this four-bar sequence through the ROOM REVERB EFFECT — which should be effect #3. Note, you can use any effect for re-sampling, but for this example let's use the ROOM REVERB EFFECT.

Select the FX SELECT button and press the up arrow three times. Now select SAMPLE SOURCE select button, press left arrow button once which should bring the cursor under

INPUTDRY. Now you want to select the up arrow and press it two times which will bring you to the MAIN-OUT screen. You are ready.

Press YES button then select a blank instrument location where you want the new sampled loop to go. Play the sequence and at the same time adjust the VU meter, so that it's not AMPING out. Remember to push the volume slider to the max level in order to receive a good re-sample. When you have adjusted your VU meter level, stop the sequence then press the YES button. At this point, the ASR-10 will indicate WAITING. Now select the play button and let your sequence play a little over the four measures, so that you will have room to adjust your

loop later. When you have recorded your sample, press the YES button and the ASR-10 will prompt you to select a ROOT KEY which will be the key where you want the new sample to reside. Let's use the C3 key as our root key. Your sequence is now re-sampled to one key.

Now we want to loop this new sample. Select the EDIT button. You should now see LYR1 which means we are in the edit mode for layer #1. Note, the ASR-10 can create multi layers and has the ability to edit each layer individually. Now that we are in the layer #1, select the WAVE button then press the up arrow button until you get the LOOP FORWARD page. When you have done this, strike the WAVE button 4 times which will bring you to the loop end position. Strike right arrow button until the cursor is under the number in the () all the way to the right. Now, while holding down your sampled instrument root key C3, use the DATA ENTRY slider to adjust your loop. When you get it the way you want it, you may want to push the left arrow button twice which will bring you to a bunch of numbers.

Using the **DATA ENTRY** slider will fine tune your loop a little sharper. You can also select the right arrow until you get to the **LOOPOS** page which will also help you adjust your loop by using the **DATA ENTRY** slider or the up and down arrow buttons. Note, looping is a skill, the more you do it the better you'll become with it.

Now you know how to create your own loop. After you have edited your loop, name and save it to disk. Your loop speed will be

whatever speed that was used to create your sequence.

In using the above method, you can re-sample a seven instrument sequence down to one key, freeing up seven unused instrument locations for more sounds. This will help you create massive song productions. Just remember to adjust all of your volumes before re-sampling sequences because the individual volumes cannot be adjusted after you have re-sampled the sequence. In addition,

you still have the two audio tracks available to you for additional music. A fully expanded 16 meg ASR-10 is recommended in order to get great re-sampling results and the most out of your ASR-10. Happy looping. ■

Bio: John Heath is a full-time claims specialist and a part time Gospel and Jazz keyboard musician.

My (En)soniq Journey Through Time

Part I

Joe Travo

I haven't always played Ensoniq keyboards, but for the last ten years, they have played a major role in the music that I've made. When I was eight I played accordion; at 15 I got a Doric combo organ which I sold at 18 to buy a Hammond M3 which I rewired for a Leslie, and which I still have and play and love. Other weird instruments, like a melodica, a Whippany Dart (kind of a "quacky" sound, so we called it "The Whippany Duck") and a Baldwin combo organ appeared from time to time, so I've made some comparisons.

I recently had occasion to compare my Ensoniq (an original VFX and an EPS Classic) keyboards to the competition. While my friendly authorized Ensoniq repair dealer (American Music in Fresno, CA) unsuccessfully tried to put my VFX back in dependable operating condition, they kindly lent me a Korg Wavestation EX as a loaner. For a committed Ensoniq user like me, it's no contest, having to give up things like the fluorescent display and polyphonic aftertouch, and the quick intuitive

PRESET set-ups. More than anything, though, it's the way my two Ensoniq keyboards sound, more than anything else, that I missed. Since there are plenty of "keyboard review" and "comparison" articles around, that's about as far as I'll go in the "Ensoniq vs the Giants" competition. Instead, this experience got me thinking and writing about the various special and unique Ensoniq attributes that I've grown accustomed to in the past. I've been fortunate enough to use and own a number of Ensoniq instruments, and liked them all, some more than others.

My First Ensoniq

Fast-rewinding back about ten years, summer 1988, my daughter Diana had just turned three years old, and the keyboard sound I was getting out of my two Casio "fun" keyboards (HT700 and CT310) just wasn't cutting it with "The Four Seizures." When I went into World Music in Simi Valley, California, and told the salesman what I was looking for in terms of use, features and price-point, he said "We don't have weighted keyboards in that price range, but we have this, and it's the last one in the store," and pointed to an Ensoniq SQ-80. He demoed the sequencer, different types of storage, and velocity response. If he'd let me play it, I probably would have bought it on the spot, in spite of the fact that I didn't really have the \$1,000 he wanted for it.

Instead, I went to about four different stores, and asked them all the same ques-

tions, and after first looking at some other brand-name keyboards, I found myself steering the conversation around to Ensoniq. Although everyone that carried Ensoniq had high praise for it, one very customer-focused saleswoman in Ventura, California recommended that I *not* buy an SQ-80, even though she had them in stock. Instead, she showed me this new-fangled unit with *built-in onboard* effects! Although at the time I didn't realize the importance of this, she assured me that it was a tremendous advance, and really affected the sound. She gave me a pair of headphones, and invited me to try it out, with the advice that I try out the **PATCH SELECT** buttons. I did, loved it (in spite of OS 1.51), bought it, still have it, and still use it. Fooled you, didn't I? I didn't, but I did run into it again years later.

I guess the biggest advance (revolutionary vs evolutionary) displayed by the VFX was the on-board effects, but the VFX was advanced in another way — styling. It *looked* like the advanced keyboard it was at the time. Even if you never got into the editing menus (which I did), the sonic effect of the complex modulation routings gave some of the acoustic and synth instruments a *very* convincing sound. I use a lot of B3/rock organ sounds, and the **DISTORTION + LESLIE** effect routed to polyphonic aftertouch and the modwheel allows me to kick in the effect, on a *single note*, with both hands still on the keyboard. The patch select buttons give me that extra ability to change "drawbar" settings mid-stream. One of the biggest compliments I've received was at a gig we were playing with a new drummer. After we finished one of the numbers that feature some of my Hammond organ sounds, he drummer started stretching his neck over in my direction. Then he said, "Just looking for the B3 I heard you playing in that song." Buying and developing other sounds, and using the piano-style double

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footswitch has made the VFX the main sound module and keyboard controller for both my live and MIDI rigs.

