

ALESIS First Reflection

SUMMER 1995

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1

NEW Alesis Synthesizer! Introducing QuadraSynth Plus Piano!

After months of designing detailed system refinements and powerful feature enhancements to the original QuadraSynth, Alesis proudly introduces the new QuadraSynth Plus Piano. We've added 8MB of new sound ROM to the original unit for a total of 24 megabytes onboard! This expanded ROM set for the keyboard includes the highly acclaimed phase-accurate stereo piano from the Grand Piano QuadraCard.



On top, Alesis' new QuadraSynth Plus Piano 64 Voice 24 Megabyte Expandable Master Keyboard. On bottom, our new S4 Plus QuadraSynth 64 Voice Sound Module.

The Preset Program area has quadrupled in size for a massive library of 640 internal Programs and 500 internal multitimbral Mixes! With an SRAM card inserted, you can add eight additional banks which gives you 1,664 Programs and 1,300 Mixes immediately accessible from the front panel or via MIDI. And since the library of QuadraSynth Programs continues to grow, you can conveniently expand your timbral palette with professional quality state-of-the-art sounds without having to purchase expensive new modules.

Furthermore, new Alesis Sound Bridge software is included with

Continued on page 22

ADAT Hits The Road With Robert Scovill!

3 Time TEC Award-Winning Engineer Takes
ADAT On The Road For Tom Petty Tour

Robert Scovill won't win the 1995 TEC Award for Sound Reinforcement Engineer Of The Year. The reason is not that he won't have accomplished yet another phenomenal year on the road; rather, it's because the prestigious award can only be presented to one engineer for three consecutive years before it's offered to someone else. Scovill has been the recipient of this honor in 1992, 1993 and 1994 while engineering for Rush and Def Leppard. But the judges would be hard-pressed to find a more worthy contender for 1995, since Scovill is currently in the middle of Tom Petty's *Dogs With Wings* tour to support Petty's new Warner release *Wildflowers*. To ensure the ultimate sound quality from venue to venue (as well as capture the performances for posterity), he's taking seven ADATs and a BRC with him.



Robert Scovill, Bill Overstreet (Assistant Engineer), and Alesis' Ted Keffalo hang out at the final sound check for the Tom Petty tour. In addition to Scovill's stack of ADATs, note the BRC on the console!

ADATs In Sound Reinforcement

Scovill's primary application of his ADAT System is as an advanced sound reinforcement tool to make each arena, stadium and amphitheater sound consistently excellent, night after night. Scovill uses the recorded ADAT tracks of actual previous performances to adjust the sound for each new venue before every show. Robert's console is hard-wired to dedicated ADAT tracks for each of the 56

Continued on page 9

INSIDE: The KEITH EMERSON First Reflection Interview!

►NEW QuadraSynth Plus Piano Keyboard ►NEW S4 Plus Sound Module ►NEW Monitor Two
►Robert Scovill/Tom Petty ►Francis Buckley/Quincy Jones ►Control CD-ROM ►The Fat Man
►QuadraCards ►New Q2 Software ►MidiVerb 4 Spotlight ►Brian Ahern/George Jones' Bradley
Barn ►Special 10 Year Alesis Retrospective ►Q2/ADAT Hot Tip ►3630 Compressor Tip ►Spectral
Translator ►Tech Q&A ►The ADAT Files ►Much, Much More!

COMPRESSION

Using The 3630 Compressor For The "Non-Effect Effect"

For those of you just getting started in audio engineering, a key turning point is when you grasp the concept of what a compressor does and how you should use it. In stores, it's hard to get a compressor demonstration that "grabs" you the way that, say, a MidiVerb 4 or QuadraVerb 2 audition will. Plug an effect send into a Q2, and you'll hear dramatic things happening: reverb, flanging, chorusing, delaying. Most signal processors make an obvious change in the sound, and if you like it, you get one. Such effects are connected to a variable aux send from a mixer, return to another input of the mixer, and you mix the "wet" (processed) and "dry" (original) signals together to get the sound you want.

But compressors, such as the Alesis 3630 RMS/Peak Dual Channel Compressor Limiter with Gate, aren't designed to make such a dramatic effect on the sound. They're not even hooked into your system the same way that a digital reverb unit is. For a compressor to work, the entire sound has to pass through it (either by placing it between the source and the destination, or in an insert jack). Once you've got it wired correctly, you turn it on and hear...almost no change in the sound, at least until you start turning knobs. Even when the 3630's dual metering system is showing you that something's happening, it isn't always obvious to the listener.

And that's the point. You've been listening to compressors all your life without knowing it. Almost every lead vocal on a pop record is compressed during tracking or mixdown. Then, the entire stereo mix may be compressed or limited during the mastering process. Finally, when you hear the song on your favorite radio station, it passes through another compressor for the station. Automatic volume control—that's what a com-

pressor/limiter/gate like the 3630 does—is one of the most valuable tools you can have. After you've bought your first compressor, you'll understand why there are so many of them in professional P.A. systems and recording studios.

Keep that concept of the "automatic volume control" in mind, and look at the meters on the front of the 3630. Each channel has two meters, one showing input/output level, and another showing how much gain reduction is being applied. Suppose you set the threshold control to "0 dB", and the ratio control to infinity. This means that no matter how high the input signal, it will never rise above 0 dB. If the input meter is below 0 (the green and yellow LEDs), nothing will happen: the gain reduction meter won't light at all. But, if the input meter reads +4, the gain reduction will read -4: the 3630 is doing its job, automatically reducing the output volume by 4 dB for that instant. (By the way, the length of "that instant" is set by the attack and release controls.)

By cutting the peak levels, it allows you to raise the average level of a source using the Output control. By using the threshold and ratio controls, you can set a stable sound that will hold its position in the mix whether the singer is whispering or screaming. By using a 3630, which has an extremely clean, non-gimmicky sound and easy-to-understand controls, you'll get the results you want. And, they're so cost effective you can put several in your rack (so you can leave your favorite vocal compression settings up and use another unit for the bass, etc.). You'll wonder how you ever got along without one.

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Robert Scovill / Tom Petty Tour

Continued from page 1

channels coming in. This provides a high degree of control for bringing up individual signals - drums, organs, guitars, vocals and so on - to check the sound before the next show. On a secondary basis, the resulting awesome collection of live material could be assembled for later release of a live album.

The Live ADAT Advantage

"I think there are several advantages in using the ADAT system for live sound," said Scovill. "First of all, ADAT gives us a high percentage of usable material that gets to tape at an amazingly low cost. To do this without ADAT, we'd have to sync three open-reel 24 track decks. To record every practice, sound check and show, the tape costs alone would be staggering. Without ADAT, there's no way we could do something like this. Plus, when you're taping the every performance, the band stops thinking about the fact that

they're being recorded and starts concentrating on making great music. It used to be that when you were recording a show, you had to bring in a mobile crew at a very high cost, and the band was always conscious about the record light being on."

And Now, Back To The Show...

At the beginning of June, a couple of Alesis guys decided that it was necessary to see Robert Scovill's ADAT setup in action, so we...okay, okay, we just wanted to see the Tom Petty *Dogs With Wings* show at the world-famous Hollywood Bowl here in Los Angeles. But what a great show...the sound was terrific, Petty's songs were excellent, and Mike Campbell's psychedelic surf guitar solo was unbelievable. Did I mention we liked it?

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