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Auricle Computer Program Is Music To Composer's Ears

HOLLYWOOD — This is a complicated story that began eight months ago when Ron Grant, a composer for the "Knots Landing" TV series, asked his brother Richard, a lawyer and computer systems designer, what kind of home computer to buy.

The story ends with a nice new business for the Grant brothers, a nifty way for composers to use computers in the scoring of film and TV sound tracks and a radically new approach to the problem of how humans and computers talk to each other

When Ron, 39, first investigated home computers, he looked at most of the popular brands. He even looked at some unpopular models, such as one that was selling for \$40,000 — more even than the price of his Porsche. Richard told Ron to buy a Commodore 64, an inexpensive model. Richard, 41, insisted that the software — not the computer itself — was what Ron had to pay attention to.

Pointing to the Commodore in his office, Richard said, "Hardware is

going to be like razors. Before long, computer companies will be practically giving them away so they can sell you the software."

Like millions of other new computer owners, Ron soon developed an interest in programming. He wanted to adapt his Commodore for use in his music composing, especially the tedious, boring part of the job that he spent figuring click tracks — the internal timers composers use to fit music tempo to a film or TV show's visual action.

"I wanted to come up with a system that would let a composer do whatever he wanted his music to do," Ron said. There is probably not a professional musician around who has not at one time or another consulted and groaned over a click-track book — a massive encyclopedia of numbers used by film and TV composers to find the proper music tempo for scenes of varying lengths.

As much as two thirds of a sound track composer's workday can be spent just figuring the arithmetic of click tracks, Ron said.

In essence Ron wanted a way to

tell his computer things like "retime bar 10 to 38," a simple command that any musical arranger would understand easily. Few computers would, however.

Richard had a solution: the Auricle, a totally new way for people to deal with computers. Or, more precisely, for computers to deal with people.

Richard calls Auricle the "ear of a computer." It understands English (or any other language a user may choose to write, including gibberish) because the Auricle user teaches the computer what words he or she wants to use for any process. If, for example, a word processing program code for a spelling check is "control period Y space T," an Auricle user simply may change that to "find the dictionary."

An Auricle user just types the command and then sees what he or she wants superimposed on the screen — an advantage over most computers, which require that the user take the current project off the screen in order for the computer to perform another task.