I should say that at the same time I bought the VFX, I was looking at an EPS, with a "sampler" being a concept I didn't fully understand. I was of the "synth" mentality, where I turn on the power and a bazillion sounds are immediately at my disposal. I would also meet the EPS again, many years later.

The SQ-Rack

A while after had moved to north central Wisconsin, I had a chance to play a guest slot with "Dr. Sax & the Maniacs." My only problem was the fact that I was in the middle of a project and my VFX was the heart of my midi rig, so I didn't want to tear it all apart. I visited my friendly Ensoniq dealer, Dick, at Jerry's Music, in Wausau, Wisconsin, and asked him if he had an Ensoniq keyboard I could rent. He said he didn't, but he did have a used SR-Rack that he'd let me borrow, no charge. I had an older non-Ensoniq keyboard that I could use as a controller, so I

jumped at the chance to check out the SQ-R. I figured it was as close as I could get. The great thing about this unit was how familiar the sounds and editing layout was to the VFX. Different display though, but some truly excellent sounds. Even better, the CV pedal plugs in the back!!!

The ESQ-1

Remember that Korg I mentioned earlier? It was the second loaner I got while the VFX was in for repair. The first loaner from American Music was the venerable ESQ1, the 8-bit wonder that started it all. It lasted three days, and when it went down, it almost took our eardrums with it. Before that, though, it was great. Everybody's got their different sound apps, and their favorite patches, but for me, some of the ESQ BELL and MOOG-type stuff was prime on this keyboard. There's that fluorescent display again, too. The keyboard feels different from my VFX, but the velocity response is there, just as I expect it. The velocity really helped the sound to cut through the mix, too, especially on a Saturday I remember well. We were warming up and doing a

sound check before a party, and suddenly, one of the high notes sustains, then gets louder, then much louder, then the neighborhood dogs started howling. The volume slider didn't work, and the decibel level was painful, so I shut the unit off, and I never could get it to go on again, so I used my backup keyboard and returned the ESQ1 loaner and got the Wavestation loaner. The only comment I'll make on the Korg unit is the comment I made to a band mate when he asked me how I liked it. I told him that going from playing the VFX to the Wavestation was like going from driving a Porsche to a school bus. They both basically do the same thing, but in markedly different ways. ■

Continued next month...

Bio: Joe Travo (still the LizardMan) lives in Visalia, California, where he continues to play keyboards with AUGUST, a Latin/funk band, (whose CD "Then & Now" is doing well) and a blues/rock band (formerly SUSHI BLUES) that has changed its name and members too many times to remember. Friends (and innocent bystanders) say he is both electric and eclectic.



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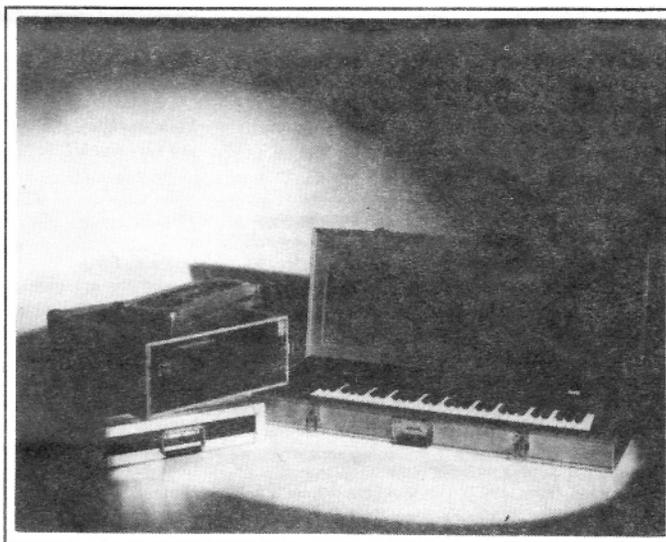
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Electronic mail - Internet: interface@transoniq.com. In many cases a quick answer can be obtained by posting to our interactive, on-line Interface at our Web site (<http://www.transoniq.com/interface.html>) or calling Ensoniq CS at 610-647-3930.

This is probably one of the most open forums in the music industry. Letter writers are asked to please keep the vitriol to a minimum. Readers are reminded to take everything with a grain of salt. Resident answer-man is Pat Finnigan (PF). Letter publication in the printed version of TH is subject to space considerations.

TH -

I currently own an original EPS with a 2x memory expansion. What I want to know is, can you connect a HD floppy (PC compatible) in place of the old DD floppy? The internal architecture of the EPS is very basic, and I'm wondering if it's possible to do some mods myself. Can you hook up an IDE hard drive through an adapter of some kind? Can you replace the floppy with a floppy-chain tape back-up? Is there any documentation on the expansion (mem. and SCSI) port that would allow a tinkerer to hook up an alternate storage device without paying 600 bucks for an Ensoniq manufactured SCSI kit? The 2x mem card has what looks like a connector slot for something... can this be useful in my quest?

Thanks,
Darcy Lapointe
Nova Scotia, Canada
portal@istar.ca

[PF - Darcy: Welcome to Earth. Your SCSI expander is \$147 + shipping from Rubber Chicken Software. Your 4X expander (doubling your 2X, that is, if you want it) is available from Syntaur Productions for around \$200. Visit www.fatsnake.com/syntaur for the 4X and visit www.soundcentral~chickeneps for the absolute BEST SCSI interface for your EPS.

Although a lot of people don't know it, the EPS family (16+ included) are the best boxes Ensoniq ever built. Some of our 3rd-party vendors (those I reference) have been doing the EPS/16+ so hard they've redefined the platform...]

[Sam Mims, Syntaur Productions, (800) 334-1288 - Syntaur does have the EPS 4x expanders in stock, but we're dangerously close to the end. Once we sell out, there will likely be no more made. The price, by the way, is really \$299.95 (we discount them from Ensoniq's \$349.95 retail). And by the way, Syntaur also sells those new SCSI kits for the EPS and EPS-16 Plus, allowing these 'boards to work with a Zip drive.]

Dear TH -

In Issue #145 (July, 1997), Pat Finnigan wrote "The Care and Feeding of the Ensoniq Disk Drive." He described the 800k drive only, but promised a second article about the 1.4 MB drive in the ASR-10.

Could he be persuaded to prepare that article before The Demise?

Thank you for your efforts with TH - the ASR-10 coverage has been very helpful to me.

