

MUSIC & TECHNOLOGY

Auricle 3.0

By Gary Woods

Ever since I first saw the Auricle Time Processor almost 20 years ago upstairs at the Writers Guild, I knew it was going to change the way people put music to film. At that meeting I saw a piece of Software, then running on a Commodore 64 and doing things that had previously taken composers and music editors hours upon hours to create. The software could generate accelerandos and ritardandos with a few keystrokes. It could change meters and click 8th notes in one measure, changing to clicking quarter notes in the next and all with incredibly accurate timings. Literally anything that could be conceived musically could be created in the Time Processor and brought to the scoring stage.

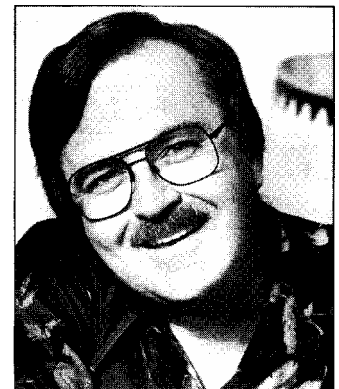
The rave reviews along with the Technical Academy Award ['86] and Technical Emmy ['85] soon followed along with a switch from the Commodore to the PC ['87] and Auricle's place in film music history had been firmly established. The thing that has always impressed me most about Auricle is its incredible musicality. This has been brought about throughout the evolution of the Time Processor because Richard and Ron Grant, its developers, have been sensitive to the requests of Auricle's users and have continued to add and modify features, which brings us to Auricle III Revision 3.0. So, what's new in Auricle Land??

One of the biggest improvements is that the Time Processor now defaults in favor of the more popular **Cueline 1M1 Streamer/Click Generator**. Auricle will still work with the now discontinued, bulkier Tesla Click and Streamer Boxes, but the defaults for the software are now setup for the more modern 1M1. One of the best features of Cueline's 1M1 is that the unit has a built-in **text generator** which Auricle utilizes fully. This feature allows the Auricle to place a

bar/beat counter in a small foreground window to the right side of all work-print video monitors connected to the system at a stage or home studio. When the clicking of the cue is commenced, this bar counter first appears expanded on the video screen to show the current free clicks setting, i.e. how many count-off beats are set into the indicated starting bar. As the count-off progresses when the click track is triggered, the number of free beats counts down with each click. After the count-off is completed, only the bar/beat counter remains. When the cue is set to fire on SMPTE time code using the "Click Cue on SMPTE" command, the name of the cue and the SMPTE address of the start will also appear, centered, toward the bottom of the screen advising the booth as to where to locate for recording purposes. This window vanishes when the count-off completes.

There's also an audio re-generator included in the 1M1 that converts audio clicks to MIDI or a professional built-in click, and all visual cues and sound generators in the 1M1 can be controlled via MIDI note-on-commands. Streamers can be displayed in 8 different colors (PAL or NTSC) as well as on black with no video present, and traversal times can be varied from 2 seconds, to 2.66 seconds and even 3.33 seconds. All streamer traversals end with an automatic "punch" at the end. There are 4 "punch" sizes with 3-flutter, 5-flutter and 7 flutter "punches" possible. Also, any number of streamers may be made to appear on and traverse the video screen simultaneously. For more information on Cueline's 1M1 call long distance +45 70 275 100 [Denmark] or email sales@cueline.com.

Many users of Auricle have found the HP 800 notebook to be a great tool for sessions and Auricle III 3.0 continues support for the 800. Richard has a supply of these handy notebook computers that have been configured specifically to be fully Auricle compliant, and to date not one of them has failed to meet expectations. He says, "HP 800s have proven to be an ideal alternative to the previously favored Toshiba notebooks." The combination of the 800's "elfin



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footprint" and the more transportable and sophisticated Cueline 1M1 streamer/click generator "make the HP 800 the most convenient, road-worthy and adroit Auricle platform to date."

A novel feature added with 3.0 that saves a lot of time during sessions is the ability for Auricle to **generate SMPTE time code (LTC)** on its own, thus allowing the Time Processor to drive other devices like hard disc audio and digital video in step with its click track during the rehearsals of a live orchestra. This has revolutionized the orchestral scoring process by completely disengaging the booth and its overhead from the rehearsal process, freeing up an additional 10 to 20 minutes for creative purposes during a typical double session.

