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Refining Sound: A Practical Guide to Synthesis and Synthesizers

By Brian K. Shepard



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Refining Sound: A Practical Guide to Synthesis and Synthesizers By Brian K. Shepard

Refining Sound is a practical roadmap to the complexities of creating sounds on modern synthesizers. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of learning to create sounds on a synthesizer is understanding what all the individual synthesizer components contribute to the complex finished sound. Author and veteran synthesizer instructor Brian K. Shepard draws on his years of experience in synthesizer pedagogy in order to peel back the often-mysterious layers of sound synthesis one-by-one. The result is a book that allows readers to familiarize themselves with each individual step in the synthesis process, in turn empowering them in their own creative or experimental work.

Refining Sound follows the stages of synthesis in chronological progression from the "raw materials" of sound waves through the various stages of the refinement process, ultimately bringing readers to the final "polishing" of their sounds with audio effects. Each chapter focuses on a particular aspect of the synthesis process, and contains easily digestible guided projects (entitled "Your Turn" sections) that focus on the topics of the chapter. Throughout the text, the material is supported by copious examples and illustrations and more than forty interactive synthesis demonstrations on the related companion website that allow the reader to experiment with and understand these concepts without the distraction of other synthesizer controls and modifiers. The final chapter brings everything together as the reader creates several common types of synthesizer sounds with detailed step-by-step instructions and explanations of the concepts behind those steps. With all of the sounds in the final chapter, readers are given suggestions and tips on ways to modify the sounds, with final outcomes left to the readers' own creativity. *Refining Sound* is essential for all electronic musicians from amateur to professional levels of accomplishment, students, teachers, libraries, and anyone interested in creating sounds on a synthesizer.



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Editorial Review

Review

"Shepard employs an inviting and accessible writing style to explain advanced topics in a way that is easy to understand. This book demystifies many of the topics of synthesis that can be confusing to people."--VJ Manzo, Assistant Professor of Music Technology, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and author of *Max/MSP/Jitter for Music*

"*Refining Sound* is an approachable introduction to the secrets of synthesis. The companion website is chock full of tutorials, making this well organized book a handy reference for either self-study or in a course."--Mary Simoni, Ph.D., Professor Emerita, University of Michigan, Dean, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

"In *Refining Sound*, Brian Shepard provides a deeply valuable and sorely needed resource for the musician seeking to understand sound design. In clear language, he thoroughly explains and illustrates concepts that could be tedious and overwhelming for most readers, and does so from the perspective of the musician rather than the mathematician or physicist. I'm sure we will use this book as the primary text in our synthesis classes for years to come."--Scott L. Phillips, PhD, Co-director of Music Technology, The University of Alabama at Birmingham

"Brian K. Shepard's book on synthesizers and synthesis is one of those rare volumes which is comprehensive in its explanations of the history of synthesizers and electronic music in general that makes for a jolly good read. For enthusiasts and professionals alike, this book is the best I've read in years. Thoroughly recommended!"--J. Peter Robinson, Composer

"I'd venture to say that even veterans will find a few interesting facts here that were previously unknown to them...a first rate source of instruction for those with no knowledge or just partial knowledge of subtractive synthesis. Additionally, I can't imagine a better textbook to use in a formal class."--*Sound Bytes*

About the Author

Brian K. Shepard is Professor of Audio Design Practice and Assistant Dean of the USC Iovine and Young Academy for Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation at the University of Southern California. For more information, visit his website at briankshepard.com.

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