Sincerely yours,
Allan Lessem
Vicksburg, MS

[PF - Allan: I'd be honored. Let me collect myself (during this holiday season between gigs). Rest assured that I'll debunk all of those horror stories about the unavailability of replacement drives for the

1.4 Mb Ensoniq variants.

And thank you for waking me up during this twilight of the Hacker. And for reminding us of our mission and our purpose in the etherwind...]

TH -

Can anyone please tell me what the values are for R2 and R4 resistors in the power supply for the VFX-sd? I've been waiting four months for a new p.s. from Ensoniq. I figure I can replace the resistors easier than waiting for Ensoniq to send a new one. Starting to loose patience...

Please help!
Spiritkpr@aol.com

[PF - Spiritkpr: R2 is 360 ohms, R4 is 22 ohms. They act as fuses for the display driver resistors, so you'd better replace them as well or you'll just burn out R2 and R4 again. The driver resistors are a differential pair, MJE 172 and MJE 182, so replace them as well. Here's the other resistor values: R1 = 1k ohm, R3 = 2.7k ohm, R5 = 10k ohm 1/2 watt, R6 = 820 ohm.

But if you're replacing these parts, you might as well check the + and -5V and + and -12V regulators (7805, 7905, 7812, 7912) as well, 'cause if they aren't already overtaxed I'll bet one of them went short on you.]

[Spiritkpr@aol.com - PF, you're a godsend... Thank you very much!]

TH -

I own an ESQ-1 that I enjoy using both professionally and for my own personal pleasure. Recently it simply quit. The main program doesn't run and no sounds are generated.

I wrote Ensoniq and received very short reply (without apology) stating, "We don't repair your keyboard, contact Transoniq Hacker to get support!" Now, nowhere in your web site have I seen information about 3rd party repairs. In fact, most of what I've read is rather depressing. At this point, I seem to own what is destined to become a very expensive paper weight!

Is it possible to get my ESQ-1 repaired?

Roger Horn
pappahorn@aol.com

[PF - Roger: Yeah, Ensoniq discontinued support for the ESQ-1 about 2 years ago, and still point to us like we're used car dealers. Actually, if you can't reinitialize the keyboard from the front panel, there's ONE other option. Disconnect the keyboard from the AC outlet, open the hood of your ESQ-1 and locate the backup battery. Take a piece of wire and short the battery terminals together for about 2-3 seconds; this will absolutely reset your ESQ-1, as it erases any and all data stored on board. Once accom-

plished, remove and reseat all connectors on the display board and logic board. You'll have to remove the keyboard to locate the keyboard connector, but do this too.

Reassemble, plug in and turn it on. Either (A) it'll resume normal operation, or (B) it's gone forever. It might be something like the power supply, but since it powers-on OK it's probably keyboard encoder or other logic board-related problems that cannot be fixed since Ensoniq has neither replacement logic boards or parts for the ESQ-1's anymore. So keep your fingers crossed...]

[PappaHorn@aol.com - Thanks for the suggestions, unfortunately, they didn't help. Performing a hard reset had no effect. The power supply appears to be just fine: all the voltages appear to be correct.

So I'm left with one nagging question - what does one do with a dead keyboard? Perhaps TH should consider writing a book covering the subject; say 101 uses for a dead keyboard. Or perhaps another title; how to convince your significant other to let you buy yet another expensive \$\$ toy. Thanks again.]

[PF - Papa Horn: I've got one with the same problem. It will only play the piano patch (Patch #1). Pisser, isn't it?]

[Sam Mims, Syntaur Productions, (800) 334-1288 - It's a shame that you can't get parts anymore, but after all, the ESQ-1 is over a decade out of production. I can understand Ensoniq's position - it just wouldn't make economic sense to stop the factory to make short runs of these old circuit boards. And even if they did, you could probably buy another ESQ-1 on the used market for less than the price of the new circuit board.

We get so many calls for this sort of thing that we now purchase broken Ensoniq keyboards just for parts. So if you don't have any luck fixing your ESQ-1, you can sell it to us. Better than using it for a paperweight, boat anchor, or doorstep...]

Pat...

I recently finished reading your article, "Retrospect, Whatever Happened to... The Mirage?" A fine article and loaded with info I found very interesting. As the MR-76 is my first quality workstation, the history, as one may call it, about Ensoniq was valuable to me to some extent. I find in each article usually some nugget of information that continues to help me progress in the right direction, or something that may spark an idea of some area I haven't considered.

I remember at the time I was really considering purchasing an Ensoniq board was the time the TS-12 was first released. I got to observe the local demonstration workshop here in Seattle and Roy Elkins, formerly of the Ensoniq crew, was the host. Boy, was I impressed. I thought the machine was the real deal and that was what I was to get. Well, the short story line... money was tight and by the time I was ready with the cash, out comes the MR-76, so this is

what I have.

It's a live machine and to crank out tunes it's a breeze. So what about the Mirage story you ask? Well, let's look at the last paragraph. You state, "Guys like us bought the keyboard and as many rack mounts as we could afford," and line them all up so with the use of a midi switcher you could pick from the samplers with your favorite sounds. This is the spark of a new idea for me. Then you continue that Ensoniq was already developing the instrument with the power of 8 Mirages, sequencer, new sample rate, multiple outputs, and SCSI in one box ...But that's another story... Well, don't leave me hanging out to dry... what is the other story? What was this infamous keyboard and some of its history? Please put it into a larger than normal nutshell. I look forward to the new nuggets.

Thanks,
Kyle
WARNERPRD@aol.com

[PF - Kyle: It's coming in the Hacker VERY soon. Stay tuned...]

[WARNERPRD@aol.com - Yo, Yo, Yo, looks like this one is a go... Will be tuned in... K.W.]

[Kyle WARNERPRD@aol.com - Pat... I've had another idea lately. When I saw the TS-10/TS-12 demonstration I believe the ASR-10 keyboard and ASR-10 rackmount were also on display and demonstrated, but it was way too far over my head. I have had a notion to get at least a rackmount ASR-10 since I already have a MR and Roland X-P 50. I haven't decided how exactly this would benefit me but, from what I have read in the past, it's a great piece to have. As with the MR and Roland, I am still discovering things and ways to use them and growing all the time in knowledge and application. What is your opinion on the ASR-10 board and rackmount as an addition to song writing and live performance? Also, what past issues would I find the articles concerning this product? Thanks... Happy Trails.]