On the subject of SMPTE, the Time Processor specifically supports the VLR-100PC SMPTE Generator/Reader. The unit attaches to the Auricle via your computer's 9 pin serial connector. In all respects the VLR-100PC mimics, but is otherwise an alternative to the built-in SMPTE generators on the notebook computers, but with one important exception: The VLR-100PC references house sync (**black burst**) and thus can share the same sync reference as do all other devices on the stage. When the VLR-100PC is attached but not generating SMPTE it acts as a SMPTE reader/re-generator. By looping the stage's SMPTE feed through the box you don't need to require the booth to manually switch SMPTE sources when going from rehearsals to recording. (The VLR-100PC is available from Auricle Control Systems)

One of the most notable enhancements to Auricle 3.0 is the addition of functions for the **import** and **export of Standard Midi Files**. These new features are facilitated by either a Mac or Windows' utility provided by Tobias Giesen of TGTools (www.tgtools.com/auricle). These utilities run on the same computer as does your sequencer. In combination with the Tobias utility, the Auricle import operation of course passes your sequencer's meters, tempi, SMPTE and timing information into the Time Processor. But you can also optionally transfer all your markers, text events and cue points into Auricle's "hitter," automatically streamering any of these as you might choose. The export operation provides the exact reverse—the tempo, meter and SMPTE information set in the Auricle can be quickly passed to your sequencer with the entries in Auricle's

hitter selectably exported as markers, text events or cue points. And if this were not enough, the new export function also provides for the Auricle's click track itself to be transferred to your sequence. For more details regarding Auricle's new import and export functions, see the Auricle website at www.auricle.com/manual/TGTools.html.

Auricle 3.0 also addresses a number of other areas in an effort to keep up with the times and the demands of its users: Digital video is becoming more common in principal production and post production picture editing. On some recent occasions (e.g., *SpyKids 2*) this has resulted in scoring sessions run at other than the standard 29.97 video rate. The new version of the Auricle now specifically accommodates this evolution in industry practice.

A few years ago, as a result of a suggestion from Alan Silvestri, the Auricle was modified to permit the streamering of a "list" of bars to avoid any number of repetitious entries. Thanks to Alan you could, for example, "WHITE STREAMER BARS [5,7,15,4,51]" in one operation as opposed to executing 5 separate operations. This has proven so effective that this "list" function has been expanded to cover nearly all other Auricle bar specific operations including metering, hit streamering and the modification of "hit" information generally. You can, for example, in one single operation REMETER BARS [10,5,80,105] TO 2+2+1+1+1/8.

In previous versions of Auricle, if a user "semi-taceted" a bar all the clicks in the measure were silenced except for beat 1. In the new version, thanks to a suggestion from Shirley Walker, a facility to turn off only the downbeat click has been added.

A few composers, James Newton Howard and Bill Ross among them, often put together rubato cues which have no steady click reference. These cues are mapped into the Auricle for the orchestra using the Time Processor's popular Capture SMPTE Hit feature. As the mockup for the cue is played, the Auricle's keyboard is tapped at each downbeat and its SMPTE address is instantly filed in the Auricle's "hitter." Before Revision 3.0, one had to then go back and separately streamer these "hits" for the conductor. Thanks to a suggestion by Team Howard, in the new Auricle the capture and streaming (white, violet or blue streamers as well as 3, 5 or 7 flutter

punches) can be accomplished simultaneously with the capture by striking mnemonically appointed keys.

One of the features Auricle has provided for years which even today sets it well apart from any sequencer program has been its Warning Into Bar function. In Auricle you could have always established a given number of free clicks into a new tempo after [an internal] free timed passage or grand pause. But in the original Auricle this was accomplished by a "gag" which altered the "maps" making subsequent edits difficult to handle while complicating tracking by any attached sequencers. With much friendly prodding by conductor-orchestrator Pete Anthony, the popular Warning Into Bar function in version 3.0 has been entirely rewritten and all previous limitations have been eradicated.

As of this writing, Auricle 3.0 has not yet been released for general consumption.* Various beta versions employing the features mentioned, however, have run sessions for a number of recent major features including *Signs*, *Men In Black II*, *Spy Kids II*, *Minority Report*, *Scooby-Doo* and others. All that remains, according to Richard Grant, is completion and printing of his Manual's update material. 3.0's release, says Richard, is expected not later than early October 2002.

For additional information on Auricle 3.0, the HP 800 and the VLR-100PC you can call Richard Grant at (818) 990-8442, drop him an email at webmaster@auricle.com or go on line at www.auricle.com. For more information about Cueline's 1M1 Streamer-Click-Character generator you can call +45 70 275 100 (Denmark) or email sales@cueline.com. And for any questions to me you can call (805) 967-7823, drop me an email at gandlwoods@earthlink.net or write to me at 5098 Cathedral Oaks Rd. Santa Barbara CA, 93111.

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* This article was written c. August 2002 for publication in December 2002 as indicated in the caption. Auricle 3.0 was in fact released in the interim, mid-October 2002.

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