[PF - Kyle: My personal all-time fave is the 16+ Turbo. Not as much memory as the ASR, but included was the optional 1 Mb FlashBank that maintained its memory when the unit was unplugged. Much more responsive in behavior and playability than the ASR, but, like me, anyone who has one won't let it go...

The ASR is an exceptional sampler - I wouldn't go for anything less than the ASR-10 keyboard. Get it with the SCSI board, the OEX-6 expander (for 10 total outputs), the Digital I/O board (if you can find it anywhere), and that's a definitive sampler. Shut off disk tracks (unless you plan to do hard disk recording), add 16 Mb of 30-pin SIMM RAM, and it's a complete workstation with the friendliest user interface you'll ever use. Totally transparent (like the EPS and 16+ interface), great FX processing, it's only flaw is it's an overtaxed 16 MHz 68000-series Motorola processor. Arbitrating all the extra features of an ASR (44K FX, DiskTracks, increased polyphony) really slows down key-down-to-note-sound delay, especially with heavily multisampled instruments. But it's probably the best-sounding, user-friendliest sampler ever made by anybody. That may be why it had to die when Creative/Emu absorbed Ensoniq: two products competing for the same market share? From the same company?

Actually, at this point, ANY Ensoniq sampler you can get your hands on is gonna be a good deal. The ASR-10 fully stroked, ported and relieved is a VERY powerful piece, the 16+ Turbo is THE live performance sampling keyboard (it's just faster in the gig than an ASR), and the EPS with SCSI is the absolute fastest loading sampler ever made (13-bit). Since

they're ALL extinct now, ANY one is a good buy. I'm biased toward the keyboard versions since you just plug it in, turn it on, load it up and go.

Just my \$.02 worth...]

[WARNERPRD@aol.com - Boy, Pat you really put in in the way I needed to hear it. In the near future I will be letting you know just which "keyboard" I will be investing into just as soon as I can locate it. You and your \$.02 worth are by far the best deal anyone has made me, and believe me, it was more than \$.02. Thank you again, Kyle.

Readers... does anyone know where I can find a Digital I/O board for an Ensoniq ASR-10 keyboard? I also understand I can get an add-on Simm Ram to bring it up from 10Mb to 16Mb from Rubber Chicken right? Thanks K.W.]

[PF - Kyle: The ASR-10 takes old antique 30-pin SIMMs. Since it has four slots, four 4-Mb, 70ns non-parity SIMMs will give you a total of 16 Mb. Try www.thechipmerchant or 800.808.2447. They should be around \$10-\$15 apiece. As far as the Digital I/O board, if you find a source, let me know...]

TH -

I own the Ensoniq SD-1 32-Voice synthesizer. And, I must admit that I am a happy customer. I have had it for at least 5 years now, used it darn near everyday, and I have never had a problem. The reason that I am writing you, is because I am trying to get new sounds for my keyboard. I'm not looking for the factory produced ones that I know that you have, but the ones that I used to see in the Transoniq Hacker years back. Can you by chance refer me to someone specific that might be able to hook me up with some homegrown sounds? I would greatly appreciate any help that you could offer.

Thank you,
Brian
bbaker@inow.com

[PF - Brian: Go straight to www.fatsnake.com/syntaur - Syntaur Sounds are the absolute best source of SD-1 sounds, as ol' Sam Mims not only programmed tons of sounds for the SD-1, but he plays one daily. 'Nuther nice thing is he's the owner of Syntaur Productions...]

Subject: Anyone for Reason?
Hiya,

Every now and then I visit the on-line Interface to see who's saying what in this post-marital phase of the relationship between ENSONIQ and the Hacker. Like everyone else, I regret that the whole thing wound up in divorce court, but what I see in the Interface these days reminds me again why it happened. As someone who works, and hard, for ENSONIQ, it makes me sad and angry to see what's being written.

Personally, I would trace the final breakdown not to Creative, as is so often suggested in the Interface, but to the departure of the professional Clark Salisbury, the Hacker's long-time answer maven. Since Pat has taken over the job, the Hacker has become a great spewing geyser of inaccuracies and invective disguised as informed knowledge. What used to require about an hour a month on ENSONIQ's part - fact-checking Clark's text - with Pat would require great globs of back-and-forth, if he cared to check them, given his irresponsibility with facts. When ENSONIQ says it no longer has the resources to support the Hacker, this is what it's been trying discreetly to say,

not that the company has lost interest in its readers or anything else. It's amazing that the Hacker and Pat have been publicly taking the stance that this is all ENSONIQ's or Creative's doing, when I told them and told them and told them that they had a problem with Pat. My own frustration with this made me uncertain about the wisdom of my continuing to write for the Hacker, so loathe was I to be associated with such reckless pseudo-journalism. Years ago, I personally offered my home phone number to Pat, via Jane and Eric, for him to call me whenever he had factual questions with which I could help him. He has called me precisely once in all the intervening time (I have since moved, but Jane and Eric have my new number, and there's always e-mail).

Why Pat has been so lazy about checking his info, so persistent in suggesting that he's privy to information that he actually has no knowledge of, baffles me. As an individual, he's as entitled as anyone else to say silly things on the Internet. I just wish that his position at the Hacker didn't imply that he necessarily knows what he's talking about. I should say that I feel very uncomfortable now in attacking his work in public, since I don't wish to hurt his feelings, but, jeez, how long will this go on, how bad is this going to get, and how many ENSONIQ users are being misled as to the nature of ENSONIQ reality?

For example, in the current Interface, Pat says: "That may be why it had to die when Creative/Emu absorbed Ensoniq: two products competing for the same market share? From the same company?" Nice, Pat. The ASR-10 had been taken out of production long before the merger, since folks had stopped buying it. It had an exceptionally long production life - it's a great sampler - but old age claimed it, not Creative. "Yeah, the TS died of neglect about the time Yamaha accepted the EX5/7, about the time EMU put ROM boards in its samplers. Problem is no one's around to make it anymore - Ensoniq only made export models to Russia around the time Al Blake got canned (the day he signed off on the Paris golden master software). Lights on; nobody's home..."

Again, the TS had a long life, but no product lives forever. It did not "die of neglect," whatever that's supposed to imply. I guess you're suggesting some EMU connection here; I don't see it.

Al (a great guy) still works with ENSONIQ. He was never "canned," though his on-site phone-answering presence certainly diminished when he decided to move down South. And, Al had absolutely nothing to do with "signing off" (a phrase that in the software industry means "approving for release") on any version of any software. Engineers do this sort of thing. This, I guess, and the flinging of the phrase "golden master" is meant to imply that Pat's a software pro who's in the loop somehow. In fact, ENSONIQ does not use the term, so I have no idea what he thinks he's talking about. There are no golden masters per se, only software that's deemed ready for release or not.

The lights are on and we are home: witness the tremendous success of our current product line. (BTW, Pat regularly disses the so-cool FIZMO; I wonder if he's even played one).

What hurts here is that those of us who work for ENSONIQ are, as has always been the case, completely dedicated to the creation of exciting, innovative and affordable products. We all put in long days in this effort, and care about it deeply. Pat's insulting tone, aside from being, as usual, misinformed, is a slap in the face to all of us who are doing our very best to do good work, day after day. How dare he, when he himself doesn't exhibit anything approaching our commitment in his own writing, with its lazy spewing of

misinformation that he could verify, if he cared half as much as he pretends to.

Reader, please, please, please take what Pat writes with a grain of salt, and remember that there are at least two sides to every story. Contrary to what you've been reading in the Interface lately, Creative and ENSONIQ are not comprised of dumb or evil people sitting around thinking of ways to pick your pockets. The reality is that we're striving, as we always have, to provide great products at affordable prices for musicians of all shapes and sizes.

Robby Berman
robbyb@ensoniq.com

[TH - Well, a few things... First, welcome back! (Betcha didn't expect that...) As you know, this is an open forum and we've specifically asked you (several times) to please speak up if you see things in error - that's how this whole process is supposed to wend its way toward the truth. We always say to take EVERYTHING in here "with a grain of salt." That's the thing about open forums. This isn't, and has never claimed to be, anything else. There's been many times when readers have come back and corrected us - hey, this is welcomed, asked for.

Second, we've been receiving, let's say "grumbling," from Ensoniq about the letters column almost from our first few issues. This has always come and gone over many, many years - including during Clark's days. When Ensoniq stopped including sample Hackers with their keyboards (back in July of *1989*), it was specifically because of the Interface. That's why we went to flyers. When discussing Ensoniq's current displeasure with the Hacker, I don't recall Pat's name coming up ONCE. There was some mention of the Interface - but it was solely in the context of "complaints from users." There was also mention of an article - it wasn't one of Pat's and the complaint was one of "picky little things that most users wouldn't care about." If Ensoniq was trying to be discrete, they must have overshot it a little.

Third, we didn't say "this was all their fault" or they were dumb or evil or anything - we did, however, say it was Ensoniq's decision (TH never said Creative's). And we gave the reasons - the ones they gave us - for their decision. And we mentioned, again, that they've always been invited to speak up here and even to fact check articles. Has there EVER been a single, solitary statement from "ENSONIQ" in this forum? Even one? Now, what's the deal with that? And their declining participation here PREDATES Pat.

I don't recall a lot of Fizmo-dissing from Pat (but he can make his own responses to your points), but the two mentions that I (Eric) made were one in our "Demise Announcement" that it looked like it might be pretty hot, and one in the letters column where I mentioned that the comments in the newsgroup rec.music.makers.synth were "frightfully consistent." (You might want to do a search on "fizmo" somewhere like dejaneux.com to see what folks are saying...) And we've got an article from Ensoniq's own Eric Montgomery that's either going to be in #164 or #165 - depending on space. Hey, all points of view are welcome here - we're not going to start policing other folk's opinions.

This is probably as good a time as any to point out the Pat seems to be one of the few people on the planet to be interested in single-handedly helping folks keep their "obsolete" gear working (other than, of course the owners of said gear). And, that when this whole "Change in Direction" thing came down he graciously offered to continue to answer questions here without the peanuts we send him every month.]

[WARNERPRD@uol.com - If I had the chance I'd

slap this boy. If you have a problem Rob, this time you should keep it to yourself. You couldn't even begin to grasp the depth of help the Hacker's forum and Pat himself is giving me to go to places you will never see. So in other words, TAKE A BRAKE, and go back to work at Ensoniq and continue to do the best job you can for us who own your products and for those who will in the future. K.W.]

[PF - Subject: Asking for Reasons

Late. Just fine, Robby: thanx for asking. Okay, I'll drop my gloves, too. Now that we're going away you wanna move in, eh? Let's set the record straight, Mr. Professional:

Ensoniq divorced us: we didn't file. I actually penned an article called "The Royal Wedding" announcing Ensoniq as the bride-to-be of EMU. WE tried to make it work: we even got one EMU-Ensoniq issue out before both of you guys backed out.

The fact of the matter is Ensoniq offers NO technical support for discontinued products. So short of the ASR-X, FIZMO and PARIS, that leaves the Mirage, EPS, 16+, ASR-10/88, SQ-1/2/1+1R, VFX/sd/SD-1 and their rack variants. And you dare to bitch at us for providing the tech support for 76% of your product line after pulling the plug yourselves? Ensoniq slammed the door on these products (and their owners) September 21, 1997 as per notification on its web site. I'll take your letter as token of Ensoniq's appreciation for our forum's hard work to help those Ensoniq owners rather than a representative sample of your handiwork.

As for the lone phone call, that was all it took to get the info I needed. We're obviously such pen pals I didn't know you missed my calling. I feel a lot of love in this room...

"Lazy in checking my info..."? Eric and Jane forward technical issues that remain in doubt to Eric Montgomery for checking before we go to print. He claims we've been batting close to 100%. I've NEVER suggested that I'm "privy to information that I have no knowledge of." But I do own the schematics of 76% of the Ensoniq product line, and I don't have a problem with telling an owner (who's been waiting FOUR months for a replacement SD-1 power supply...) the values of R2 and R4.

Al Blake was the Senior Hardware Engineer for the MR series when he and Roy Elkins spoke with me about the initial MR review in the Hacker. Roy, I, and Al conferenced over three hours on March 15, 1997 over this new keyboard; Roy wanted me to speak with the man responsible for the MR's hardware architecture.

I received email from Al September 15, 1997 at 8:30AM concerning the future of Ensoniq products whereupon he explained no more FX boxes, Digital I/O cards, and no more tech support on anything more recent than the ASR-10. I called Malvern at 10:30AM the same day to speak with him and was politely told "he no longer works for Ensoniq," coincidental with the Wednesday morning staff meeting up in Malvern. What am I supposed to think?

And, contrary to Ensoniq methodology most hardware/software companies wares are in beta until deemed bugless enough to work as advertised, whereupon the medium of these wares (disk, tape, ROM, whatever) is termed the Golden Master by which multiple copies are cloned for distribution. Just because Ensoniq doesn't follow convention doesn't mean the rest of the world follows suit.

"Lights on: nobody's home." True - that's a very

cruel thing to say about any company, and I apologize to all Ensoniq-folk who are fighting the good fight (and to you too, Robby). Unfair and insensitive to all those who remain at Ensoniq. Sorry that we're not "witness to the tremendous success of our current product line" or we'd know that. Which product would that be? FIZMO, ASR-X or PARIS? My music dealers (Sweetwater Sound, MARS Music and IRC Music) won't even carry those products with the exception of the lone FIZMO I saw at Mars (with wall wart power supply). The salesperson (an Emu specialist and owner, by the way) wasn't exactly talking it up, either.

Regarding the ASR-10 "it's a great sampler - but old age claimed it." Same with the TS-series. Well, the competition is kicking your ass reinventing such "old" products. EMU is putting ROM boards in its samplers to be more like the TS-10, the Yamaha EX-series is a virtual lift of the TS-10. If these keyboards died of old age, your competition has resurrected them to fill a HUGE market void you left behind. Most companies develop and release newer improved product to replace the old so they don't lose market share. Obviously not Ensoniq, or I'd be playing a TS-20.

"Reader, please please, please take what Pat writes with a grain of salt..." Readers, please, please, please take what Robby writes with the same grain of salt. I DON'T work for Ensoniq, so I call it as I see it. Otherwise we'd be the Roland User's Group Magazine touting "the tremendous success of our current product line..."

I was on the Ensoniq bandwagon when Tom Darling was the lone rep dragging the old metal-cased Mirage to trade shows, and have been using their gear exclusively for the past 12 years. I've been a paying Hacker subscriber since Issue #4. So I've learned my facts the hard way. So I'll continue to help everyone I can in this forum, since Ensoniq won't. Why? Because I'm part of the solution, Robby. I was (and still am) VERY proud of my time with Ensoniq in their glory days - I doubt I'd still be playing music had Ensoniq not happened. They fueled the creative fire with such inspiring hardware the art of music creation became transparent. The Ensoniq keyboard was a musical conduit from my mind to the audience's ears. The times have changed, but neither you or high water can take that experience from me. I'll continue to share it in this forum with our readers (people who bought Ensoniq products in the first place) until OUR "lights out: nobody's home." Peace Out...]

[Robby Berman - Hi again,

Look, I said in my original post that I was uncomfortable attacking Pat, and I meant it. That he can provide so much help to users of discontinued ENSONIQ products is nothing but a great thing. We have no argument here. By the way, in discussing earlier on this page the duplication of ROMs for discontinued products, he stated, "Ensoniq has a history of vigorously prosecuting anyone who infringes on their code." Pat, I don't know of any single case of this actually happening, do you? My greater concern on this issue would be that these products were not designed to be customer-serviced.

I see now why Pat misunderstood Al's role in the company. At the time of his three-way phone call, Al was Marketing Product Manager for the MR products (though he came to the job after their initial design, BTW). He was never Senior Hardware Engineer, but I can see how this misimpression could have been created, as Al certainly was entitled to speak with some authority about the MRs. Since Pat thought that Al was head of engineering, I guess this shows how he got to the notion that Al signed off on PARIS software (though hardware and software ARE different things, of course). As far as Al's changing role at ENSONIQ,

Pat writes, "What was I supposed to think?" when he found Al no longer at the plant after a staff meeting, and associated the two events. Both of these demonstrate what's going wrong here. My concern, Pat, is that in your role at the Hacker, you speak from a position of authority. My view of your job is that people look to you for facts, not guesswork. We all indulge in this kind of recreational detective work (I was always trying to guess what was up at Apple before Steve Jobs came back), but it bears admitting that one can be way off base when indulging in this kind of casual sleuthing. And when one is in a public position as you are, I think a bit more responsibility, more caution, is in order than when simply shooting the breeze in one's living room. My concern is that readers may not understand that you're making inferences, and that you don't actually have the inside scoop of the company's workings (though you apparently do have inside knowledge of the products).

My main concern remains all of the unfair Creative- and ENSONIQ-bashing. We try to provide the best products that we can, working very hard to achieve this goal. I just felt I couldn't sit idly by while my work - and my co-workers efforts - are being so coldly slammed.

PS. Pat, you wrote in your response, "Which product would that be? Fizmo, ASR-X or PARIS? My music dealers (Sweetwater Sound, MARS Music and IRC Music) won't even carry those products with the exception of the lone FIZMO." I dunno about the other stores - I don't have their catalogs, and I don't want to state something I don't personally know to be true - but I've got the current Sweetwater catalog right in front of me: they do carry the ASR-X Pro, ZR-76, Avis-ta and PARIS, as well as FIZMO, contrary to your claim. Grain of salt, anyone?

[PF - Ensoniq caught a German company selling Waveboy-ish FX disks with slight tweaks in the code as to avoid detection. Didn't fool Mike Hyman for an instant; see him for the details. As for Ensoniq products not being designed to be customer-serviceable - they've ensured that's the only way they'll get fixed by not providing spares.

Speaking of inferences, Sweetwater Sound ADVERTISES the entire Ensoniq line; they don't stock it until someone orders it. Common practice in all too many music stores, although they have a demo ZR and a demo PARIS system at pretty good prices. See <http://www.sweetwater.com/blowout/blowout1.html> for the details.]

[TH - Sticking my nose in where it doesn't belong (and with NO first-hand knowledge)... with regard to Al, Pat says he was told, "...no longer works at Ensoniq." And Robby's saying, "...at the plant." Just possibly, someone (carelessly, I think) might have said, "...no longer works here." Just a thought. Nice that Al's not out on the street - hey?]

[Greg Purkey (gcp@mailhost.clipper.net) Subject: The grudge match -

Although I have read fine articles by both Pat and Robby, I'm gonna have to vote for Pat on this one. I bought my VFX-SD in the early '90s and to this day I am still very impressed. The power of the sequencer was short of amazing for keyboards of that time. Look at the nice big readout display. The VFX-SD is still my master controller even though I don't even use the sequencer any more. Why is that? I was so impressed with the VFX-SD that I bought a ASR-10. Even though the read out display shrunk, the unit was still a great sampler. So why didn't I continue to buy from Ensoniq? They released too many new keyboards and dropped support for what they had released in the past. I couldn't keep track. So now a company that

doesn't support any of my keyboards wants me to go buy a Fizmo? I checked out the Fizmo and I doubt that keyboard will be around to see 2000.

It's too bad the Hacker-Ensoniq relationship doesn't exist anymore. The Hacker helped me get a lot more out of my Ensoniq keyboards, and considering the fact that the Hacker was independent from Ensoniq, I could even count on occasional criticism of an Ensoniq product and gee whizz, it even sounded like Ensoniq took the heat well. As a matter of fact in the November 1992 article Robby Berman indicated the ASR-10 is "almost as if it's been designed by the readers of the Hacker." Not a bad compliment to readers of the Hacker for a sampler that has had such a long life as the ASR-10 has. Robby...why can't that kind of feedback continue? Robby wrote THE BEST article on understanding SD and VFX envelopes I have ever read. It made me appreciate the VFX-SD a lot more. People always vote with their dollars, and based on the new Ensoniq products, it leaves a lot to be desired.]

[DMusum7335@aol.com - Oh what the hell... I'll put my two cents in here too. I've been a Hacker subscriber since around 1991. Pat has done a great job since taking over the helm from Clark. And by the way, I use to own a VFX (Pat owns it now) and still own an SD-1 and a TS-12. It's great to know that there is no technical support from the company that I purchased the keyboard from but 3rd party support now "owns" the expertise. You can't get a schematic from Ensoniq on these keyboards because of proprietary code reasons yet in some instances Ensoniq can't even get parts anymore. If the code is so proprietary why did Ensoniq stop making the VFX engine? And Greg Purkey summed it up best. He's stuck with two keyboards that Ensoniq no longer supports and I'm stuck with two. (It was three; thanks Pat !!) Now you want me to spring for another keyboard from a company who will stop supporting it when they decide to stop producing it? I feel bad for the Eric Montgomerys and the Bert Neikerks of the world who were part of the once great "old" company. BTW, did you notice that all of the finger pointing starting after the announcement of the discontinuation of the Hacker? Coincidence? And Robbie, shame on you for bringing this subject up. Your perceived "problem" will go away in 9 more issues. What were you trying to prove??? Grow up!!!]

[kowl@spinneret.co.za - I would just like to reiterate that I don't think that the current negative bad press (or should I just say vibes) around Ensoniq and their gear (which I think Ensoniq should be taking serious note of) has anything to do with the Hacker. I also don't think that Ensoniq has anything to gain from trying to shut it down (or out) and EVERYTHING to gain from helping to keep it going. If the relationship needs a bit of working on, then great, do it. But Ensoniq has no idea how it is damaging its loyal base of supporters by pursuing its present policy towards the Hacker.

Again, I want to say that I have been a big fan of Ensoniq gear for the last 3-4 years (I own the MR-76, ASR-10, ASR-X and MR Rack), but, over the last year due to my experience with the ASR-X, the sequencer on the MR-76, and the shoddy treatment the Hacker is getting I very seriously doubt I will purchase another piece of Ensoniq gear. Why? I'll try and keep this to two short points.

1) The ASR-X: what a great look, concept AND sound. Its a machine I love, and hate, if only it did what the front cover claims... "groove?": sort of, if there isn't too much midi data flowing through it, "sequence?": again, sort of, if it didn't crash every once in a while, if the midi timing was tighter, if the "region" points worked perfectly... These days, I won't even attempt to use the onboard sequencers of my Ensoniq gear - my Korg Trinity and MC-505 does the job so much more stably - and I feel cheated. BTW The midi timing of the X has been a fervent topic of discussion on the ASR-X users group (maybe that should shut that down too?!) with quite a few postings from dance producers and studio guys claiming that the the sequence/midi timing is not up to scratch. And, I agree with that sentiment.

I am aware that every machine has its weaknesses, but there is a certain base level which any professional gear should at least reach, whether its on the sound quality front, the fx front, the build quality, the sequence/midi implementation, the power of its CPU, the user interface front, and, very importantly, on the software coding front (bugs, bugs, bugs!!! And I won't even get started on my scsi frustrations with an older OS, or the sound glitchings that happen with my present OS).

Does this mean I'll be getting rid of my X? No, be-

Classifieds

Ensoniq EPS-16 Plus rack module, 8 outputs, SCSI expanded. Rarely used, great condition \$700 obo. baliraja@hotmail.com

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cause I love the sound and it does have some real neat features, but will I get future Ensoniq products? I am not too sure.

It's like this, I have drooled over the PARIS system for a while now, but when I get the money, do I really want to spend my money on a system that I am not sure will do what its creators claim it will do. Will it be stable? Will it really be able to handle all those in/out options properly? Will its sequencer (which I hear is soon to be released) really be up to scratch? Will it fit snugly into Cubase (which I hear will also be implemented soon with ASIO drivers)? Will its chipset have the power be able to handle all its features smoothly? Maybe yes to all these. But I just don't know, especially with my experience of the X. And this leads me to the second point...

2) Shutting down the user forums tells me that the company, no matter what its stated reasons, is in panic and unsure of itself or its future. Trying to bash those voices that are giving valid feed back as to how its products are being received is not very good policy. And I might remind Ensoniq that no matter what they think of Pat, he isn't the only writer for the Hacker, and even if he is guilty of some of the things Robby claims, at least he is putting the effort in to making their products work, when they aren't. So, why should I buy PARIS when I know I can't turn to the Hacker for support? Or when I feel its not listening to its users? Or its hardware might not be able to handle what it is supposed to? Or when I am not that confident its working methods or future plans.

It is my experience with Ensoniq's gear and its treatment of the Hacker that has made me lose faith in Ensoniq, and the Hacker had nothing to do with that. In fact, irony of ironies, its the Hacker that helped keep my enthusiasm alive. Ensoniq, look to the quality of your hardware and software implementation before dissing your supporters.

Owl (One-time fan, wanting to be smitten again.)]

[TH - Just to make it really clear: Ensoniq isn't "shutting us down" in any way. What they've decided is to no longer promote us. Given that, WE'RE shutting us down. And actually, given the way their unit sales were going the last few years and the somewhat disappointing "turn-around" that seems to be going on, at this point Hacker viability would be kinda iffy even if they did promote us. As mentioned in our announcement, things have been pretty rough the last few years - but it looked like they might be turning things around. Now, we're starting to get the feeling that we might not be missing out on much. Of course, since there aren't any flyers going out this is just partially-baked speculation...]

[Owl (qkumbazoo.com) - Okay, so maybe they aren't shutting you DOWN (just shutting you OUT). I still think it is valid though that they should be supporting you (and other user forums that might be in existence) a whole lot more because they need the feedback from, us, their supporters, and we need to be able to talk to each other and with Ensoniq.

I know my message is probably on the harsh side, but it's there because I actually want them to succeed (and you guys with them, if that's your desire). The fact that you feel it necessary to shut down operations is sad for the rest of us because you did provide a very useful place for us to interact. Life... Peace]

[TH - True.]

[Dvkrogh@aol.com - To Owl,

If you're interested in Paris, you might want to take a look at www.greatidea.com/paris.

It's an independent newsgroup and makes Paris the product with the best support I've ever seen. Usually, a question gets answered within the hour, and both people from Ensoniq and some of the software designers visit the group on a daily basis (!).

While I'm not optimistic about asio drivers for Paris (why would you want that?), I can assure you that it's a rock-stable system and can handle all its inputs and outputs absolutely trouble free.

As a side note: it's an independent user forum and I don't think Ensoniq is planning to "lock them out" in any way. Needless to say, I don't agree with many things that have been said in the Hacker's Interface lately. There are always 2 sides to a story (or however you say that in English).

FWIW, I use Paris as the heart of my studio (a mec system with 3 eds cards, 40 analog inputs, 12 analog outputs, 16 adat lightpipe channels, 48 realtime plus 80 submix based tracks, tons of eqs and effects and what-not). I also have a Fizmo, several ASR10s, and use the MR Rack very often, and all of this stuff is and sounds great IMHO.

If the Paris system is part of the "change in direction," then I say go for it. My 2 cents, Derek.]

[Owl - Derek, thank for the info. I'll be taking a look at the newsgroup because I am very interested in PARIS. From what I have seen it looks like a really good product, but I want to make sure it works properly... so I am glad to get your feedback.

The reason I want ASIO drivers is because I am used to doing my sequencing and hard disk recording with Cubase, and I want to be able to use the PARIS hardware, effects, inputs and outputs, and even external mix controller from within Cubase. For me the ultimate would be for these two systems to lock together. As far as I know, this should be possible with the right ASIO drivers. Anyone know anything more on this?

Jees, you are running loads of inputs and outputs. The fact that its running well for you makes me feel a little more secure about the product.

Can you tell me more about FIZMO? What kind of sounds is it good at? Is it geared towards dance music, or what?

I am very fond of my Ensoniq gear, but I feel like I have also been burnt by some of the gear in some ways, hence the frustrated tone of my above posting. And I am concerned about the way they seem to be treating the Hacker. However, to balance what I said before, I DO really like the sound and character of my ASR-X and my MR-Rack and I work a lot with them. The effects are really cool, the sound is clean and tasty, and, well, the X is a sexy little box (am I a geek or what). So, I hope it all works out the best for everyone: Ensoniq and those who have stood by them.]

[Louis Van den Berg (ljvdb3@ucr.campus.mci.net) - I have purchased every high-end synth, sampler and efx device Ensoniq has produced. I have ancillary gear as well (midi switcher). My loyalty to Ensoniq was based first on the gear, which was superior, and a superior value, but then subsequently to the Transoniq Hacker. To be clear: I would not have bought the many Ensoniq products I purchased after my initial ESQ-1 without the support, the information and the sense of "community" which the Hacker provided. The TH could always be relied on to be straightforward, honest and very, very practical. My view of Ensoniq is that they have lost perspective, lost their direction and, with their attitude toward the Transoniq Hacker, lost their connection to Ensoniq's most ardent customers, their evangelists. Their behavior is so pre-

posterous, so seemingly self-destructive, that it may be that they have lost their minds.

Some few Ensoniq products still appeal; Paris looks very good. But something at Ensoniq has gone wrong; the light is out. I'll keep all my gear, which is still tremendously useful. But, will I buy further Ensoniq (or Emu) gear without the distinct advantage that the Hacker provides? Nothing tips the scales. I'll look elsewhere.

I support and thank the Transoniq Hacker, Pat Finnigan and all who contribute to this terrific little publication. I look with dismay at the coming of the last issue, but continue to hope that it won't be.]

[TH - And while we really appreciate words of support, it's all pretty much been said by now and folks should probably consider using these remaining columns to get their technical questions answered...]

[WARNERPRD@aol.com - Very well said... Let us all use the last remaining spaces for tech questions concerning our Ensoniq products. We all can see how valuable space could be wasted when the end is near. It is very interesting that it takes this to finally realize "what you've got till gone." K.W.]

TH -

I just bought a KT-99 workstation and, like some of your readers, I have no idea what to do with all the information regarding sound changes. Especially changes that occur while playing the instrument. Please tell me how to program my KT-88 into the best organ sounds possible. Things like tone change during live shows. I really think this keyboard can do more than the factory presets in mod wheel and pressure velocity sound changes. Please send me any assistance you can - my position in the band depends on getting the best Hammond B3 sound that I can.

Witan Mitchell in Sebastopol
Ongrounds@aol.com

[PF - Witan: First off, experiment with the FX settings. I've found setting the rotor control to "continuous" and using the mod wheel instead of "pressure" to vary Leslie speed produces VERY credible results.

The other cool (and often overlooked) trick is to map the data entry slider to "Timbre" and use it as a drawbar to fade in another wave. Using this technique judiciously with the organ, spectral and sine waves xposed up a coupla octaves is just like pulling the high drawbars out on a B-3. Edit to taste...]

Folks at the Hacker -

I have an ASR-10 that is four years old, and have never had a problem with the sampler until now. Every time I try to load the initial O.S (3.53), the board will not tune. I get a message of "keyboard failed--retry?" No matter how many times I attempt to retry I continue to get this message. Can you please offer me some insight to this problem?

Thank you.
Artemis K, Acclimate6@webtv.net

[PF - Artemis: The keyboard has failed. Usually, the connection between the keyboard PCB halves (around middle C) has gone open or intermittent. The inside of an ASR is SOOO crowded the only repair I'd recommend is to have your Authorized Ensoniq Service Center repair it for you. Not a fatal problem, but annoying, nonetheless. They should be able to square you away for about an hour of bench time...]

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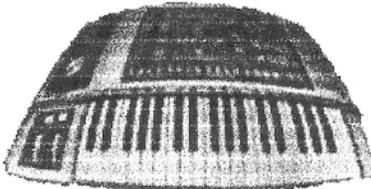
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